



Council Worksession  
January 25, 2022  
5:00 pm

Present: Mayor Kari Niedfeldt-Thomas  
Councilmember Abdullahi Abdulle  
Councilmember Graeme Allen  
Councilmember Pam Axberg  
Councilmember Emily Dunsworth

Absent:

Staff in Attendance: Devin Massopust, Tony Paetznick

Guests in Attendance:

New Brighton Public Safety Crime Update and Discussion

Massopust stated Public Safety Director Tony Paetznick had a presentation for the Council.

Paetznick provided the Council with a presentation on crime trends in the City of New Brighton. He stated 2021 was a challenging year for law enforcement the both the country and state. He reported murders have hit a record level statewide. He explained opioid overdose deaths have nearly doubled from 2018 to 2020 and traffic fatalities were up nearly 37%. He was pleased to report violent crimes were down, but noted there had been a dramatic increase in burglary and thefts. He broke down the thefts in that were occurring in further detail noting this included theft from motor vehicles, motor vehicle parts and other larceny (vehicle thefts, car jackings and gas drive offs). He described how the city was addressing the theft of catalytic converters through high visibility painting events. A five year comparison of motor vehicles pursuits and use of force incidents was reviewed. He discussed the voluntary camera registry campaign that took place in 2021 and commented on how footage could help the police should an incident occur.

Councilmember Allen requested further information on how use of force was defined. Paetznick explained anything more than handcuffing an individual was considered a use of force incident.

Paetznick reviewed the departments operational and administrative initiatives. He reported an officer had been reassigned to the Ramsey County Violent Crime Enforcement Team (VCET). He explained he has had conversations with the Holiday gas station management regarding the gasoline drive offs that occur. In addition, he has had conversations with suburban Ramsey County Chiefs of Police Association members and the Ramsey County Attorney's Office about the crime trends in the community. At a patrol level, his officers were being proactive with traffic safety enforcement, were gathering intelligence and had targeted vehicular and foot patrol. In addition, the department has been deploying the camera trailer, sending out multi-agency crime alerts and crime prevention messaging.

Paetznick discussed the police staffing challenges he was facing. He noted the department was authorized to have 31 licensed peace officers in the 2022 budget and there were 24 officers available across all ranks at this time. He commented on how he continues to seek Public Safety Officers (PSO's) along with lateral and

experienced officers. The number of calls for service and the number of officers required per incident were reviewed. He encouraged residents to always call the police with suspicious activity. He encouraged residents to stay informed and educated.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas asked if gas stations could be required to be pre-pay only. Paetznick stated City Code does not have that authority at this time. He indicated one suburban community does have an ordinance in place to address this concern. He commented this was something he could look into further.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas supported the City looking into this further. She questioned if there were more efforts neighborhood crime watch groups could be doing. Paetznick reported the increase in crime was adversely impacting those residents living in multi-family housing in the community, especially with vehicle related crimes. He commented on how property crimes were impacting those who had been most impacted by the pandemic.

Further discussion ensued regarding the benefits of the City engaging with the residents residing in multi-family settings.

Councilmember Allen commented on how there needs to be a balance between what is important and what is not so the residents the City was trying to protect was not being targeted.

Councilmember Abdulle stated it was encouraging to see the number of violent crimes had decreased and he understood there were other crimes that were on the rise. He discussed the locations where the majority of crimes were occurring in the community noting this was mostly on the north side of the City. He encouraged the City to make sure the multi-family housing buildings were secure and suggested minimum standards be set for safety and security.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas questioned what type of Ordinances could be considered by the Council to order to assist with the safety and security being provided within multi-family housing units in the City. Paetznick indicated there would be opportunities within Chapter 13 of the Housing Code under Minimum Standards. He commented further on the efforts some properties had made to improve their security and noted funding may be available to assist property owners with these initiatives.

Councilmember Allen commented on the legislative policy changes that impacted police officers and their training. He requested further information on these changes. Paetznick explained the City has been a member of the Lexipol Policy Manual system. He noted the department regularly reviews and updates its policies. He indicated the department was slightly ahead of the curve due to the forward thinking of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing Task Force. He discussed the duty to intervene policy that was now in place.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas asked if the County can access residents via cell phone if a major event were to occur in New Brighton. Paetznick reported Ramsey County has an alert program that was administered through the county emergency communication center. He noted this was a voluntary opt in program and is used sparingly. He commented further on how the department can utilize these notifications.

Councilmember Abdulle requested an update on the current traffic enforcement policy. Paetznick stated the philosophy behind traffic enforcement is about roadway safety. He indicated the state-wide roadways were challenging at this time. He discussed the number of complaints he receives regarding traffic concerns. He explained the department's strategy was all about education, engineering, and enforcement.

Councilmember Abdulle questioned if automated enforcement had been considered to reduce staffing costs and eliminate biases. Paetznick stated red light cameras and speed cameras were not allowed per State Statute at

this time. He discussed how challenging the interstate crossings were and red light runners. He reported the department has invested in trailers to assist with addressing the speed of traffic in neighbors. He indicated these trailers also gather information for the department which helps with assessing concerns in the neighborhoods.

Councilmember Allen stated he appreciated the great work being conducted by the Public Safety Department. He reported 2/3 of traffic stops result in warnings and 1/3 result in a ticket. Paetznick reported this was the case.

Councilmember Allen commented on the concerns there were with traffic stops at this time. He appreciated how the department was working to educate and work with local mechanics to get vouchers for vehicle owners that needed simple fixes to their vehicles.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas requested further comment regarding the morale of the public safety team. She thanked the public safety team for their hard work on behalf of the community. Paetznick stated he appreciated the support of the City Council at this time. He reported there has been a tremendous pendulum swing when it comes to how law enforcement was viewed by society. He explained these were challenging times and stated local law enforcement agencies were just one part of a complex criminal justice system. He reported his department was working diligently to keep the public safe and there was only so many things he can control. He indicated his officers were trying to keep their heads up and doing their job the best they can. He stated he was concerned about his officers morale and understood there were significant vacancies throughout the metro area and state of Minnesota. He commented further on a discussion he had recently with the Patrol Advisory Team and how they were working to enhance the job. He stated he hopes for brighter days and noted his officers would continue to do great work for the community.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas thanked Public Safety Director Paetznick for his presentation.

Worksession adjourned at 6:25 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Sandra Daniloff  
Deputy City Clerk