

**MINUTES OF THE
POLICE CHIEFS ADVISORY BOARD**

7:00 P.M.

June 15, 2023

Chairman Dan Henderson brought the meeting to order with the following committee members present: Police Chief Marshall Craft, Mrs. Debbie Hall, Pastor Kimberly McGill, Pastor Tesha Miller, Mr. Alan Quillen, Mrs. Florence Cephas, and Mr. Kevin Andrews.

Chairman Henderson called for a motion to approve the meeting minutes from February 16, 2023, meeting. Pastor McGill made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from February 16, 2023. The motion was seconded by Mr. Quillen. The motion so passed with all those present voting in favor.

Public Comment: None

New Business

New Business Item #1: Chief Marshall Craft to share 2022 Crime Reporting statistics and strategies for combatting crime in 2023.

Chief Craft began by thanking the Board Members for their service to the community and Mayor Genshaw for agreeing this was a critical step in bringing about positive changes in the city.

He then presented an overview of crimes statistic for Seaford from 2021 to 2022. He noted the reports do show an increase in some crimes including homicide, extortion, larceny (including motor vehicle theft) fraud, drug offenses, and weapons violations. He also explained that charges related to prostitution and drug offenses are typically proactive, meaning the Department has seen an increase in activity, but likely because these issues have been a point of focus.

He went on to explain that of the 20 categories of criminal activity, eleven (11) show a reduction, and nine had an increase. Includes one homicide in 2022 which significantly skews the crime statistics since it reflects a 100% increase from the zero homicides committed in 2021.

The overall percentage of crimes in the Class A categories increased, which includes sexual offenses. Chief Craft noted in 2021, during COVID, sex offenses significantly increased because young children were home with little supervision. He added that some of these could be victims from one year to the next because of the time it can sometimes take for individuals to report sexual offenses. Since it can be six months a year later before an incident is reported, it can be difficult to report these cases accurately.

He noted the crime clearance rate, on average, has remained around 85%, which is better than the national average. The Class A crimes previously discussed, now trend around 35%, consistent with national averages.

He also reported that incidents of motor vehicle thefts have increased, Chief Craft contributed a large part of the increase to a TikTok video instructing viewers on how to start a vehicle without having the keys. He noted that Wilmington, Dover, and Laurel saw the same activity.

Chief Craft went through some of the reporting the Department does and noted many other departments do not provide this type of extensive reporting; however, the Seaford Police Department feels this level of detail is extremely important to maintain transparency.

He then went over statistics and programs related to suspected prostitution. He noted the Seaford PD will continue to partner with the Delaware State Police Victim Services unit to conduct interviews to determine if individuals are forced into prostitution against their will or if they are simply supporting a drug addiction.

Chief Craft explained the anticipated issues the Seaford Police Department may encounter with the legalization of marijuana. He noted the Department will likely see a decrease in the seizure of weapons and other illicit drugs as reasonable suspicion will no longer include most incidents related to marijuana use.

Miller asked if Chief Craft could clarify the laws related to search and seizures related to the possession of handguns. Chief Craft went through the State of Delaware guidelines concerning weapons seizures. She asked if Delaware was an open carry state, and Chief Craft confirmed.

Quillen asked how Officers will determine if someone has marijuana in their system when making a traffic stop. Chief Craft explained this will be incredibly difficult as there is currently no way to test for THC during a traffic stop and probable cause will also be difficult to prove because you can no longer use things like the scent of marijuana as a reason to initiate a search.

Andrews and Chief Craft then discussed a specific incident Mr. Andrews witnessed involving Seaford Police Officers and an individual suspected of drunk driving. Mr. Andrews asked how the department handles cases where there are witnesses who can confirm a crime was committed. Chief Craft explained each officer is trained to assess the situation, including statements made by witnesses, and determine if there is sufficient evidence to make an arrest. The Officer in this instance did not feel there was enough evidence to detain the individual for suspected DUI (Driving under the influence). He noted that while race played no part in making that determination, he does believe the Officer could have handled the situation differently to establish probable cause.

Chief Craft then explained the proposed canine unit for the Seaford Police Department and noted this will be a process that requires reevaluation, as most canine units are trained to alert to marijuana. For example, if there is a traffic stop where the individual has marijuana in the vehicle, along with illegal weapons, the officers cannot use the alert from a canine officer as probable cause to search the vehicle.

Chief Craft went on to explain crime is trending upward in the Seaford community, and he truly believes place-based focus and community engagement play a huge role in combatting crime and improving the quality of life for Seaford Residents. He then covered the adjustments made by the Department to coordinate patrols in focus areas are throughout the city.

New Business Item #2: General discussion regarding goals and objectives for the PCAB in 2023.

There was a general discussion on the surveillance cameras installations in heavy crime areas. Ms. Miller explained unfortunately when there is a camera out of service or malfunctioning, word seems to get around quickly, and individuals will always find a way to circumvent the cameras.

Chief Craft stated the Department is working on a new program that would allow residents to authorize access to their in-home security systems or door camera devices in the event of a crime in that area. He noted this is to cover the blind spots that the Police Department cannot monitor. Additionally, the city is working with the Help Initiative to have additional security cameras installed in high-crime areas as well.

Along with cameras, the Department has also deployed six (6) license plate readers throughout the city to assist Officers to identify and track the movement of vehicles and individuals involved in criminal activity.

Mrs. McGill noted she did witness officers out on bikes communicating with city residents and feels these are the types of interactions the Seaford PD should be posting on their social media pages.

Chief Craft discussed the Department's efforts to curb traffic-related incidents and increase safety for pedestrians. Mrs. Hall noted she saw a Facebook post related to tractor-trailers parked along Hall Street, and the resident stated they had reached out to the city but had not received a response. Chief Craft explained Officers can't be everywhere all the time. Additionally, the Officer in charge of responding to traffic and parking-related complaints did report he addressed the Facebook complaint in question.

Chief Craft then discussed the various partnerships and programs the city is involved in, including partnerships with the Help Initiative and the Delaware Criminal Justice Council, which heads the Operation Safe Streets and Safe Neighborhoods programs.

Ms. Miller stated she was pleased to see the Mayor and Council support the recent request to increase staffing for the Police Department and noted it's clear that limited staff directly affects the Department's ability to respond to issues in the city.

Those present discussed the recently held Citizens Police Academy. Mr. Quillen noted he participated in the Academy and felt it was a very eye-opening experience and that residents should be very proud of the Officers we have serving our community.

Old Business

Old Business Item #1: Diversion Program Update

Chief Craft reviewed the purpose of the Diversion Program and an update on methods used by the Seaford Police Department including the existing clinicians available through the department and available Narcan training. Per Ms. Miller's request, Chief Craft reviewed information on how to obtain Narcan training and why it is necessary. The group then discussed specific areas of concern throughout the city.

Reminder of Meetings

- Next Police Chief's Advisory Board, Thursday, September 21, 2023, at City Hall starting at 7:00 p.m.

Chairman Henderson called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Miller made a motion to adjourn, and Mrs. Cephas seconded the motion. The motion passed with all those present voting in favor. The Meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Ashley S. Blalock, City Clerk