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## Public Safety & Justice Affairs Committee Meeting

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Agency: [Cuyahoga County Council](#)

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### Summary

- New Cuyahoga County Sheriff Harold Pretel briefed the committee about his first 77 days, outlining projects, staffing levels, etc.
- Committee Chair Michael Gallagher expressed concerns regarding the Cuyahoga County [Diversion Center](#) not living up to its purpose of alleviating the pressure on the jail by diverting people out of the courts/jail and instead is operating primarily as a mental health services center available to anyone.
- [Diversion Board](#) Member Brandy Carney (also the county's chief of Public Safety & Justice) explained that the [Cuyahoga County Alcohol, Drug, Addiction and Mental Health Services Board \(ADAMHS\)](#) has plans to open a crisis center in partnership with MetroHealth. Carney said she has no concerns about its ability to continue to manage the diversion center. *[Editor's note: The ADAMHS Board was not going to renew its contract to manage the center [but is reconsidering](#)].*

### Follow-Up Questions

- What is the fate of the diversion center in light of the [potential new jail location](#) and the pending ADAMHS Board contract and the partnership with MetroHealth?
- How much more involvement will the Cuyahoga County Sheriff's Department have within Cleveland neighborhoods? Plans for expansion?

### Notes

Meeting started at 1:04 p.m.

#### Committee Members:

Michael J. Gallagher, chair

Yvonne M. Conwell, vice chair

Scott Tuma

Patrick Kelly

Council Member Dale Miller also attended.

No public comments (no one was signed up).

**Sheriff Harold Pretel** presented on his first 77 days in office.

- Added new staff: Special Assistant James Repicky, Jail Warden Jeremy Everett, Chief Deputy Aaron Reese. The sheriff gave an overview of each person's experience.

### **Major sheriff's operations:**

#### **Corrections Center**

- Staffing: Corrections officers 644/725; corporals 43/46; sergeants 23/26; lieutenants 7/8 *[Editor's note: These staffing numbers indicate the number currently staffed versus the amount budgeted for].*
- 68 still completing the academy / probation (this number is included in the 644)
- A final hiring event for 2023 is planned for this month
- Three job coaches, looking to adding one more
- There will be a GED graduation via Zoom with families and officials in attendance
- The [Towards Employment](#) cohort graduated last month
- Mail scanning program since September allows corrections officers to save lives, Pretel said. One less way to introduce fentanyl and other poisons into the facility. A "terrific program."
- Consolidating medical treatment into common housing areas.
- Camera project expanding into Mental Health Unit "so that we can all lay eyes on things, maybe before they develop"
- Consolidation of all food preparation functions
- Working on a plan to reduce healthcare costs as well as a re-entry tool for those suffering from substance abuse
- An elevator modernization plan is 95% complete
- Canine-enhanced narcotic detection screening measures at entry points set for deployment later this year (in talks with county law department, human resources, and unions about what happens when a dog gives an alert on an individual.
- Added an expectant mother's housing unit ([showed pictures of the new space](#)) to be completed this Friday (Oct. 6)

#### **Emergency room runs and hospital details**

- Year-to-date: 833 deployments (EMS: 660, patrol car: 173)
- State legislation now allows corrections officers to do hospital runs and guard inmates at a hospital.

### **Court security officers**

- Considered supplemental force on site

### **Deputy sheriffs**

- Budgeted for 180, fully staffed. “Hundreds who would like to join us.” The county is an “attractive employer of choice in the law enforcement community,” Pretel said.
- Downtown Safety Patrol -- an operation in Cleveland -- is in its eighth week and very well received, Pretel said. Have seized more firearms than any law enforcement in Northeast Ohio. “Downtown is the core of our county.” Other communities will be added as they get additional staffing. *[Editor’s note: The Downtown Safety Patrol, formed in August, had [seized more than a dozen guns as of Sept. 1.](#)]*
- Cadet program open to any sheriff’s department employee who is not a deputy sheriff but wants to be one.
- Protective service officers staffing: 92 of 101 budgeted, a force multiplier at county buildings, recently seized weapons intended to be brought into the Justice Center. Going to add to other locations, including the Family Justice Center and the Welcome Center for immigrants.

### **Questions:**

**Kelly** - Heard that there was a possibility that deputies do not have enough vehicles.

**Pretel** - “We are very tight on cars.”

**Tuma** - Are there any capital works projects in the works at the jail?

**Pretel** mentioned the elevator enhancement and expectant mothers’ wing.

**Tuma** - “What has your relationship been like with the county executive?”

**Pretel** - “It’s been a good relationship.”

**Tuma** asked how has the relationship been with MetroHealth re: transporting people to the hospital.

**Pretel** - "It's been a working relationship." "They have their challenges just like any other facility or industry." "They certainly do strive to support us."

**Tuma** asked if Pretel was comfortable with using county officers for transportation in terms of staffing.

**Pretel** - "I have no concerns with that whatsoever." Not for every officer. There is a vetting process to select the officers to perform that function. Good with proper training.

**Miller** - They are in the process of revamping the way the county gathers data about the jail. There's been a problem in the past.

**Pretel** - "The system currently in place is dated." They have to cobble together the data. Whatever council needs will be provided. Has a [request for proposal \(RFP\)](#) coming out for a new jail management data system.

**Miller** asked what actions are in place to help reduce the jail population.

**Pretel** - The [centralized booking project](#) will help with that. Had discussions with the judges (Common Pleas and Municipal).

**Miller** - "Where do we stand on bail reform? Are we making any progress on that?"

**Pretel** - That is something that is ongoing. Those who are properly charged and high-level offenders are not being released too soon; their bail is appropriate. Those with low-level offenses are being released.

**Conwell** requested clarification on Pretel's comment that they are tight on cars.

**Pretel** - "Could always use a few more." More hospital details will require more cars. Would like a larger margin for error (accidents, maintenance, etc.)

**Conwell** - "Do we maintain our own cars?"

**Pretel** - That is done by county motor vehicle maintenance.

**Conwell** asked about the number of vehicles in the fleet.

**Pretel** did not know. Order in for 10 by the end of the year.

**Conwell** asked how the order was being paid.

**Pretel** - The General Fund.

**Gallagher** - What happened to [XJail](#)?

**Pretel** - "It just kind of folded." "It didn't have the support it should have."

**Gallagher** - That was supposed to be the answer to computerizing the jail. Asked if Pretel had reviewed any of the meetings with the [Justice Center Steering Committee](#) going back five years. Not sure if it's wise to go out with an RFP without knowing if the chosen solution will be compatible with the new jail. Asked, "What is a Job Coach?"

**Pretel** explained they assist officers with issues that are job related, HR, childcare, medical problems, etc.

**Gallagher** asked if they still use Tri-C on de-escalation training for new recruits.

**Pretel** - Yes.

**Gallagher** returned to the staffing component and asked "Why can't Cleveland do that?" (attract law enforcement employees)

**Pretel** - Series of issues for them to work through.

**Gallagher** - "Is the pay commensurate?"

**Pretel** - "It's close." "I don't think it's that."

**Gallagher** asked about his meeting with the [Cleveland City Council Public Safety Committee](#).

**Pretel** - "We are in a partnership along with the [Ohio State] Highway Patrol, the [U.S.] Marshal Service. It's a team effort."

**Gallagher** - "How many officers have we put into the downtown patrols and cars?"

**Pretel** - Eight deputies, one sergeant, and two canines.

**Gallagher** - "How many extra has Cleveland put in?"

**Pretel** - "They're at a deficit. They were supposed to be at 45 and they're at the low 20's."

**Gallagher** - "How much is this costing us per week?"

**Pretel** - Didn't know but "it's in the budget." The "magic number" is still 180 (total number of officers for staffing) same as it was decades ago even though there are new functions and tasks that exist now.

**Gallagher** mentioned that at the Cleveland City Council Public Safety Committee someone said, “He wanted to see more of you down there.” He wondered “Why this is not being asked of his own police chief.”

**Pretel** stated that they do make those requests at the council meetings. He sees the Downtown Patrol Unit as the county helping a municipality like it would if Rocky River or Maple Heights asked for extra assistance.

**Gallagher** - “We’re eight weeks deep into this and doing Cleveland’s job for them with other partners, which I understand,” he said. “We’re at a point where...the pin’s going to get pulled. I need to see cooperation from Cleveland.”

**Pretel** - Cleveland officers do participate on various task forces, etc.

**Gallagher** - Asked on a scale of A through F, “Where are we at with the jail?”

**Pretel** - B+

#### **Diversion center:**

**Gallagher** had requested board members to be present.

#### **Diversion Board Member Brandy Carney and Vice Chair Crystal Bryant presented and answered questions**

**Gallagher** asked, “What are you seeing? What is working? What’s not working? What can we help you with?”

**Bryant** - “The diversion center is a newer concept for Cuyahoga County.” What has been working is the collaborative effort across partners and agencies. Cleveland officers training to leverage the center is happening slowly but better than under the previous mayoral administration.

**Tuma** asked for an example of what Justin Bibb’s administration does differently compared to Mayor Frank Jackson’s administration.

**Bryant** - Issue with cell phones. Previously they said officers could not use personal cell phones. Bibb’s administration reversed that policy and will provide cell phones if necessary to help remove that barrier to referring people to the center.

(Scott S. Osiecki, from the ADAMHS Board, was in the audience.)

**Miller** asked how many Cleveland residents use the diversion center.

**Carney** - Didn't have that information.

**Miller** asked if there is a positive trend on people using the diversion center versus going to jail.

**Carney** - There's been positive use of the diversion center, but it is not where they want to be in terms of police drop-offs. Anyone is allowed to use the facility.

**Gallagher** stated, "It's not working like we want it to." The center is not in the most optimum location. There has to be more collaborative effort with the police department. "And in a desperate attempt to bump up the numbers, we opened it up to anybody and their brother that wanted to come in, which wasn't its intended purpose." Mentioned there were people that used it as a wedge. There seems to be an issue with management. He also wants to meet with Osiecki.

Carney - Presentation

- Located on East 55th Street. Do not own the building, Oriana House owns it. The center is available to any agency in the county, 24/7/365
- Completely voluntary, maximum stay is nine days, target is five days depending on treatment (detoxification and mental illness stabilization services)
- Purpose is pre-arrest diversion from jail/criminal justice system to receive immediate, direct services that support long-term recovery and community re-engagement.
- Work with FrontLine Service and ADAMHS Board
- Certified by the Ohio Mental Health & Addiction Services
- Onsite staff includes nurses, psychiatrists, social workers and counselors, behavioral health specialists, and recovery coaches. Oriana House has contracted with University Hospitals to help with medical services.
- They now allow two smoking areas outside.
- Takes a long time for a culture change to increase participation with law enforcement

- Call center number of calls = 2,827 from May 2021 through July 2023 (22% from police, 78% from community members, self-referrals, other agencies) Intakes = 1,362.
- 30-40 people a day in the center during summer was common
- Management contract (with ADAMHS) ends 12/31, RFP was sent out and closed. ADAMHS will be opening a crisis center with MetroHealth at the St. Vincent Charity location. They have been in discussions to ensure collaborative efforts to not duplicate services. Only had one reply to the RFP. It was Oriana House.
- They have been working as a crisis center because it is not solely criminal justice.

**Tuma** asked why there is a difference of opinion between Carney and Gallagher on the state of the center.

**Carney** - There has been steady growth. The law enforcement piece is challenging. But it's starting to move.

**Tuma** - "What steps has your office taken in respect to reaching out to departments and municipalities?"

**Carney** explained that the ADAMHS Board handles the training, marketing, notification and awareness to the police department.

**Tuma** asked if there is a concern with respect to what the ADAMHS Board's plans are? Backing out of it and doing their own thing with MetroHealth, re: duplication of services, etc.

**Carney** stated that's why they're meeting to make sure they're not duplicating services. They pay for three ADAMHS Board trainers to do the work. But if they're not part of the center, she has no concerns about them being able to move forward and operate as they have.

**Gallagher** - It is not a true diversion center. The point was to divert people from the courts and jail. It's a mental health services building disguised as a diversion center. He's concerned about the court aspect. Have to have buy-in from police and that's not happening right now.

Live stream halted at 2:25 p.m.

**Additional resources**



Public Safety & Justice Affairs Committee

<http://council.cuyahogacounty.us/en-us/Public-Safety-Justice-Affairs-Committee.aspx>

Cuyahoga County Council Members

<http://council.cuyahogacounty.us/en-US/council-members.aspx>

Cuyahoga County Sheriff's Department

<http://www.cuyahogacounty.us/sheriff/>

Cuyahoga County Website

<https://www.cuyahogacounty.us/>

Cuyahoga County Sheriff Harold Pretel

<https://www.bw.edu/news/2023/spring/07-bw-criminal-justice-grad-named-cyahoga-sheriff>

Cuyahoga County Diversion Center

<https://cuyahogacounty.us/diversion>

<https://www.adamhsc.org/about-us/current-initiatives/cuyahoga-county-diversion-center>

Oriana House

<https://www.orianahouse.org/>

Cuyahoga County Jail Site

<https://www.cleveland.com/metro/2023/09/cuyahoga-county-will-purchase-garfield-heights-site-for-new-jail-the-wake-up-for-wednesday-sept-27-2023.html>

Law Enforcement Officer Shortage

<https://www.cleveland19.com/2023/09/29/cleveland-police-department-down-424-officers-according-budget/>

Cuyahoga County Sheriff's Office Careers

<https://cuyahogacounty.us/sheriff/about-us/careers>

Cleveland Police Recruitment Process

<https://clevelandohio.gov/city-hall/departments/public-safety/police-recruitment-process>

Cuyahoga County Protective Services Officers

<https://fox8.com/news/i-team/county-protective-services-officers-win-fight-over-guns-for-now/>

Downtown Safety Patrols

<https://fox8.com/news/i-team/sheriffs-office-may-make-downtown-cleveland-patrols-permanent/>

Towards Employment

<https://www.towardsemployment.org/>

MHA

<https://mha.ohio.gov/home>

ADAMHS Board - Cuyahoga County

<https://www.adamhsc.org/>

FrontLine Service

<https://www.frontlineservice.org/>

James Repicky

[https://blog.cleveland.com/metro/2011/07/euclid\\_mayor\\_bill\\_cervenik\\_pol.html](https://blog.cleveland.com/metro/2011/07/euclid_mayor_bill_cervenik_pol.html)  
[https://www.cleveland.com/metro/2012/01/euclid\\_police\\_chief\\_ends\\_career.html](https://www.cleveland.com/metro/2012/01/euclid_police_chief_ends_career.html)

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