
City of Bethel, Alaska

Public Safety & Transportation Commission

December 1, 2015

Regular Meeting

Bethel, Alaska

I. CALL TO ORDER

A regular meeting of the Public Safety and Transportation Commission was held on December 1st, 2015 in the Bethel City Hall Council Chambers.

This meeting was called to order at 7:05PM

II. ROLL CALL

Present: Joan Dewey *Chair*
 Chuck Herman *Council Representative*
 Eileen Henrikson
 Julene Webber

Absent: Naim Shabani
 Deborah White

Ex-Officio Present:
 Andre Achee *Chief of Police* (via telephone conference)
 Bill Howell *Fire Chief*
 Christina Him *Recorder and Transportation Inspector Designee*

III. PEOPLE TO BE HEARD

None

IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOVED:	Herman	Motion to approve the agenda.
SECONDED:	Henrikson	
VOTE ON MAIN MOTION	All in favor.	

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOVED:	Herman	Motion to approve the minutes from the regular meeting of November 3.
SECONDED:	Henrikson	
VOTE ON MAIN MOTION	All in favor.	

VI. SPECIAL ITEM OF BUSINESS

A. Nominations for Vice Chair

MOVED:	Webber	Motion to nominate Eileen Henrikson for Vice Chair.
SECONDED:	Herman	
VOTE ON MAIN MOTION	All in favor.	

VII. CHIEFS' COMMENTS

Chief Bill Howell – *See Report in Commission Packet.*

Chief Andre Achee – *Staffing issues since the last PSTC meeting - we are down one position, Lt. Corbett's last day was a couple of weeks ago, he has relocated to the Soldotna area. Sgt. Limani and Davis have been conducting interviews for potential candidates. We have good prospective candidates and their backgrounds are done. We will probably be extending several conditional offers of employment. If these candidates pass everything, they will make a fine addition to our team. Dispatch is at full staff.*

Yesterday was the grand opening for the Willow Place Apartments. Michelle DeWitt with Bethel Community Services Foundation (BCSF) did a phenomenal job and assisted us with the grant application for Public Safety.

I have spoken with APSC (Alaska Police Standards Council) and am currently attending AACOP (Alaska Association of Chiefs of Police) to speak with other chiefs in regards to retention and recruitment and what is working for them.

The fire department did a phenomenal job; we and AST troopers assisted them with the fire

Currently, the police department is budgeted for 8 patrol officers, but we are down 4. We have 1 patrol officer who is currently the acting investigator. We have 2 patrol sergeants and 1 investigative sergeant. Our night shift start at 7pm-7am, and it is staffed at minimum staffing, which is 2 officers. We are staffed with 1 patrol officer for half of the week during day shift and I assist them as need be, as well as AST - we appreciate their efforts as well.

Our dispatch supervisor is in Utah attending a conference with eForce which is the records management system software that we use at the police department. She will be learning all the functions of the software that we use in dispatch.

The Police Department participated in the Public Health Nursing Health Fair that was also co-sponsored by YKHC. It was a good turn-out, our employees showed up and we used our command mobile trailer to assist.

Preventative maintenance is an issue that the City and Public works is working on regarding mechanical staffing. We are trying our best to ensure our public safety and emergency response vehicles are maintained and operational. We have addressed this issue with the city manager and we are hoping that we find good mechanics

VIII. TRANSPORTATION INSPECTOR REPORT

See Report in Commission Packet

IX. COUNCIL MEMBER’S COMMENTS

Council Member Herman – *Item E on the agenda (Ordinance #15-32 Repealing and Replacing BMC 5.08, Alcoholic Beverages) has been passed by Council. Item D (Ordinance #15-31, Amending Operation of Low Speed Vehicles) has also passed. We’ll talk about agenda item B (Ordinance #15-19, 15-20, 15-21) when we get to it. Essentially, the goal of these ordinances was to cut down alcohol sales in cabs. We voted to not approve all 3 proposed ordinances, however the reason it hasn’t gone back to council is because we did not follow the proper process/procedures to vote on it as a body. Generally a lot of the issues will be addressed by legal alcohol sales.*

X. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. Drug Screening Policy for Chauffeurs (Commission Member Shabani)

Discussed, no action taken, will continue discussion at the next scheduled PSTC Meeting when Shabani is present.

B. Formal Recommendations/Clarification for disapproval of Ordinance #15-19, 15-20, 15-21 (Council Member Herman)

The goal is to cut down on alcohol sales in cabs. PSTC voted to not recommend the ordinances. We formally move to disapprove.

- 15-19 - PSTC does not support this as there are concerns with the lack of due process for taxi drivers. PSTC would be more interested in a tiered system
- 15-21 - PSTC does not support this ordinance as it is cost prohibitive, estimated at about \$2,200 and there are also concerns with privacy.

MOVED:	Herman	Motion to disapprove Ordinance #15-19 for the reason of concerns with the lack of due process for taxi drivers and an interest in a tiered system of punishment by PSTC.
SECONDED:	Webber	
VOTE ON MAIN MOTION	All in favor.	

MOVED:	Herman	Motion to disapprove Ordinance #15-21 for the reason of concerns that the system is cost prohibitive and concerns with privacy.
SECONDED:	Webber	
VOTE ON MAIN MOTION	All in favor.	

C. Curfew Policy (Council Member Herman)

The idea was to discuss and clarify other options other than monetary citations to juveniles, such as offering community service for curfew violations. The court has always gone with offering community work instead of a fine. The discretion that is given is usually community service work.

D. Ordinance #15-31 Amending Operation of Low Speed Vehicles

No action taken, ordinance passed by council.

E. Ordinance #15-32 Repealing and Replacing BMC 5.08, Alcoholic Beverages

No action taken, ordinance passed by council.

XI. NEW BUSINESS

A. Police Department Staffing Levels

We discussed this a little bit during the last PSTC meeting, however we are still working on some issues. Money can't just be thrown into it, we have to throw other ideas into it, and we are still working on the ideas, but money does play a little of a role. We do compete with the State of Alaska for employees, not only for the police department, but for the City of Bethel. We normally don't compete with Alaska State Troopers, but we do compete with other criminal justice organizations within the City, i.e. Correctional Officers. The starting pay for CO1 (Correctional Officer 1), with minimum requirements of being 19 years of age or older, with a clear background, is \$31/hour. Whereas police officers start at around \$21/hr. After a year of probation, a correctional officer's pay increases to around \$34/hour. The City of Bethel does offer good benefits packages, however we have to compete with salaries.

We extended two conditional offers to two experienced officers; unfortunately we were not able to compete with the salary so they turned down the job. If we offer them more money than our own current staff, that have been in Bethel for 2-5 years, then this would cause a disparity among the ranks. It is a morale issue and it has happened about 10 years ago in this department.

We are working on trying to get support from PSTC and the finance director. I am looking within our existing budget to satisfy some of the monetary issues that my employees may have and bring it to council. I am not going to council to ask to throw more money at the police department, but I am looking at the existing budget to satisfy the monetary issues that some of my employees may have. This will help to retain existing officers as well as help with recruitment.

Shift issues may help with the morale and help recruit some individuals, but there are some contractual issues. We have to make sure the contractual issues are legal due to some of the PERS requirements, etc.

The way that the City of Bethel currently advertises for Police Officers is done through our Human Resources manager. The police department advertises the positions on free websites for law enforcement - i.e. www.policeone.com, which is a free national website for law enforcement agencies to post vacant positions on. For certain executive type of positions or supervisor positions, there are other free websites such as, APOA and AACOP as well. Word of mouth from past employees or current employees has also helped with recruitment. We have not paid for professional recruiters or paid for advertisement. We use resources that are free and get the message out there. At the recent job fair, our HR manager Laura Cloward attended and we tried to send a couple of officers there as well to assist with recruitment.

A far as housing for law enforcement officers, The Willow House Apartments is a private company, however if there is a vacancy, law enforcement officers will have priority. There are incentives for relocation expenses, housing allowance and employees are reimbursed, however they are required to sign a commitment contract.

We have been basically between 70-50% for over a year in staffing. For emergency situations, AST will assist BPD, but not in basic patrol coverage. Even if we hired a brand new police officer, who is ready to go to the academy, they will not be available for 3 months, as they will be attending the academy for that period. All Police Officers that are hired have a polygraph examination and a psychological examination done, as well as a complete full background prior to employment; this helps eliminates applicants.

B. Fire Department Staffing in Anticipation for Increased Calls for Service due to Liquor Sales

We have a couple of things going on here, the fire department is currently a reactive department, but in the areas that we can be proactive, we are trying to be - one area is staffing. We have been successful at hiring people immediately, and that is a strength for us. The opening of liquor stores is going to be a pretty intense period for Bethel in Public Safety. We deal with a lot of issues that the PD is facing, especially with turnovers.

We are currently training a new employee and we just finished training 3 other new employees. We have a really new crew at the department. Employees getting burned out are a huge concern, as a lot of times, they are asked to standby when they are off duty. They get compensated for it, however even with that being said, when you are constantly cutting into another person's off time, it is tough. We are having to do the coverage because we have 3 shifts and only 5 people to cover it. The assumption is that we are going to have a lot of activity when the liquor

stores are open. If you need evidence, look at what happens during Dividend time. There were 162 calls for service in October for the fire department and the percentages for alcohol related incidents were significant.

The City of Bethel went “wet” in October of 2009, and after that, it was busier for alcohol related calls for services. From 2011 through 2015, our call volumes have just continued to increase year after year. In FY 2015 (2014) our 6th firefighter position was defunded. Based on call volume and numbers, we are up about 23% in call volumes. Alcohol related calls are up about 35% within those 4 years.

I really believe that the liquor store is going to create a lot more call volume for the police department and fire department.

The fire department assists the police department when they are not available. The EMTs will be called to handle these calls and transport inebriated individuals.

We would like to refund the currently vacant positions in our department and we are going to aggressively go after grant funding for these positions (firefighter and EMT positions). We would like to see two firefighters on shift for firefighter safety – if one firefighter goes into the house before the second firefighter or volunteer comes in, they are at risk of safety because their resources are going to be stressed. We would like to take the fire captain off a working shift position, so that he can manage day to day basis operations, such as pre-fire planning and working/training with the crew. We are looking for support from the PSTC and would like to keep this on the agenda and give PSTC more information at the next meeting.

XII. COMMISSION MEMBER COMMENTS

Joan Dewey – I think this has been one of our more important meetings and I think that it’s great to see people having a quorum and being able to have these meetings.

Julene Webber – I just value our police and our fire departments and I’d like to see that be supported in this community, and so I’m going to do what I can do to help make that happen.

Eileen Henrikson – No comments.

Chuck Herman – No comments.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

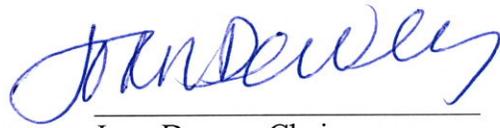
MOVED:	Herman	Motion to adjourn.
SECONDED:	Webber	
VOTE ON MAIN MOTION	All in favor.	

Meeting adjourned at 9:25pm

APPROVED THIS 2ND DAY OF February, 2016



Christina Him, Recorder



Joan Dewey, Chair