

**CITY OF UNIVERITY HEIGHTS
MINUTES OF SAFETY COMMITTEE
OCTOBER 3, 2022**

DRAFT

The Safety Committee met on October 3, 2022. The following were present:

Justin Gould, Chair
Vice Mayor Michele Weiss
Councilman Chris Cooney
Councilman Brian King
Fire Chief Robert Perko
Police Chief Justin Rogers
Clerk of Council Kelly Thomas
Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan (joined shortly after opening)

Chair Justin Gould called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Agenda Items

1. Discussion regarding traffic and pedestrian signals throughout the City

The matter of traffic and pedestrian signals throughout the city was discussed. Mr. Gould noted that there had been a citizen inquiry regarding same and that the issue of repairing the signals had been a concern as well as the maintenance of pedestrian crossings. Mr. Gould stated that it would be helpful to understand the process and know what would be needed and the cost in view of the pending budget review. Chief Rogers was recognized for comment.

Chief Rogers explained that a longtime employee used to routinely monitor the condition of the signals and pedestrian crossing signals but since his resignation, it was decided to proceed with Signal Service to provide the maintenance and repair. Chief Rogers stated that the areas have not been maintained or replaced as expected. He added that there has been a tremendous effort working with Signal Services to have a comprehensive assessment of the signs and signals. There is a need at this time to replace and upgrade by utilizing better technology. Chief Rogers stated that when the police department is informed that there is a problem, Signal Service is contacted. Signal Service provides this type of specialized service to many and may not be able to assist the city immediately based on priority, i.e., an accident may have occurred elsewhere and the service may be more critical.

The issue of preemption, a safety system that accommodates the direction that public safety vehicles are traveling to adjust turn signals, was discussed. It was mentioned that the acoustic

system is in disrepair which hinders proper monitoring. Chief Rogers stated that he has met with GPD, the Mayor's office and traffic engineering professionals. Chief Rogers referred to a 2017 grant that was applied for, suggesting that perhaps that would be an option to assist with this project. He stated that the scope of that project has to be reviewed. He reported that it was discovered last year that work needs to be done city wide on 20 intersections and that administration is putting forth efforts to obtain all the needed quotes about union information and technology options.

Mr. Gould recalled that preemptive systems were discussed during the last budget cycle. He asked whether any neighboring communities have installed or have plans to install a system that could be coordinated with University Heights so that access would be easier. Chief Rogers reported that it is his understanding that South Euclid may be considering an optical system; Cleveland Heights is waiting on Beachwood because they recently decided to go with a certain type of technology which may be radio or GPS based. He stated that these would be good options.

Mr. Gould suggested that a regional approach to NOACA requesting funding for all three cities may be more effective than our city requesting solo. Mr. Gould asked Chief Rogers to prioritize requests into critical, urgent and necessary so that there is data to provide to the Finance Committee for the budget cycle. Chief Rogers stated that information has been provided to the Finance Department. He stated that if all 20 controllers were replaced, the cost would be approximately \$100,000 and that preemption is also a consideration. He stated that these are rough estimates based on doing all 20 intersections in the city. Mr. Gould stated that he is interested in what the Chiefs would define as priority, i.e., the intersection of Warrensville and Silsby, the intersection of Silsby and South Taylor, and/or the area where complaints have been received such as the area of South Belvoir and Cedar. Mr. Gould requested that Chief Rogers provide information to Vice Mayor Weiss and him about the cost of each intersection in the city,

Vice Mayor Weiss asked about the cost – is it \$250 to 300 thousand for everything nuts to bolts? Chief Rogers stated no, that that amount is just for production and referred to an amount of \$3.2 billion quoted in a 2017 grant; this would cover the cost of replacing every type of component at every intersection. He noted that since then, the scope of the grant has changed and it may not cover all of the items that were originally indicated. Mrs. Weiss asked about the effect of neighboring cities when a signal is installed; she asked if the city makes a change and Beachwood, as an example, does not, she wondered if that would affect us. Reference was made to the signal at Silsby and Green and Beachwood Road that borders the two cities; Beachwood is responsible for that signal. Chief Rogers stated that it could but he is not saying that it will. He explained that what preemption does is create better traffic flow for public safety vehicles. Mrs. Weiss asked if Shaker Heights had been approached. **(Chief Rogers' response was inaudible)**

In response to Mrs. Weiss question regarding whether these costs are included in the capital asset schedule for the Police Department, Chief Rogers stated yes; Mrs. Weiss requested that the amounts be updated.

Mr. Gould thanked Chief Rogers for the information and added that the prioritization to be provided by both Chief Rogers and Chief Perko will be helpful.

2. Motion to Adopt Cuyahoga County All Hazards Mitigation Plan

Mr. Gould stated that Chief Perko has explained in detail that the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 requires that the city adopt a plan to remain compliant. Chief Perko stated that each year the city's capabilities are reviewed.

Motion by Mr. Gould, second by Mr. King to recommend that Council as a Whole approves the adoption of the Cuyahoga County All Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Mr. Cooney asked if the city had a contingency plan in the event services are unavailable and whether the plan has been tested. Chief Perko described the plan and stated that it is a best practice program.

On roll call on the motion to recommend that Council as a Whole approves the adoption of the Cuyahoga County All Hazard Mitigation Plan, all voted "aye".

3. Motion to accept FY21 FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant

Mr. Gould stated that Chief Perko has detailed this item in a memo to Council. It was pointed out that the grant was previously approved to update the city's equipment and also for training firefighters and to enhance the safety of the public as well as directly benefit firefighters and agencies that are eligible for the grant. On August 26, 2022 the Fire Department received the official notification of an \$80,000 grant approval for the FY 21 FEMA grant. This action is for acceptance of that grant. Chief Perko noted that this program is anticipated to take four years to complete the certified technical rescue operation and this is the third year.

Mr. Gould asked if the \$3,809 amount of matched funding is within an existing budget item that has not yet been spent or if an additional amount needs to be allocated, and if training funds are still available. Chief Perko stated that funds are still available.

Motion by Mr. Gould, second by Mr. Cooney, to recommend the acceptance of the FY21 FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant, including the expenditure of the matching funding amount indicated in the memo. On roll call, all voted "aye".

Mr. Gould applauded Chief Perko for his continued successful efforts in obtaining this particular grant as well as others.

4. Discussion regarding use of Ready/Notify Code Red alert system and police activity/violent crime reporting.

Mr. Gould referred to a memo that Chief Perko issued regarding the general uses for the ready/notify code red alert system which are: weather emergencies, other disasters, major emergencies that need to be reported,

Both Chief Perko and Chief Rogers were asked to discuss how, if at all, the system has been used and ways that they would use if there is a policy within the departments. There was discussion regarding same as the procedure was explained. Chief Perko referenced a memo presented at the November 19, 2019 Council meeting regarding this. A representative from the County EMA office conducted a presentation at that time and explained Code Red, which is the software platform being used to issue announcements.

Concern was expressed that calls should be made for real emergencies and that residents would tire of receiving general announcements often and would eventually ignore the calls. Mrs. Weiss stated that she believes that Code Red should be used for emergencies and hazards exclusively. It was pointed out that the general notifications can be opted out and only emergency issues can be accepted. It was explained that residents can log in and select what they will accept.

Mr. Gould asked if the Chief would be willing to work with Mr. Cook to remind people how to sign up for Code Red and also let people know the levels of notification; perhaps a community announcement could be made. It was suggested that something can be included in the Mayor's Friday wrap up. It was also suggested that notice be made in the new resident section of the website. Mr. Gould felt that a reminder would be helpful to remind citizens that they can sign up and/or opt out of notifications. Mayor Brennan agreed that it would be a good idea to include in the Friday wrap up to notify citizens that they can sign up for emergency and non-emergency notices.

Councilman Gould discussed the matter of car break-ins in driveways when residents have not locked cars. He suggested that a community notice be sent out, not necessarily as an emergency to residents when these often-patterned events occur to alert citizens. This would not only advise them of the incidents taking place at the time, but also provide a reminder to be more vigilant. Discussion continued regarding how and when citizens would be notified as these violations occur including working with the Mayor's office and the safety forces considering the effects of media involvement.

5. Discussion regarding data trends with vehicle thefts

Mr. Gould discussed the different types of crimes as vehicle entries and rumblings, vehicle burglaries, and violent carjackings. Chief Rogers was asked to discuss the trends he has found. It was noted that there has been a 4% decrease in robbery incidents from last year to this year, and vehicle theft has increased. Efforts to communicate with residents through the Mayor's office to remove valuables from cars are being made; perhaps via the weekly wrap-up.

Vice Mayor Weiss recalled that when there was heightened activity, five instead of four patrol cars were out at night and she wondered if that was being considered. Chief Rogers stated that recently additional resources were in the field.

Councilman Gould thanked Chief Rogers for efficiency in handling the challenging situations.

6. Discussion and review of safety force preparation for, response to, and communication about high-incident weekend/events.

Mr. Gould stated that this is part one of the discussion and noted that a member from Chagrin Valley Communications, the city's new partner for 911 services, has been invited. Reference was made to the July 4th weekend noting that this was the first-time fireworks were generally legal in the State of Ohio, but University Heights opted out. A communication from Chagrin Valley that wasn't aligned with either the laws of University Heights or the expectations of service that the city's safety forces and citizens expect. The message was not to call them if someone is setting off fireworks. It was noted that to have fireworks going off in a densely populated community like University Heights, it is not only illegal, but threatens the fire safety. The city's safety forces did respond to the calls that came in complaining of fireworks being set off and Mr. Gould thanked them for their response.

Chief Rogers was asked to discuss what the department does in preparation for such high-incident events such as JCU homecoming, St. Patrick's Day, the High Holy Days. etc. and how the occurring events are responded to. Chief Rogers reported that field resources are enhanced and collaboration with dispatch during these events takes place. Coordination with other entities – police departments, private security, is also done to make sure information sharing is in full effect. Chairman Gould stated that during that weekend, a phenomenal job was done by the Chief in providing an amended phone number so that calls could be handled so that residents could report concerns about fireworks.

Chief Perko was asked when it comes to fire safety if there are certain weekends that he prepares for. Chief Perko stated that historically he knows that fires often occur during the holidays where there are large gatherings and people cooking. **Inaudible comments**

Vice Mayor Weiss asked Chief Rogers if John Carroll University (JCU) interacts with the city's police force. Chief Rogers stated that JCU has protocols in place. He noted that the department follows up with them on a regular basis, providing them with information received regarding injuries. Chief Rogers stated that the department communicates with the police chief at JCU as well as the Catholic offices so there is a constant stream of sharing information,

Motion by Mr. Gould, second by Mr. King to amend the agenda to add a discussion regarding the Ohio Opioid Settlement. All voted "aye".

Mr. Gould stated that he is still waiting on additional documentation as to what has been received (addressing Chief Perko and Chief Rogers).

Chief Rogers and Chief Perko reported that there are a lot of available resources for this, but people aren't aware. He noted that Cuyahoga County has overdose bookmarks with phone numbers for 24-hour mental health help, crisis hotline, etc. Collaboration with Project DAWN (Deaths Avoided with Naloxone) and other resources needs to be done to get this information out to the city. Cuyahoga County provides free resources. Mention was made of a \$2,000 grant received which could be used to develop a flyer or some form of communication for the city's residents so they are aware. It was noted that this is a valuable resource and the incidents of overdose is universal; it happens everywhere and we should be able to educate our residents.

Mr. Gould stated that he will talk with the Law Director and this issue will be discussed next month.

The meeting adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

Submitted by,

Jeune Drayton
Asst. Clerk of Council

Justin Gould, Chair
Safety Committee

