



Public Safety Committee Meeting
February 27, 2021

Members Present: Mayor Rohan Hepkins, Councilor Dolores McCabe, Councilor Liana Roadcloud, Police Chief Anthony Paparo, Public Works Director Jeffery Wilkinson, Thomas Abrams, Finance Director Nafis Nichols, Fire Chief Michael Diенno,

Absent: Solicitor Charles M. Gibbs, Code Enforcement Director/Emergency Management Coordinator/Fire Marshal Rufus Stokes, Antoinette Truehart, Lauren Footman, and Denise Stinson, Tax Collector Julianne James

Other Attendees: Mrs. Bradford

The Public Safety Committee Meeting was held via Zoom and started at 9:32 am.

Councilor McCabe opened the meeting with a prayer.

Police Department – Chief Paparo praised Public Works for keeping the roadways clear with all the snow we had received and acknowledged the Fire Department for pitching in to help with the heavier snow. He stated that accidents were not too bad, just normal simple ones, but DUI accidents are the most problematic in our Borough. Hopefully, the DUI Task Force will be putting together a checkpoint soon. It was requested to put one on Church Lane to send the message that it is not a safe corridor to drive back and forth from Upper Darby to Philadelphia and vice versa, as the majority of the accidents occur there between the overnight hours of 11:00 PM and 3:00 AM.

Speed Bumps: Chief Paparo also stated that the Yeadon Police Department is still actively putting out speed bumps but has been delayed due to inclement weather as to not have cars sliding if they're wet/icy.

COVID-19: COVID is beginning to become under control with the availability of the vaccines coming into play.

Crime Rate: The crime rate has been pretty good, however, there has been a bit of resurgence of carjacking's in the city and surrounding area. It seems to be mostly two types: a delivery person arriving (Crime of opportunity if they don't have a lot of cash on them) and regular theft of a car. Cars are more difficult to steal nowadays due to the electronics, key fobs, and other ways that they are secured today. This topic will be included in the monthly report to make residents aware and was also discussed on the *Good Morning Yeadon!* forum.

Councilor Delores McCabe inquired about crime going up due to COVID as time goes on and because of unemployment and lack of resources. Chief Paparo said it was initially a concern of

his when the mask mandate was put into effect. It was assumed that Criminals, who you cover their faces during the acts of robberies and so forth would take advantage of the mask wearing when committing robberies and such. However, the rate of crime in Yeadon did not increase, and it was down about 10% last year. While the crime rate in Philadelphia is up 55%. Chief Paparo was very pleased with the performance of the Police Department in keeping those numbers down due to visibility. He stated that wearing masks makes us more cognizant of our surroundings because you must pay more attention to faces. Chief Paparo also added that due to the incidents that were occurring in the surrounding areas in 2020, there was increased manpower to the streets to deter crime.

Animal Control: We are no longer using Delaware County Animal Control. The cost went from a \$120 a month fee to them billing the Borough \$150 to pick up the phone to call them if we have an animal problem. This year the fee was raised to \$150.00 without notice, when The Chief called to discuss the new fee in effort to maintain the budget, the owner refused to discuss it and Chief Paparo was basically told to find someone else. Delco Animal Control would have cost about \$2,000.00 just to pick up the phone whether we needed them to remove something or not. When Brandywine Valley wanted to raise our rate 3% for the next 5 years without discussion, we parted ways. This saved roughly \$20,000. Chief Paparo is actively working on contracting another Animal Control company that does not charge monthly fees. In the meantime, The Chief has a “Dog Guy” that took over for Brandywine Valley, he does not charge a monthly fee but only charges for animal removal. This has saved roughly \$150 per dog. The residents will be informed to still call 911 for Animal Control issues.

There was discussion on the presence of foxes, deer, skunks, and wolves in Yeadon. Dr. McCabe asked if there was truth to there being foxes in Yeadon and if they would attack. Chief Paparo stated that there are quite a few foxes in Yeadon, they mainly come out at night and will not attack because they are very reclusive and tend to run in the other direction when they see humans. He stated that our #1 issue is deer and our #2 animal control issue is skunks. Thomas Abrams asked about the post that five wolves came out of Holy Cross Cemetery on Next Door Yeadon. Chief Paparo stated that there are no wolves in Yeadon. Dr. McCabe asked if a wolf would attack and Chief Paparo stated that wolves in a pack formation will attack if hungry.

Mayor Hepkins added that he will continue to talk with The Chief about animal control in the area, including the cemetery. Animal Control is an intermittent issue. One improvement made was the deer issue due to a program that Chief Paparo enacted within the last two years that has helped decrease the number of deer significantly.

Finance Department: Nafis Nichols stated that Yeadon is better off financially compared to other municipalities within Delaware County based on conversations and meetings he attended. Yeadon took a hit, but not as dramatic as the other towns in Delco. Real Estate Tax Collection was only down around 3% even with the extension of the discount period duration of the tax season compared to other municipalities that were down over 10%.

COVID-19 Expenses: Expenses related to COVID did affect the budget on the expenditure side, with reimbursements that are coming back from the County we are anticipating \$95,000.00. The

House passed a bill that is waiting to go to the Senate. There is some local money in there, a big part of it is for first responders for the Police Department 's of course, so that it can get to the local towns that would be very, very helpful for us because that is a large portion of the Borough's budget so it's going to look up. However, Yeadon is not doing as bad as the other municipalities and the Finance Department is monitoring expenses, etc., very closely and doing everything that needs to be done to stay ahead of the game.

Fire Department - Chief Michael Diienzo stated January totals as follows: 87 fire calls, 225 ambulance calls, which is about average. Chief Diienzo also stated that The Fire Department is back to like pre-pandemic normalcy with call volume. The Fire Department is also just in the process of putting an RFP out to expand the federal grant that was obtained for self-contained breathing apparatuses, which was announced a few months ago that we got that RPO go out this week. The Fire Department is excited about that and it's a \$180,000.00 grant that we received to replace something outdated. Chief Diienzo also stated that the Fire Department also received a COVID grant and put in a new Big ASS Fan (excuse the language, it's literally what it's called). It's an industrial sized, commercial ceiling fan that's inside of our engine bay and it replaces the air. It runs all the air through a filter, which is COVID compliant, so we received grant money for that that was installed this week. He thanked the Highway guys for keeping our streets clean and safe. We have some of the best-looking streets in the County and I know our highway guys really work hard to make that happen so hats off to them.

Public Works Department – Jeff Wilkinson stated that the Public Works Department has been busy the past month regarding snowstorms. He added that these snowstorms weren't typical storms, they were very long lasting for 8 to 12 hours. Mr. Wilkinson stated that the biggest key is staying on top of it and not waiting until the majority of it falls. The Public Works Department was able to come up collectively with a very solid plan of rotating the guys on. Mr. Wilkinson added that having at least 4 operators on the Public Works Department can stay on top of the streets for any emergency situations.

Mayor Hepkins inquired if the increase in snow has increased our budget for salt or anything like that. Mr. Wilkinson said the only thing he probably would change moving forward next season is upping our salt total in the bid. In the past the department would put in 300 tons, but Mr. Wilkinson will probably up that closer to maybe 400 tons to 450 tons. Yeadon was allotted 300 tons and right now about half was used. 75 tons was just acquired and that should hold over for the rest of the year as long as there is no more snow. The biggest thing post storm is the potholes so almost every day Public Works is out trying to patch them up. Mr. Wilkinson stated that we need the help from the residents. The easiest way to go about it is just getting the public involved and just having them call and contact Public Works if they see a pothole. That's one of the first priorities making sure there's no potholes, next are the sewers.

COVID-19 Disinfecting/Cleaning: The COVID-19 electrostatic sprayers have been implemented. Public Works has stayed on the schedule of every Tuesday morning the library is sprayed down and disinfected from top to bottom. Wednesday mornings the Borough, the whole entire building is sprayed down top to bottom before the 3rd floor opens and people start coming in. The Police Department currently has the handheld device so that they can readily spray down

and disinfect their patrol cars. They can simply go in and pick up the electrostatic sprayer and spray it down themselves. The upfront cost was pretty costly but in the long run doing the disinfecting in-house will save a lot of money.

Thomas Abrams also congratulated Mr. Wilkinson for doing a good job.

Lights and Cameras: Mayor Hepkins asked about an update on cameras. Mr. Nichols stated that there is nothing different to report from the legislative session, we're waiting for them to complete the radio communication piece. They are in the process of installing the lights in house around the Borough. The equipment should be in for Public Works to install soon but Mr. Nichols believes that it's already in per Eileen Mulvena. Mr. Nichols also stated that he needed to coordinate with Jeff and those other bulbs are being replaced.

COVID-19 Vaccines - The Wellness Center, soon to be Health Center, is open although it was closed for a week or so due to running out of vaccines, help is on the way. Vaccine distribution is ramping up the latest and we spoke about J & J coming out with their vaccine and they were approved. Emergency approval was granted yesterday by the CDC and I believe the administration said they're going to order 100,000,000, so there should be about 400,000,000 vaccines in circulation shortly. That would be enough to vaccinate every American and more. There are also other dicey situations like the variants that they have to see if it inoculates you from the variants or summer suggestion of booster shot, but that's something to be worked out as we go along. The major thing is that the CDC would like everyone to be vaccinated. The roll-out should be effective where everybody who wants a vaccine should be able to get one at least by early summer.

Talk about apprising the public about the Health Center vaccines and Mayor Hepkins was pleased to report that the next Mayor's forum is probably be the best medium because it will be really timely, so Thursday coming, March 4th, a representative from County Council Kevin Madden will explain how this came about, answer our questions, as well as a representative medical expert or representative from the County to talk about the vaccine and the roll out, and particularly how that's going to work at our Health Center here in Yeadon. So that would be on Thursday at 7:00 o'clock and encourage everybody to Tune In so that they can learn firsthand and then hear more about how that is going to work.

Traffic Control: Councilor Liana Roadcloud informed Chief Paparo that she has received a few complaints with respect to Union Avenue with the Nile handing out the free food. People were a little concerned with respect to the traffic that was happening around there. It appears that one of the representatives from the Nile is directing traffic and inquired if there was anything the Borough could do.

Chief Paparo stated that Mayor Hepkins spoke to him about that as well. He informed Ms. Roadcloud that our officers are aware of what's going on over there and they've been asked to make sure that they keep an eye on that area. However, the difficulty for the Police Department is manpower depending on what's going on at the time, if officers are tied up on other calls, then they're not able to get over there and dedicate themselves to traffic control for it. In a nutshell, the Police Department does not have the manpower or the budget to dedicate officers solely to

that detail. Lansdowne PD has been asked to help, but they face the same issues with manpower as Yeadon does. Chief Paparo stated that the problem is the location and because the lot is not big enough to handle the influx of people coming. Talks of relocating the giveaway were mentioned. Mayor Hepkins added that issues like this are unforeseen COVID expenses and the police have had to be stretched thin. It would also bring into consideration of using extra funds to pay for overtime every weekend. However, it is realized as a problem and there will need to be adjusting and taking a look at it to see how it could be done safely and the most cost-efficient way. Mr. Abrams suggested adding a Traffic Unit to the Police Department to deal with issues like this among other things. Mayor Hepkins agreed but stated that it's a budgetary item, and that we must allocate and utilize the staffing we have with the limited budget we have. Mr. Abrams commented that the Traffic Unit would probably pay for itself with the number of tickets they'd give out. Mayor Hepkins and Chief Paparo agreed that this will be an ongoing topic.

Comments – Black Lives Matter (BLM) protest and demonstrations were mentioned as Mayor Rohan Hepkins added that he and Chief Paparo proactively anticipated some things, like civil unrest and loitering. He stated that he called a curfew, added more manpower to the streets. Due to these efforts, Yeadon was left unscathed while Southwest Philadelphia and Upper Darby were ransacked and/or demolished. The increased rate of homelessness, depression, and other mental illnesses was also discussed as a by-product of quarantine due to COVID-19.

Meeting ended with benediction from Mayor Rohan Hepkins.

Respectfully submitted by Quiana Braxton