



PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

Chaired by Council Member Victor Jones

Committee Members: Jones, Moore, Williams and Johnson

**OCTOBER 21, 2020 – 4:00 p.m.
COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

MINUTES

As part of the city of High Point's on-going COVID-19 mitigation efforts, in-person attendance will not be allowed at this meeting. Instead, the meeting will be live-streamed and the public can listen to the meeting as it is being live-streamed by clicking on the following link www.HighPointNC.gov/VirtualPublicMeeting

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Victor Jones called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m. Following a virtual roll call by Chairman Jones, the following attendance by Committee Members was duly noted.

Present (3): Chairman Victor Jones, Committee Member Tyrone Johnson, and Committee Member Britt Moore

Absent (1): Committee Member Chris Williams

Staff Present:

Eric Olmedo, Assistant City Manager; Greg Ferguson, Assistant City Manager; Ryan Ferguson, Marketing Manager; Travis Stroud, Interim Police Chief; Major Mark Kun- High Point Police Department; Major Petula Sellars- High Point Police Department; Major Anthro Gamble-High Point Police Department; Mary Brooks, Deputy City Clerk; and Lisa Vierling, City Clerk

2020-404 Presentation-New High Point Police Department Strategic Plan

Staff will share a presentation on the new High Point Police Department's Strategic Plan.

Interim Police Chief Travis Stroud explained that the leadership in the High Point Police Department would be sharing information on the new High Point Police Department's Strategic Plan. He advised that it would be a very loose presentation because they are still in the process of developing it, but felt it was important for them the city leaders to know what the Police Department is doing on a daily basis. Chief Stroud spoke to how the Police Department is 82 days into a new administration since the retirement of former Police Chief

Ken Shultz; how they seized the moment to take on a new direction to focus on some new things. He emphasized that it is a holistic approach and reiterated that they are trying to build something that will go generation to generation to generation.

The Chief spoke to how the Police Department is a professional organization; they keep the community safe; and fight crime. He emphasized the importance of all the officers being on the same page meaning that from the time an officer joins the department to the 30-year veteran everyone would be on the same page about how they are going to operate. The end goal is that there are no questions about what the Police Department is built on. The Chief reiterated that this new strategic plan is a work in progress and explained it will take many months for them to get it in place because they cannot cease operations--they still must serve, protect, and fight crime.

Chief Stroud mentioned that although the mission statement currently on the wall at the Police Department has core values beneath it and is very well-written, there is no ownership of it, so they decided now is the time to seize the moment and rewrite their mission statement to get it more in line with the city's mission statement which is:

"Creating a single most livable, safe and prosperous community in America."

He explained that, clearly, if the Police Department provides the safety, both the livability and the prosperity go up; however, the complete opposite of not providing the safety would almost guarantee that both of those would go down. He then read the mission statement as it is currently worded but noted it could change because they are constantly tweaking it.

"Our mission is to make High Point a safe city by developing leaders, employees, and crime-fighting, community engagement, training, and professional policing."

He then shared the illustration with leadership and development at the base with the following four pillars:

1. Policy
2. Crime Fighting
3. Community
4. Training

He spoke to the importance of having a strong base/foundation because everything moving forward will be built on leadership and employee development. He shared that he wants to develop and find the potential of every single employee because they are looking for long-term employees. He spoke to how retention is one of the biggest goals inside the Police Department.

Chief Stroud noted that he plans on rolling out the new mission statement to every rank and file in the Police Department. He spoke to how every one of the officers should have a servant mind set; how he plans to have every employee take part in the conversation; and how they would constantly reference the "307" moving forward, which is the number of employees at the Police Department (262 sworn positions and 45 civilian); and how they would operate as one group and would not operate individually; how it is all about the group, the mission, the city, providing a safe environment for the community and the officers; and

how they plan to collaborate with the elected officials; and how they can adjust their model depending on what the constituents are sharing with the elected officials.

The Chief then introduced Major Mark Kun and invited him to come up to talk about the Crime Fighting pillar.

Crime Fighting Pillar

Major Marc Kun, who is over the Major Crimes Division (i.e. homicide, robbery, sexual assault) and also over the strategic intelligent units, crime lab, court liaisons, street crimes, vice and narcotics), spoke to how the Police Department first and foremost is a crimefighting organization and how they have to fight crime to maintain a safe community. He reported they will be focusing primarily on violent crime and impact crime and will focus on the following three things moving forward: People, Vehicles, Firearms/Guns.

People: They will focus particularly on the people that are violent offenders and those that are driving the violence in High Point. Major Kun pointed out that they have a big problem right now with people driving around and shooting up people from cars. They will also focus on the armed and dangerous people (the people that are the shooters, influencers, ring leaders, shot callers, chronic offenders, convicted felons, gang members, and gangs in High Point. He spoke to how the chronic offenders, the impact players, the guys that drive the violent crime are the problem in the community and how these offenders generally have long records in the criminal history system.

Vehicles and cars: Major Kun reiterated there have been quite a few drive-by shootings and mentioned one of the most recent homicides that occurred on University Parkway and Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive where shooters in a car opened fire (over 20 times) and shot into another vehicle. He spoke to how this is a very serious problem in High Point and all over the Piedmont Triad area. He noted that most of the vehicles used in the drive-by shootings are stolen or rental vehicles. The car used in the previously mentioned homicide was stolen from Greensboro, used the next day in the homicide, and was found burned in the southside of High Point.

Firearms/Guns: Major Kun shared some statistics. Since January, he reported they have had over 51 guns stolen out of vehicles because people don't lock their cars and 27 guns were seized during traffic stops. Over 333 guns have been seized during the year so far in High Point.

Committee Member Moore asked if the serial numbers are tracked from firearms that are seized to see if they are properly registered and how many of the 51 seized guns were in the vehicle of a legal owner. Major Kun explained they do have an ATF officer that does this on a daily basis and there is an investigation done on every gun seized in High Point. Major Kun stated he was not sure of the exact number, but it was probably quite a few. Chief Stroud noted that almost every gun stolen from vehicles and reported it to the Police Department more than likely were legal gun owners. He further explained that those apprehended during traffic stops are different and emphasized the convicted felons should not be in possession of those weapons and most of the time those weapons are stolen.

Along the same lines, Committee Member Johnson inquired about the percentage of the ones they find in cars during traffic stops, were obtained illegally and the percentage of people that

may or may not know their gun was stolen. Major Kun was not sure about the percentage but noted if you are a legal gun owner and your gun was stolen from your vehicle, then it is very possible 9 times out of 10 that the person is more than likely a convicted felon.

Committee Member Hudson inquired about the ratio of handguns vs. long guns that have been seized. Chief Stroud replied that a majority of what they seize are handguns; however, they are running into more long guns here and there, and they have seen a pretty significant increase in higher caliber rifle rounds being used in shootings.

Chief Stroud added that one of the Police Department's biggest focuses is going to be on violent crime because it would drive the community into the ground if you do not get it under control.

Chief Stroud then introduced Major Petula Sellars and invited her to come forward to present on the Community Engagement pillar.

Community Engagement Pillar

Major Petula Sellars stressed the importance of the community engagement on what the Police Department does every day. She spoke to how they have not done a good job getting the word out to the community or to the elected officials on what they do from a community engagement standpoint. She explained there are school resource officers assigned to the middle and high schools, but there are none in the elementary schools. As a result, the PALS program (Police Assisting Little Schools) was formed and they identified two schools to do a pilot program to see how successful it might be and partnered with Kirkman Park Elementary and Oakview Elementary School. She mentioned the following things they do that are impactful to the students and the teachers:

- ✓ Welcome teachers during the first week of school.
- ✓ Welcome students because they do not want them to be afraid of police officers.
- ✓ Welcome the students when getting off the buses and open their car doors when exiting cars.
- ✓ Collect supplies for the teachers.
- ✓ Attend award ceremonies and cheer the students on.

Major Sellars spoke to how National Night Out was cancelled, but the Police Department decided to do "Cops & Community" and the community came out in huge number. She then shared some details on what they do for "Community Day" where they create a carnival-style atmosphere for the children with many fun events and contests. They are also partners with the Special Olympics, involved in a Youth Leadership Academy, etc.... She expressed excitement about an event they are planning that will take the place of the Holiday Parade which has also been cancelled this year and felt very confident that it would also be very impactful to the community.

Major Sellars reported on another impactful program the Police Department is involved with, the Angels in Blue program at Christmastime where officers identify families that can use some assistance at Christmas and take the expense off the families by providing everything from gifts, food, Christmas decorations, etc..... to brighten their holiday. They may be victims, or a family member may be a victim of some sort of crime.

Chairman Jones mentioned he purchased some T-shirts and sweatshirts recently for Angels in Blue and asked if the money raised from those sales help support the program. Major Sellars replied it does and that other fundraising efforts are under way as well, such as "No Shave November and December." She shared that as part of the fundraising efforts, the Chief has temporarily altered the department's grooming standards, and the money the officers pay to participate is earmarked for the Angels in Blue fund. Chairman Jones asked if the information about this program is available on the Police Department's website so that the people in the community can buy a T-shirt as well. Major Sellars replied that the information is not yet available but would be forthcoming. They are in the process of sending information out to their community partners first to keep from being overloaded with requests and depending on the outcome with getting the community partners involved, they may take it one step further. She spoke to how this is a very impactful program and how rewarding it is for them to be out in the community and have someone thank them for helping their family/loved one.

Another community engagement program that they are involved with is the Youth Leadership Academy and she spoke to how many of these programs start with the school resource officers; the building of relationships with youth, people, parents, community members; the huge impact it has on the community; oftentimes the roles/purpose of school resource officers are misunderstood because they do very little enforcement, but a whole lot of relationship building.

In conclusion, Major Sellars reiterated that they want the City Council to be aware of all that they are doing and would make sure they do a better job in getting the information to City Council.

Chief Stroud advised that there are many benefits to the community engagement side and how it is an early intervention strategy can help push kids away from street activity and into more positive stuff. He stated his concerns with the community engagement pillar is that it could become so big that the officers can no longer do the job they are supposed to be doing, so that is why they are looking for community partners to join in. He went on to say that the participation by the council members for National Night Out was huge and that it did not go unnoticed and spoke to how this was a WOW factor for the officers and the community.

He then introduced Major Anthro Gamble and asked him to come forward to present on the training pillar.

Training Pillar

Major Gamble stressed the importance of training and spoke to training making the individual officer better, making the agency better, making the city safe, and giving officers confidence to make better decisions. He explained that training starts the day an officer is hired and continues until retirement. He talked about how there are so many training opportunities out there, but they have to narrow it down and choose/focus on what is relevant and current.

He touched on the amount of time that goes into training a new police officer; how the training process starts with Basic Law Enforcement Training (BLET) class which is a 3-month process; they spend a month learning procedures/policy in High Point; they go through a 16-week field training program where they are assigned to a veteran officer and

evaluated every minute of the day; that the average High Point officer trains at least 70 hours a year versus the 24 mandated hours by the State.

Chairman Jones commended the Police Department for being extremely positive and proactive in its training as well as retroactive training. Major Gamble agreed that the Police Department is very proactive on training and spoke to how they are constantly looking at other agencies across the country to see how they can get better.

On the training pillar side, Chief Stroud reiterated that they do have to tailor down and focus on the specific things they train on and explained this is why they constantly are looking ahead to determine what topics to train for every year. He spoke to how they want reality-based training; how training needs to be hands-on, upfront, and stressful; how they want to induce stress in a training environment because that is the time for the officers to learn from their mistakes; and how they learn from watching videos of what other departments are doing nationwide.

Policy Pillar

The Chief spoke to the Police Department's policies being solid; that policies are a huge thing for the Police Department; and how they had the "8 Can't Wait" piece in their policies before it was actually launched. The Police Department has 64 General Orders and Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for every unit within the department.

Chief Stroud mentioned the four pillars that were presented on; stated there is always room for growth; reiterated that this model is a work in progress, would be under constant review/examination; and is subject to change. He referred back to the illustration of the model with the Leadership and Development at the base, the four pillars in the middle, and the High Point Police Department at the top and explained that the reason the High Point Police Department is at the top is because it is literally holding the "307" up. He felt the plan is solid enough, smart enough, common sense enough, and best practice enough that when the new chief comes in, he/she will think it is good and will keep moving forward with it.

Council Member Jones inquired about the morale in the Police Department and if the department feels like they have the full support of the Mayor and City Council. Chief Stroud replied that he personally visited every one of the training sessions for the officers and told them that the department does have the City Council's support. He noted that he has not seen any issues with City Council; expressed that Council's support has been through the roof; and talked about having a phenomenal group of officers due to the high standards that the department has.

Committee Member Moore commended the Police Department for doing a great job; stated he has always felt that the city has had a fair and solid Police Department; and stated looks forward partnering with them on the community engagement side. Chief Stroud expressed appreciation for the accolades and attributed the success of the department to the phenomenal community members who work with them.

Committee Member Moore mentioned the court system and asked Chief Stroud if he has seen an improvement. The Chief felt it could probably be better and agreed that they have experienced some frustration through the process from the enforcement side of it because they see the same repeat offenders back out on the streets doing the same crimes. Committee

Member Moore stated he was unsure of where the answer lies and felt it would be nice if the court system could be more efficient so that doesn't happen time and time again. The Chief agreed that something is not working; felt there has to be a deterrence for these activities; and spoke to the big number of repeat offenders in the system.

Committee Member Johnson expressed excitement about the community events and stated that the City Council supports the Police Chief and the team 100%.

2020-405

Presentation-High Point Police Department's New Traffic Safety Initiative

Staff will provide a presentation on the High Point Police Department's new traffic safety initiative.

Chief Stroud spoke to how awful the driving inside the city is; how the numbers are disturbing; that there have been 14 traffic facilities so far in 2020; how many of those involved high speeds, aggressive driving, lack of restraint, etc.; and the numerous complaints received from the citizens regarding driving. He explained the idea behind this initiative is they want the drivers to reset their driving habits to get back to defensive driving rather than the aggressive driving that they are seeing. The Chief advised the campaign will be a multi-week, multi-step process involving some of the major thoroughfares (based on data) and the locations are announced and publicized and although the officers would be writing some tickets, the goal for the initiative is for the officers to give out plenty of warnings in hopes that it would help reset driving habits. He spoke to how these bad driving habits affect everyone inside the city; how it has to be brought under control; and that motor vehicle collision is just as impactful as a shooting. He asked Major Sellars to offer some comments.

Major Sellars advised that the first day resulted in 100 cars being stopped within two hours (half warning, half citations) and they could have stopped another 100 but could not get safely turned around to get behind the vehicles. She mentioned a recent accident where an 18-year-old and a 19-year-old perished; spoke to the impact this has on the entire community; having to deliver the news to the family that they will not be coming home; and how they are growing weary of seeing this.

She explained the first phase will be ongoing for two weeks; it will then be reassessed and the numbers would be reviewed; if it is successful, additional phases would follow around the holidays in November and in December.

With all the ongoing road construction in the Johnson Street/Skeet Club Road and the Eastchester Drive area, Chairman Jones asked about the impact; if they are seeing an increase in traffic accidents/violations in those specific areas; and if it is backed up with data. Major Sellars replied that the data clearly backs it up. She spoke to the need to slow down; the need to stop the aggressive driving; pointed out that out of the 14 facilities so far this year, 10 of the 14 involved speeds over 100 mph in the city.

She then shared some statistics she received from Lt. Abernathy for Day 1 that clearly show that speeding is a factor.

Day 1			
7:30 a.m. -10:30 a.m.			
		Speeding	Other Violations
Total Violations	74	40	34
Total Warnings	33		
Total Citations	41		
3:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.			
Total Violations	31	16	15
Total Warnings	18		
Total Citations	13		
9:00 p.m. – 11:30 p.m.			
Total Violations	16	14	2
Total Warnings	4		
Total Citations	12		

Chairman Jones asked residents to please not post on Social Media when officers are pulling drivers over in a certain spot because it is counterproductive to the initiative and what the officers want to achieve. Major Sellars agreed and mentioned the high number of complaints they get from citizens asking for help with the speeders. Chief Stroud spoke to how it's all about following the law, encouraging people to slow down, and to be safe.

The Chief asked if there were any additional questions. There being none, Chairman Jones stated this has been one of the more productive meetings of the Public Safety Committee in a while and that there are a lot of people in the city concerned about crime and things that they have seen happen. He thanked the officers for their efforts and echoed what Committee Member Johnson shared earlier about Council supporting the Police Department.

ADJOURNMENT

There being nothing further to discuss, there were no objections to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 5:05 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lisa B. Vierling, City Clerk

Victor Jones, Chairman