

Roll Call

The Kalamazoo City Commission met as a Committee of the Whole on Monday, July 18, 2022 at 5:00 p.m. in the City Commission Chambers at City Hall.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Mayor David Anderson
Vice Mayor Don Cooney
Qianna Decker
Jeanne Hess
Stephanie Hoffman
Esteven Juarez
Chris Praedel

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:

None

Also present were City Manager Jim Ritsema, City Attorney Clyde Robinson, and City Clerk Scott Borling.

Public Comments

An opportunity was given for general public comments, but no comments were offered.

2022-00

Presentation: Update on
Gun Violence and KDPS
Public Outreach Efforts

Assistant Public Safety Chief Victor Green, Public Information Officer Jay Shatara, Emergency Preparedness and Response Manager Brandi Janes, Deputy Public Safety Chief Dave Boysen, Office of Community Affairs Captain Danielle Guilds, Community Policing Unit Sergeant Andrew Werkema, Community Service Team Sergeant Amil Alwan, Social Services Coordinator/Victim Advocate Kelsey Harness, Community Collaborator LaTonya Turner, Pastor Greg Jennings, and Public Safety Chief Vernon Coakley delivered a presentation entitled *Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety, July 18, 2022*. A copy of the slides from this presentation was filed with the papers for this meeting.

In response to questions from Commissioners, Chief Coakley, Sergeant Werkema, Deputy Chief Boysen, Assistant Chief Green, and Captain Guilds provided the following information:

- the idea for Pastors on Patrol originated with Chief Coakley's desire to integrate his faith with his work. Although he looked for models to emulate, the Kalamazoo version was invented by Chief Coakley and Pastor Jennings. The underlying idea of Pastors on Patrol was that pastors could intercede in the community when the police/community relationship was contentious.
- the Citizen's Academy was designed to give members of the public the opportunity to experience what Public Safety Officers experience every day. The next Citizen's Academy would take place on September 25th and October 1st.
- many of the illegal guns in the community are guns that have been stolen, which is a result of legal gun owners not keeping their weapons in secure storage. In addition to seeing the number of weapons in the community increase, KDPS is also seeing an increase in the firepower of those weapons.
- to have community partnerships and collaboration there needs to be a strategy and leaders who are able to bring strategic partners together one room to talk about executing the strategy.

- the turnaround time for a social service referral was approximately one week, from the time the PSO made the referral to when the service agency contacted the individual.
- there were no females in the Pastors on Patrol program, but KDPS was trying to recruit female pastors.
- KDPS was not using general recreation programs to try to reach young people who were at risk of being involved in criminal activity. Rather, KDPS took a “spear fishing” approach, using intelligence to identify the groups involved with violence and then intervening with the individuals that made up those groups. This approach was labor intensive but effective.
- the Bridging Opportunities program was a partnership with the Boys and Girls Club to get at-risk youth involved with something larger than themselves.
- parental involvement was critical for reducing youth violence. Parents should build relationships with their kids, ask hard questions, search their rooms, and monitor social media usage.
- Community Policing Unit (CPU) officers were deployed in the City’s core neighborhoods, but they were available to respond in any neighborhood as needed. All 245 PSO’s were “community police officers.”
- work in the area of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) was ongoing. Staff would be presenting a DEI strategic plan to the City Manager and then the City Commission.
- KDPS worked collaboratively with other agencies in the county to deal with mental health issues. The City had developed the Community Service Team an alternative service model to deal with cases involving mental illness.
- the Department was looking into training and resources to improve firearms safety among legal gun owners. The COVID-19 pandemic had limited the department’s ability to offer training classes, and there were ongoing supply chain issues for safety equipment like gun locks and gun safes.
- historically it had been a challenge for KDPS to engage youth in the public school environment, but that was changing under the leadership of Kalamazoo Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Raichoudhuri. All officers had been given the directive to interact with the community. KDPS needed to be intentional about engaging young people in any context or environment and talking about healthy choices.
- KPDS recruited and hired officers who had a heart for service and then trained them in police work. The next PSO hiring process would open on August 15th.
- centralized command was one the Department’s strengths. KDPS trained extensively on command and control of a scene, and officers were prepared for any emergency, including active shooters. This work would continue with new emergency manager.

Commissioner Juarez stated KDPS had been working since 2013 to improve and change how they police. Commissioner Juarez stated the Department was not

2022-00

Presentation: Update on Gun Violence and KDPS Public Outreach Efforts (cont’d)

2022-00

Presentation: Update on
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(cont'd)

perfect but was getting better, and he remarked that under Chief Coakley they were listening to the community. Commissioner Juarez noted KDPS had just partnered with Urban Alliance to talk with the Life Camp group about gun safety, and he indicated officers would do trainings for other groups too. Commissioner Juarez stated the job of a PSO was thankless, and they endured a lot of trauma on a daily basis. Commissioner Juarez stated the Department needed to address mental health of its officers.

Commissioner Decker stated KDPS-sponsored community activities would give young people an opportunity to become more comfortable interacting with officers. Commissioner Decker expressed excitement about emergency preparedness and the trainings and information that would come from this new area at KDPS.

Mayor Anderson stated KDPS and City leadership were experiencing together the challenges in the world but also the increasing and changing expectations for public safety departments. Mayor Anderson expressed amazement at the breadth of approaches KDPS was using to address community issues, which was now considered normal in terms of the responsibilities of a public safety officer and public safety department. Mayor Anderson remarked on the positive energy in the room but observed there was still a separation between the community and public safety. Mayor Anderson stated the KDPS team was doing everything it could to be part of the community, but the community needed to play its part too. Mayor Anderson requested that residents work to build community and build trust with KDPS.

City Manager Ritsema thanked the City Commission for welcoming this presentation. City Manager Ritsema expressed appreciation for the passion the Chief and his team displayed every day and the way they were continually improving and reimagining themselves.

In response to a question from City Manager Ritsema, Chief Coakley stated PSO Thomas Maher was no longer on a ventilator but was breathing on his own while recovering from being hit on his motorcycle by a drunk driver.

Commissioner
Comments

An opportunity was given for comments from City Commissioners, but no comments were offered.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6:31p.m.

Scott A. Borling
City Clerk

Approved by the City Commission on: _____

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