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Safety Committee

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Agency: [Cleveland City Council](#)

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Summary

- Council continued expressing frustration about the current low staffing levels of police officers after passing a budget some members said provides all the necessary resources for recruitment, etc.
- There was a [PowerPoint presentation](#) briefing of safety preparations for the total solar eclipse event.
- City and county office buildings and CMSD will be closed on the day of the eclipse.

Follow-Up Questions

- How has the Cleveland Division of Police (CDP) addressed council's requests for detailed police reports in light of Marsy's Law? *[Editor's note: Marsy's Law is also known as the Ohio Crime Victims' Bill of Rights, passed in 2017.]*
- What is the status of the contract with Little Jacket and/or the RFP for marketing assistance for police recruitment?

Notes

Meeting started at 10 a.m.

Committee members present:

Michael Polensek, chair

Stephanie Howse-Jones (excused / out of town)

Charles Slife

Richard Starr

Deborah Gray

Danny Kelly

Joseph Jones

Council Members Kris Harsh and Blaine Griffin also attended.

AN [EMERGENCY ORDINANCE](#) Authorizing and directing the Director of Finance to establish a fund for use by the Division of Police to reimburse officers for certain expenditures.

Interim Safety Director Dornat Drummond
Police Chief Dorothy Todd
Deputy Chief Sammy Morris

DISCUSSION:

Polensek explained the legislation: The Director of Finance would allocate \$50,000 to be deposited into the fund and divided between the five police districts, \$10,000 per district. District commanders will handle oversight. Money would be reimbursed for events, parties, community engagement activities, refreshments for meetings, etc. The commanders would be responsible for maintaining receipts. In the past, council members have been asked to contribute their personal funds for community events.

Before approving the legislation, the committee amended it to include food and beverages as example expenses.

Hate crimes update

Slife: We've heard accounts during public comment of hate speech/hate crimes happening in the community. Doesn't have a sense of an uptick of such activities. Requested information regarding the issue and police response.

Todd: Community Relations would provide feedback to the council regarding any such incidents, but we have not seen an uptick throughout the city. The incidents that have been reported are the same few people.

Slife would like to revisit the administration's interpretation of Marsy's Law and its use of it to redact or limit information in safety reports, such as the names of offenders or alleged offenders.

Griffin asked if schools and colleges are providing information about hate crimes and intimidation. Todd said only if they find it relevant and explained that Marsy's Law

protects the victim and some information must be redacted even if it is an internal request.

Drummond also said he has not seen any upticks and, in response to a question from Polensek, said the [recent church fire](#) did not appear to be arson, per conversations the fire chief.

Polensek said the police reports that the council now receives are “worthless” because everything is redacted.

Drummond said he will confer with the Law Department to get to details of how much information is being reported to the council.

Update on the police academy class

Todd: Started with 52 police recruits, plus one fire recruit and one from an outside agency. Currently at 49 recruits. One resigned due to religion, another due to health reasons, and the third due to fitness standards.

Polensek: Budget was allocated for 181 new police officers this year. The mayor said that 600 people had applied. There are 200-plus people eligible to retire. The ability to hire 181 officers is “a fallacy.”

Todd: Interest is renewed and the perception needs to improve. They have to follow up with the 600 individuals to make sure they have taken the test, etc.

Polensek remarked that council had promised to give them everything they asked for, such as the license plate readers, Flock cameras, bonuses, and raising the maximum age of eligibility. He said he is frustrated because the residents are not seeing the visibility of officers.

Drummond said the [RISE initiative](#) has helped.

Jones: What else do you need to think outside the box? The current recruitment efforts are not working. Would like to see HR at the table to help find out what is the impediment.

Drummond said in the past the classes have had 10 to 15 people, and the most recent is 52. So there is improvement. Although there are 600 interested, not all are qualified and pass the exam. The plan is to have another class in the fall.

Jones: Was informed that Little Jacket is the name of the marketing firm that was supposed to assist with recruitment. The council had been told that the firm would be doing the work but they are not. A new RFP will be created to find a new firm. Wants a plan of action from the director with a timeline re: recruitment.

Jones said we should be looking at what Columbus is doing because “what we’re doing...on this side of the table is not working.”

Polensek said he and Griffin met with Little Jacket representatives and were under the impression that they were handling the marketing. It was not an initiative of the Division of Police, it was under the Department of Public Safety. They made some recommendations, cost is a factor, but now they have to put out a new RFP.

Kelly mentioned that it is important for the residents to meet Todd and Drummond directly because of concerns, recent shots being fired in his ward.

Total solar eclipse briefing PowerPoint presentation

The chief of police, head of the Division of Traffic, Special Events coordinator, and deputy chief of police spoke about plans for the Guardians home opening game, Women’s Final Four basketball, and the solar eclipse.

Assistant Director of Public Safety Nicole Carlton: City and county buildings will be closed. 311 will be answering calls. Waste collection will be delayed a day. Willard and Muni lots will open at 5 a.m. CMSD schools will be closed. Recreations centers will be open, and special glasses will be available for residents to enjoy the event.

Provided overview of some events happening during the eclipse. Destination Cleveland website has a full list of events. Advised that people should limit data usage on their cell phones and use wifi whenever possible. Recommend not using your phone to take pictures of the eclipse. There are drop-off locations for the used glasses afterward. There will be congestion in traffic on land and water.

Captain Thomas Mandzak, special events coordinator, said issues may arise at the end of the event with traffic congestion, overcrowding, trespassing, etc. Downtown buildings will

block the view. The lakefront is the most optimal viewing area. Huntington Beach and Edgewater Beach will be covered by Metroparks police.

Polensek was concerned that there will not be enough coverage of parks on the East Side.

Police will be stationed at those locations, a rep said.

All days off (for officers) were canceled for those days so that there will be adequate coverage, Todd said.

Gray asked that tow-away zone signs be posted to warn residents.

Commissioner Gordon Holmes (traffic) gave an overview of road closures and restrictions. The information will be shared online and on TV.

Officials wanted to make sure residents know, “If you see something, say something” and to be prepared for the unexpected because with the large crowd, there could be an incident.

Polensek said the expectation is an additional 140,000 people will come to Cleveland over the weekend.

Adjourned at 12:20 p.m.

Cleveland City Council Members

<https://www.clevelandcitycouncil.org/council/council-members>

Safety Committee

<https://www.clevelandcitycouncil.org/council/committees/safety>

Cleveland Police Academy Class

<https://www.axios.com/local/cleveland/2024/03/25/cleveland-police-academy-class-justin-bibb>

Total Solar Eclipse - Cleveland

<https://clevelandohio.gov/news/total-solar-eclipse-2024-countdown-news-and-updates>

Police Chief Dorothy Todd

<https://www.wkyc.com/article/news/local/cleveland/new-cleveland-police-chief-dorothy-to-dd-sworn-in-mayor-justin-bibb/95-98229663-d123-4a42-888e-1a93550595b5>

Little Jacket

<https://www.little-jacket.com/>

Destination Cleveland

<https://www.thisiscleveland.com/locations/destination-cleveland>

Department of Public Works, Division of Special Events

<https://clevelandohio.gov/city-hall/departments/public-works/divisions/special-events>

Marsy's Law

https://www.marsyslaw.us/about_marsys_law

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