

Item 24-0321: Police Department Annual Report

Safety and Licensing Committee

Wed, Mar 27, 2024 5:30PM

Alderman Alex Schultz (District 9) 32:18

Okay, that brings us to information items 24-0321 Police Department annual report. Director two. Thank you, Chief Olson.

Police Chief Polly Olson 32:31

Thank you Chair. I hope you've all had a chance to take a look at the annual report. I'm just going to hit some highlights for you, and then I certainly can answer any questions that you might have. I want to point out that we had \$338,000 in grant money that we received that we used to offset the costs of some of our OWI and other traffic grants as well as some work with methamphetamine and heroin. We received over \$53,000 in donations to support our canine program.

Police Chief Polly Olson 33:06

Our front desk staff received over 62,000 calls on our non-emergency lines. And why that's, I think, important and relevant is that those are calls that if we didn't have the front staff there, they would get sent over to the communication center for the Sheriff's Department and certainly that's a huge burden for them to take on in terms of sheer number and volume of calls to answer.

Police Chief Polly Olson 33:30

Our officers handled over 64,000 calls for service in 2023 including over 13,000 traffic stops that were conducted and more than 600 arrests for drunk driving. Overall, we saw a decrease in our part one crimes. Burglaries were down significantly.

Police Chief Polly Olson 33:48

Our weapons complaints remain steady, however, at 59. And to give you some context, in 2020, we had 39 complaints in '21 we had 62, and then last year, we had 55.

Police Chief Polly Olson 34:04

Our patrol staff and investigators investigated two homicides in 2023. They had 10 suicides, suicide investigations, and 12 overdose deaths that were related to some type of drug.

Police Chief Polly Olson 34:18

We continue to see a downward trend in the number of mental health detentions that were being completed. That doesn't necessarily mean that our mental health related calls are going down. It just means that we're finding other ways to handle those calls for service through the utilization of our community crisis response team, finding alternative solutions to placement in hospitalization and for those people that are experiencing a mental health crisis.

Police Chief Polly Olson 34:42

Our officer wellness remains a priority. We continue to mandate yearly check ins with our licensed clinician for our team. Our team works together to explore opportunities for education and team building activities, and this is key for officer retention and to ensure the chance that the—our officers can live a long and healthy career.

Police Chief Polly Olson 35:02

The demand for special events continues to increase. In 2023 our team processed and planned for 102 special events.

Police Chief Polly Olson 35:10

Our school resource officers continue to focus on relationship building within their respective schools. They place a priority on addressing behaviors early and often to divert from the criminal justice system. They are creative with considering alternatives to punitive outcomes from poor decision making.

Police Chief Polly Olson 35:29

Our Traffic Safety Unit is comprised of one officer. So, I find I find it kind of funny that we call it a unit, but I think we're setting the stage hopefully to be able to add to that unit in the future. He maximizes his effectiveness with engaging additional officers when time permits. And then our grant detail officers just addressing strategically, you know, areas of concern or where we get our traffic complaints, and they a lot of times will work together to again, try to curb whatever the issue is.

Police Chief Polly Olson 36:00

Our officers used force during 85 calls for service in 2023. Considering like I mentioned previously, that we responded over to over 64,000 calls for service, I think that's pretty remarkable. Of the use of force that was used, the vast majority of the time, it just involves a decentralization technique.

Police Chief Polly Olson 36:21

We continue to maintain a strong social media presence. And if you don't follow us, you should. Do you have any questions?

Alderman Alex Schultz (District 9) 36:34

Committee have any questions?

Alderman William Siebers (District 1) 36:35

I do.

Alderman Alex Schultz (District 9) 36:37

Alderman Siebers.

Alderman William Siebers (District 1) 36:38

I have a couple questions. In regards to overdose deaths, we don't know if there's a specific drug that is more prevalent than the other drugs in regards to these?

Police Chief Polly Olson 36:54

Yes, sometimes we do. It's—sometimes it's challenging to discern that. Many times, what they'll see is a mixed drug. So, it might be a combination of a couple different drugs that can contribute to an overdose. And that's the data that most often is held by the by the coroner's office in the county. But if we do become privy of say the drug results, and if we're able to specifically account for a certain drug, you know, I would say it's still most likely going to be a fentanyl or something like that.

Alderman William Siebers (District 1) 37:26

My second question. Gotta help me understand this. We have two districts.

Wed, Mar 27, 2024

Police Chief Polly Olson 37:33

We have three districts.

Aldersperson William Siebers (District 1) 37:34

We have three districts, 30 officers in each district?

Police Chief Polly Olson 37:39

We have 30 officers on each team. So, we have a blue team and a red team. Because our officers work what's called the Pitman schedule where they work 50% of the year, and so they don't often see each other they basically split—split time is one way to kind of picture it. So, we have 30 officers on each team, 60 officers total in patrol for three districts.

Aldersperson William Siebers (District 1) 38:04

Okay. How many weekends does an officer, a patrol officer, work over the course of the month?

Police Chief Polly Olson 38:13

They work every other weekend.

Aldersperson William Siebers (District 1) 38:15

Every other? Okay. Okay. How many—how many officers are on at one given time?

Police Chief Polly Olson 38:28

Well, depends on the time of day. So, if you're looking at between 3pm and 3am, that's when we have our maximum staffing, usually about 12 officers—could be between 12 and 15. 12 is generally minimum-ish. Once it hits three o'clock in the morning, between three o'clock in the morning and seven o'clock in the morning, our minimum staffing is six officers.

Aldersperson William Siebers (District 1) 38:53

12 officers is adequate?

Police Chief Polly Olson 38:55

Oh, it's not adequate, but it's what we have.

Aldersperson William Siebers (District 1) 38:58

Okay. And if somebody calls in sick or is on vacation, what happens?

Police Chief Polly Olson 39:03

Generally speaking, we look for volunteers to hold over to cover staffing. If we can't do that, sometimes we'll try to call somebody in. If that can't happen, then we'll force somebody to stay and work overtime.

Aldersperson William Siebers (District 1) 39:14

I just think it's unbelievable that we have dedicated officers that are willing to work and give up their time every other weekend. That is unbelievable. If we added some officers like we've talked about in the future in the past, would that change at all in terms of, you know, maybe making their schedules better where they're now working every other weekend?

Police Chief Polly Olson 39:43

Quite frankly, I doubt it. I think that if we got to a point (and hopefully we can get there with the staffing study that I'm hoping we can get approval for over the next year) that the staffing would supplement patrol, and quite frankly we would raise our minimum staffing to provide just an increased service to the community where I think needs to happen. The every other weekend, I think would still happen, but we would probably see some relief in our forced overtime, certainly, and be a little bit more accommodating for time off request instead of denying them due to staffing.

Alderman William Siebers (District 1) 40:21

Okay. Well, I just applaud your department and all officers for the work they do and the time they put in. It's awesome.

Police Chief Polly Olson 40:31

We appreciate that.

Alderman Alex Schultz (District 9) 40:35

I have a question, and it just relates to fentanyl and opioid use. As you're putting the report together and seeing like declines in crime and things that are typically related to that kind of activity, how do you feel we're doing as a community getting our heads around both of those crises? And where do you think we need to put more energy to—if we do—to focus in on those some more?

Police Chief Polly Olson 40:56

Yeah, I think that's a that's a great question. It is actually a little bit surprising to see the decrease in the property crimes given that I don't necessarily think we've seen a decrease in the drug related crimes. So, I'm not I'm not exactly sure how we can account for that. Generally speaking, we know that those property related crimes are what drives—or is driven by the drug related crimes, right? People trying to feed whatever, you know, drug addiction that they have.

Police Chief Polly Olson 41:27

But as far as putting resources in, you know, we have one investigator that's assigned to our multi-county drug unit. The work that that individual does is—they're very, very busy. When I talked to him the other night, in fact, I think he was already at 27 hours of overtime for the week. And, you know, if there were additional resources that could be placed into being able to add officers to that unit to do that kind of work, I mean, I definitely think that there would be value in that. Quite honestly, as I just mentioned, when answering Alder Siebers' question, you know, if I were to be given extra resources to add staff in general, that would still have to go to the patrol unit as a as a priority, just to accommodate the growth that's happening in the city of Appleton.

Alderman Alex Schultz (District 9) 42:16

I appreciate that. Alder Siebers.

Alderman William Siebers (District 1) 42:20

I know at one point in time in the past, we talked a lot about gangs. Where are we in this community in regards to gangs?

Police Chief Polly Olson 42:34

Yeah, you know, we haven't really been seeing the gang activity like you're referring to when I got started, basically, as an officer here 23 years ago. Gangs were very prevalent, and we're not necessarily seeing the gang activity in in the traditional sense that we had in Appleton in the past. I'm not saying that or suggesting that

there aren't—isn't any gang activity happening. I'm sure that there is. It just doesn't seem to be having as much of an influence on some of the criminal behavior that is happening around here like it had in the past.

Aldersperson William Siebers (District 1) 43:08

Thank you.

Aldersperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 43:11

Well, I would think that what you and your staff have been doing over time here probably has something to do with reduced crime as well. So, community outreach, changing some of the roles that police officers play in trying to address the mental health versus incarceration, I think that is making a difference. So, I really appreciate that. I think one of your most notable accomplishments is saving 150 ducklings this year. So, I want to make sure that you keep those numbers up. Is there anything else from the committee on this report? Go ahead, Alder Van Zeeland.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 43:41

Thank you. Chair. Can you talk a little bit about officer wellness and how things are going on that front? It—we started touch on it here, but are we seeing anything that's worrisome or anything where we think we need to divert some funding?

Police Chief Polly Olson 43:55

Yeah, you know, I think just being able to continue to grow the grow the funding, or at least maintaining a funding source so that we can continue on with our regular clinician checks, I think definitely has to stay a priority. Some of the other things—you know, we have a wellness committee and they work on chipping away at providing other opportunities for staff such as whether it would be training things or, for example, the stretch lab came in a few weeks ago and, you know, provided free stretches for the staff. We do things like—I know the fire department has saunas. So, we've had requests from staff about being able to bring in something like that. Maintaining our fitness equipment is obviously very important. Um, we actually had a massage therapist come in and do chair massages. We just tried to do all—you know, it sounds kind of silly, but those are the things that we can continue to do, a lot of times using volunteers to come in and provide for our staff. In the past, we've done yoga classes. But anything that we can do to encourage physical fitness and physical wellness as well as mental health wellness, I think is really important. But that includes, again, you know, even just our training budget is usually where we pull from when we want to bring in additional folks to accommodate some of those things.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 45:30

Can I follow up?

Aldersperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 45:31

Sure.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 45:32

What about equipment? You know, I've heard that those belts are really heavy, and that people, you know, physically have issues they have to deal with because of carrying that equipment. Is there a better equipment that's available? Are those things that we look at regularly?

Police Chief Polly Olson 45:49

Yeah, we're actually exploring something right now, ironically. We're looking at exploring some more load bearing vest gear for our staff. Unfortunately, as it stands right now, we're looking for grant money, but we

would have to have the officer pay for the vest carriers because we just don't have the funds in our budget to pay for them. But we're looking at getting just a rifle plates, which we would be able to purchase out of the \$50,000 PPE budget that was approved, I think back in '17 or '18. So that is one thing.

Police Chief Polly Olson 46:22

The new vest that we're looking at actually contains a pocket that the rifle plate could just slide into and out of. So, some officers could actually choose to wear it all of the time during their shift to give them extra protection. Or if they would choose not to, then they could very easily slip it in and out in any type of active shooter situation that would require it. The gear that we have right now is very, very heavy. It's very difficult for officers to put on especially over the top of all the rest of the gear that they're wearing. So, we're trying to find alternative solutions to that.

Police Chief Polly Olson 46:22

It's a lighter alternative for our officers to be able to wear and to don. It's to replace the kits that we purchased, again, five years ago that are now expiring—the PPE. So that would be a kit that an officer would put on if they would—if we would have like a active shooter situation, they would put that over their existing gear.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 47:22

It makes me uncomfortable to hear that we'd ask our officers to pay for those things out of their own pocket. So, I'm happy that we're going to look for alternatives that way and you know, even perhaps, maybe our insurance company and things would reward us for doing better health wise by our officers. Thank you.

Aldersperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 47:45

Anything else from staff? Anything else from committee? Okay.