



MINUTES

June 5, 2024

7:00 p.m.

Ralston Room, Albany Fire Department/VIRTUAL

Approved

Call to Order

Erik Anderson called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m.

Roll Call

Members present: Erik Rau, Evan Church, Erik Anderson, Nicholas Fowler, Kevin Kreitman

Members absent: Cynthia Greene, Pat Kidd, Adam Brenneman

Staff present: Jerry Drum, AIC Police Chief; Chris LaBelle, Fire Chief;
Rochelle James, Administrative Assistant I

April 3, 2024, Minutes were approved as submitted.

Staff Updates

Police Update – AIC Chief Jerry Drum

AIC Chief Jerry Drum advised the crime rate in Albany is down by a little over 11%. We are experiencing a slight increase in aggravated assaults, up into the 40% range. Sex crimes are up from 18 reported crimes last year to 50 this year. There will be an article in USA Today reporting on the organization People vs Predators. An article also appeared in the Albany Democrat-Herald. Their operation in Albany accounted for a significant spike in sex crimes. APD had 26 arrests resulting from their activity in Albany. Albany's overdose rate is on par with where we were last year. There has been a slowdown, which may be attributed to public education and Narcan availability.

APD is working on managing livability issues. We went into Eads Park today and did a full sweep clearing out camps there. They only encountered three camps. One was quite entrenched, and the occupant had been living in the camp for the entire winter. Efforts are being made to remove him from the area.

We currently have four police officer vacancies due to career changes and retirements. We have a few applicants in the background process. One of our Community Resource Officers will move into a police officer position. We have three dispatcher vacancies due to movement from the dispatch center into other department areas. We also have a clerk vacancy and a Community Resource Officer vacancy. Detective Lieutenant Buck Pearce was promoted to Captain and will move into that role beginning July 1, 2024. Brian Corbett moved up to a Patrol Lieutenant position. Joe Clausen and Peter Teague will move into patrol Sergeant positions on July 1, 2024.

Erik Rau asked if the level of turnover was average. AIC Chief Drum explained the push for hiring in the 1990s, which accounted for the wave of retirements that began in the last 3-4 years, causing movement. The discussion also focused on the difficulties of recruitment and retention in the law enforcement field.

The trend of having few qualified applicants appears to be changing, and as the public perception of law enforcement improves, more qualified people are applying.

Fire Update – Chief Chris Labelle

Chief Labelle advised that total responses towards the end of the fiscal year are on par with where we were in fiscal year 2023. AFD is projected to finish with 11,421 calls for this fiscal year. The call load for March, April, and May was average. The response times have remained virtually the same. AFD tracks response times as we get busier and have more calls for service. AFD also tracks unit hour utilization, which looks at the total time resources are on an emergency call.

Our fire life safety evaluations are on par with those in 2023. However, budgetary issues have made it more challenging to inspect locations at the level we would like. Sandy Roberts works on the risk reduction side, and the fire marshal and senior deputy fire marshal work on compliance with the evaluations.

The Community Paramedic activity is at approximately the same level as last fiscal year. AFD has seen a reduction in calls because of the community paramedic's activity and intervention. There was discussion regarding the impact of the emergency response single-role positions and the community paramedic on both call load and relief for outlying stations. The desire to eventually operate these positions 24 hours per day is an AFD goal. The challenges of hiring for the single role positions and retaining that staffing while competing with other agencies for applicants were also discussed.

The top 25 responses remain the same with sick person, fall/lift assist, and breathing problems remaining the most common. As Albany dries out, we will begin to see the small bark dust fires. There have already been two fires in Simpson Park this year.

It is common for AFD to have more than one call happening at the same time.

The full transition with Chief Wooton is in progress. Chief Wooton retires on June 28, 2024. Chief Labelle officially takes over as Fire Chief on July 1, 2024. This will create a lot of movement within the department. Kevin Vining will be promoted to Deputy Chief; Ben Cooper will be promoted to Battalion Chief; and Greg Sipe will be promoted to Lieutenant. Our training chief, Scott Cowan, will be leaving in November. Ryan Bond will be retiring in February 2025. Mark Bernt has been promoted to Battalion Chief.

We have four firefighters in the recruit academy who will hopefully be finished by the end of the month. We have 6 firefighters and 2 single-role EMTs in various stages of the pre-employment process. We are hoping to have a large recruiting academy in August. We still have three vacancies in the firefighter ranks and one single-role paramedic position to fill.

The new fire engine purchased with grant funding is in Springfield, OR. AFD should take ownership of it in the middle of July. We will be getting the tactical water tender, with a delivery date to be determined.

Next Meeting Date

The Oregon Health Authority will visit on June 28, 2024. They visit approximately every five to seven years to evaluate the department and ensure it has the right equipment, proper training, and employees with the proper immunizations.

A question was asked regarding the city's strategic plan, whether there was an all-encompassing plan, or if each department has its own. Chief Labelle advised that each department has an operational plan, and those departments are meeting with City Hall to evaluate how they are integrated into the new city strategic plan. AIC Chief Drum advised that APD has its own strategic plan, which works in conjunction with the city plan. AIC Chief Drum stated the plan is in its third year and is done annually.

AIC Chief Drum advised the new substation is working out well and is being utilized. APD is in a transition period with new vehicle and body cameras so we are working to make sure officers using the substation will still be able to download and view their videos.

AIC Chief Drum discussed the upcoming summer months. July 4, 2024, falls on a River Rhythms night. Juneteenth and the Pride Event are significant summer events, and staffing needs are a concern.

Chief Labelle is also concerned about staffing levels during the summer when vacations are scheduled and extra EMS staffing is needed at various events. Staffing will be a challenge.

There was a question regarding the cost of these events and how the cost is covered. AIC Chief Drum advised there has been a lot of discussion on how to be fair to all parties wanting to hold events. The costs associated with hosting the events were discussed (OT, water barriers, etc.).

A request for additional guest speakers at future events was made.

The next regularly scheduled meeting is on Wednesday, August 7, 2024, at the Albany Police Department.

Adjournment

Hearing no further business, adjourned the meeting at 7:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Reviewed by,

Rochelle James
Administrative Assistant I

Reviewer's Name
Reviewer's Title

**Documents discussed at the meeting that are not in the agenda packet are archived in the record. The documents are available by emailing cityclerk@cityofalbany.net.*