

Mayor's Response to Volari Group Report

I. Introduction

I am herewith forwarding my Mayor's response to the recent Volari Report, whose firm was hired and charged by the previous ruling Council Members, to come up with findings of our two Suicide Deaths in Police holding cell in 2022, as well as to assess the effectiveness of Yeadon's Police Department and Public Safety, and to come up with recommendations for improving Public Safety. It is my understanding that the Volari Group was paid \$25,000 for this report by Yeadon Taxpayers.

II. Volari Group Refused to Interview The Mayor or Former Police Chief for This Report

Volari states in their report, ***"Law Enforcement is a collaborative effort, and it takes the hard work and dedication of elected officials, professionals, union members and representatives, staff members, and the general public to make it all work..."***

Having stated this as an established objective, the Volari Group blatantly contradicts this goal by refusing to interview the Mayor and former Police Chief with respect to what decisions, policies and procedures were enacted (or not) under their watch, that would have given light to the status quo in order to find conclusions that the Group was going to recommend. Short of interviewing both the Mayor and Police Chief, any conclusions of their management cannot be accurately taken into account, as the Volari Group cannot possibly make an accurate assessment without this input. This is problematic.

III. Volari Group Continued the Strategy of The Ruling Council's Dictatorship

The Volari Group seemed to have continued the philosophy of the prior ruling Council in a management style that led to some of these unfortunate events, where they stiff-armed the leadership of the police department, upended the chain of command, took over some aspects of public safety in effectively firing the Mayor as the head of public safety, and solely gave that responsibility over to one of the Councilors who had voted to fire the Police Chief in the first place. None of this was investigated or commented on by the Volari Group – but was one of the major problems that gave rise to the dysfunctionality and disintegration of public safety – as public safety was effectively dismantled and given out piece-meal like a trophy or a conquering prize of power.

"The Volari group would also like to recognize the members of the Borough of Yeadon community at large, whose expectations for law enforcement protection and services have been met with some level of disenfranchisement and disappointment in recent times..."

The above statement seems disingenuous. The disenfranchisement cited by Volari, actually started with the Borough Council upending the chain of command structure in the police department. The ruling Council also shut down conceivable dissent of the people at public meetings and violated the Sunshine Act. They would cancel meetings without notice and took away zoom access for the public. This was never explored nor mentioned in this report (though it accurately cites a disenfranchisement of the public trust). Furthermore, the Volari Group continued with this disenfranchisement of the public trust, starting with the duly elected Mayor, in steadfastly refusing to interview him, while coming up with critical conclusions. It is tantamount to holding someone for trial, but not allowing the subject to speak or defend their actions, or it's like trying someone in absentia via tribunal, which is only done in totalitarian/autocratic regimes.

All this was performed in this manner, while stating to do the opposite. I find this approach blatantly contradictory to the Volari Group's stated purpose and rather disingenuous. Why was the Volari Group seem to be afraid of interviewing the Mayor? Or the former Police Chief? Both were available. Both were more than willing to testify before the Volari Group. But just like the prior ruling council's MO – neither were requested to be interviewed, while making moral conclusions about their leadership. Some of what the Volari Group concluded wasn't done – was actually done. Such as having an updated detention policy. And such as having a social media outreach, and such as Community Policing, which was actually a great strength of Chief Paparo and one of the reasons the community loved him so much. Volari Group came up with opposite conclusions to these facts. Much of these things were being done, but was never afforded an opportunity to show how it was done. In fact, some of the things were novel and innovated and unique such as the deer eradication program, active killer training in the schools, the community love garden, coffee with a cop and regular zoom meetings with the community. What was reported as not being done, was actually being done.

IV. Volari Group Came up with Faulty Conclusions

Due to the fact that the Volari Group did not interview, did not seek to interview, nor cared about interviewing the Mayor or Former Police Chief, they cannot now in good faith come up with valid conclusions, where they take liberty to criticize what was done or wasn't done, or what were the polices or procedures that was or wasn't in place at the time. They cannot definitively assert that in their report, absent that vital missing input. They forfeited that charge by not reviewing the polices that the prior Chief had clearly set in place, but appears that it may not have been followed due to a lack of leadership and a hiring freeze that the mayor had repeatedly warned the previous Council, would jeopardize public safety, and it appears that it did. Absent this compelling input from the leadership of the Yeadon Police Department (YPD), the Volari report seemed determined to justify the faulty decision-making by the prior Council, which led to an erosion of our public safety apparatus.

Also, the conclusion to hire 28 FTO as supposed to 20 is also faulty...as this formula is based upon officers per thousand. However, adequate police staffing is not only based upon officers per 1,000, but also based upon actual crime statistics. For example, if a municipality of 12,000 like ours, had virtually no crime, we wouldn't be bound by that formula. So yes, we would love to have 28 fulltime officers, but we don't need 28 due to where our crime needs currently stand. Also, the budget could not afford it unless we pass on a hefty tax increase to residents. So I don't think that the Volari Report handled this or explained this recommended section well.

V. The Volari Report Inaccurately Reports the 2011 Police Detention Policy is Most Recent

One of the main conclusions of the Volari Report is blatantly wrong. The 2011 Prisoner Detention Policy was not the most recent as the Volari Group boldly stated in their report. Former Chief Paparo updated this policy in October of 2019. This updated Policy (which I have a copy) ended civilian oversight over prisoners, to only allow sworn officers to oversee prisoners while in detention custody. In recently interviewing former Chief Paparo (to confirm), he aptly testified that, he had changed the policy of having turnkey civilians oversee prisoners, because they are not trained to do so: are not trained in CPR (should the need arise), are not trained to restrain a prisoner (should they attempt to escape), nor are they trained to detect or tend to other medical needs, should that need arise. I also recall that discussion in real time as that change was taking place in 2019. Volari claims this was never done/updated more recently.

By firing Chief Paparo, and eroding the Mayor's responsibility over staff, by offering his job to deputies, and confiscating the Mayor's office, summarily changing his seat on the floor, issuing a vote of no confidence (prior to the suicide deaths), and muzzling his statutory responsibility to report to residents in formal Legislative Meetings as a part of Council and barring him from executive sessions (and removing him from agenda and telling him not to speak), it led to an atmosphere of intimidation of the entire chain of command, where our officers were intimidated into thinking their Chief (and what he had done) was deemed incompetent and/or illegitimate, and therefore his orders, or prior orders was ok not to be followed. Though not blatantly stipulated, this is the suggested chilling effect that these maneuvers collectively had on the force. And in fact, some officers were to transfer out of the YPD to the extent we had never seen before. For the first time as a 42 year resident and someone who spend years on the Civil Service Commission – police officers in droves – didn't want to be here.

This erosion of morale started even prior to some of the Councilors being sworn-in, while creating a chilling effect among the officers. In fact, most of the available officers did not want to come to council meetings (as we traditionally have one officer monitor each meeting), because many had privately confided that they felt intimidated and bullied by witnessing what was being done to the department from top to bottom (and by refusing to hire sufficient officers), while undermining the two most responsible within the chain of command whenever and wherever possible: starting the Mayor and Police Chief and extending to intimidation of the force in various ways.

Therefore, the Volari Report, proves the opposite of what it is trying to assert: If the Volari Report is correct, that after interviewing the Lieutenant taking over from Chief Paparo, that there was a reverting back to the prior 2011 policy where civilian turnkey oversight was allowed again (as was the case when we had both suicides), and outside of the Mayor's knowledge. It is then safe to conclude, that the summary dismissal of the former Chief of Police, with no adequate replacement of a trained Chief of Police, plus the hiring freeze placed upon the Police Department, which was already short staffed, led to reverting back to more simplistic solutions of prior policies.

The Mayor had consistently warned Borough Council that their actions jeopardized public safety. When the Mayor tried to state some of this in his monthly legislative reports, the prior Council President informed the Mayor during Legislative Meetings that, "the Mayor is not allowed to speak." I do not want to say more in this report, as much of these facts are being litigated in an ongoing lawsuit, in which much of this evidence is being presented by the defendant to a jury pool. In addition, here are some other facts of consideration:

VI. Conclusion

We have never had a death in Yeadon's Cell by suicide or otherwise that we know of in the over 125 year history of the Yeadon Police Department. What's more, the current Mayor worked with two different Chiefs in the eight years leading up to the suicides in the Cell: Chief Molineux partnered with the current Mayor for 5 years, and Chief Paparo partnered with the current Mayor as a team for another 3 years prior to his dismissal. It was only (in the first year after the dismissal of Chief Paparo) and when the new Council took over and started to dismantle the leadership structure of the Yeadon Police Department, that all this turmoil started to take place. Before their presence and unhinged intervention and what I describe as a coup attempt in my estimation, everything ran without incident. After these unprecedented and unhinged changes, the morale and the effectiveness of the department almost immediately started to wane and unravel, as the force became constantly short-staffed, intimidated, and rudderless, morale-busting, while causing a laxity in oversight while trying to manage in order to make ends meet. It was not an environment of confidence. The opposite was created by these intimidating moves.

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In my estimation, what the Volari Report tried to point out, is actually counterproductive to their point, in that it actually proves in a convoluted way, that the Policies and Procedures put in place by the Chief had successfully prevented deaths and turmoil. An erosion of public safety ensued after his summary removal, without a clear plan. The Volari Group responded in kind with the mayor, removed from the equation, and not even interviewed, which seems to indicate that the report tries to exonerate the prior Council, by dodging all the factors and the tough questions, that could have been answered by simply interviewing the Mayor and the prior Chief.

Instead, what we get is more akin to a tribunal where the main player had no input but are negatively reported upon in absentia without the ability to comment or refute what appears to be preconceived conclusions masquerading as a legitimate factual report. This does not comport with our system of jurisprudence and is only conducted in totalitarian regimes.

In closing, not only is the report misleading, disrespectful and disingenuous in my estimation, but the Yeadon Taxpayers paid \$25,000 for this report, and as such, I believe were fleeced and deserve our money back, and if not, a substantial discount should be returned to the Yeadon Taxpayers.