

STRATFORD POLICE SERVICE BOARD

A meeting of the Stratford Police Service Board was held on the 18th day of September 2024, City Hall – Auditorium, 1 Wellington Street, Stratford ON

PRESENT: Tim Doherty (Chair), Steve Cousins, Harjinder Nijjar, Martin Ritsma, Dave Gaffney, Chief Greg Skinner, Deputy Chief Gerry Foster, Inspector Mark Taylor, Inspector Jason Clarke, Constable Darren Fisher, Alec Bish, Brad Rickert (Radio Cab), Gail Cossey (Aunt Gail's Taxi), Tony Rebelo (City Cab), Sunny Marriner, Jasmine Clark, Lisa Wilde, Connor Luczka (media), Casey Riehl (Executive Assistant), Members of the Public

MINUTES

1. Call to order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.

2. Adoption of the September 18, 2024 Agenda and Addition of Agenda Items

Motion by Martin Ritsma | Harjinder Nijjar

THAT the agenda for the regular meeting of September 18, 2024 be adopted as presented. Carried

3. Declarations of Pecuniary Interest and the General Nature Thereof

None declared.

4. Adoption of the Minutes from the Regular Meeting of June 19, 2024

Motion by Steve Cousins | Harjinder Nijjar

THAT the minutes of the regular meeting of June 19, 2024 be adopted as printed. Carried

5. Hearings of Deputations and Presentations

5.1 Proposed Taxi Fare Increase Request – Tony Rebelo, City Cab

Tony Rebelo addressed the Board regarding his concern with raising the current taxi fares to \$16.00 per ride. In his opinion, raising it \$2.00 per ride is too much at this time. He is not disagreeing that the industry is getting more and more expensive, however feels they will lose even more ridership by putting the fares up too much. He would support a slight increase for the cost of living and minimum wage increase and then revisit the fare system at a later date.

5.2 Proposed Taxi Fare Increase Request – Gail Cossey, Aunt Gail's Taxi

Gail Cossey addressed the Board to reiterate why they feel the increase to \$16.00 per ride is necessary. They had requested three years ago to

increase the fares to \$15.00 per ride to get them level with inflation and with the rising costs of operating a taxi. Expenses have greatly increased and now the minimum wage is increasing to \$17.20 on October 1, 2024. In 2012 the minimum wage was \$10.25 and fares were \$9.00. In her opinion, there is a need for the increase in order to keep their businesses running. Currently, they are basically wage-poor and expense-poor. It is her hope that the Board will support the \$2.00/ride increase.

Tim Doherty suggested tabling the motion to increase fares today and that a future meeting could be scheduled between Board members and all the taxi owners to dedicate time to having a more fulsome discussion about taxi fares, how do we license them, how do they request increases, etc. Staff could also be invited to assist in discussions. Tim Doherty and Martin Ritsma will schedule a meeting with the City Clerk to discuss the process of amending the current taxi by-law as it stands now.

Brad Rickert stated that it would have been his hope that the three taxi companies could attend the Board meeting as a united group, however that is not the case. Mr. Rickert would like to see the by-law amended with discussions between the Board, City staff and the taxi providers. He would like to see the requested increase voted on today, with future discussions on amending the by-law at a later date.

Motion by Martin Ritsma | Harjinder Nijjar

THAT the Stratford Police Service Board table the motion to increase the current taxi fare to a future meeting after discussions can be held with Stratford Police, Stratford Police Service Board, City Staff and Stratford taxi providers. Carried

5.3 Discussion on Accessible Taxis and Wheelchair Ramps

Martin Ritsma inquired with the taxi operators the possibility of an accessible taxi service in Stratford and some concerns about the aging population and the need for accessible taxis.

Brad Rickert stated that in larger cities, when you have a scale of 50-100 vehicles, a company of that size and financial capabilities, must have a certain number of accessible taxi's in their fleet. When you are a smaller operator, such as the ones in Stratford, an accessible vehicle is approximately \$90,000.00-\$100,000.00 to purchase. In addition to the cost of purchasing the vehicle, insurance costs for accessible vehicles is much higher, making it not financially feasible for individual companies in a town of this size to purchase and operate an accessible taxi because the fares must remain the same as a regular taxi fares.

Gail Cossey, Brad Rickert and Tony Rebelo no longer present at the meeting (4:52 p.m.)

5.4 Sexual Assault Advocate Case Review Update and Next Steps – Sunny Marriner

Sunny Marriner introduced herself and fellow community advocate leaders Jasmine Clark and Lisa Wilde. Ms. Marriner shared a presentation that outlined sexual assault case reviews and the progress made in the model for case reviews in Stratford since it began in 2017. Amongst communities, Stratford has shown a leadership role with their eagerness and willingness to participate in VACR. Advocate experts identify where log jams are happening, what is causing them and being part of the solution. Reviewers determine what happened that made this case unable to proceed, are there policy issues, resourcing issues, training issues, an issue being driven by another agency or possibly a cultural issue to consider. The goal has always been to create a useful and contributory systemic change.

With no stand-alone independent sexual assault centre in Stratford, the Emily Murphy Centre and Optimism Place are the agencies here that triage these occurrences. The victims in the cases that are reviewed are age 16 and over and subjects in cases are 18 and over.

Over the years they have developed a more precise, cross-country consistency with their reporting. It includes developing more responsive, standardized tools, training for reviewers is more comprehensive and an on-going community of practice.

Chief Skinner noted that these investigations are very complex. Victims and situations are very unique, sometimes their trust in police can be a challenge. Investigators use techniques to build up trust early on in the process to gather the best evidence they can and provide the right support for the victim in that environment so that they feel comfortable bringing their information forward. He added that the addition of body-worn cameras has been a very valuable addition to the investigative process and for these reviews. The reviewers can see the formal investigative interview, but they are also able to see the initial interaction between the victim and the responding officer. This goes a long way filling in some of the gaps and questions that the reviewer may have had.

While Ms. Marriner is in Stratford, they will be conducting on-going training, on-going reviews of cases that are currently before the review committee, as well as an opportunity to discuss the next steps with this program.

5.5 Enhanced Social Media Presence – Constable Darren Fisher and Alec Bish

Constable Darren Fisher, Community Resource and Media Relations Officer for the Stratford Police, addressed the Board to discuss their current social media position. Alec Bish was hired as a part-time Social Media Coordinator for the Stratford Police over the last three months to increase their social media presence. Mr. Bish is a film student whose long term goal is to become a police officer. One of his tasks was to put together a new recruitment video to advertise working within the City of Stratford for the Stratford Police Service.

During Alec Bish's contract, he has accomplished the following projects:

- has set up an automatic response system on the social media outlets that deters people from going through social media to make reports and ensure that reporting is done through the proper channels
- Frequent postings on social media across all platforms – X, Facebook, Instagram to be more consistent on a daily and weekly basis
- Created and designed a standardized social media platform for a more uniform presence
- Created a dedicated page for the Town of St. Marys. Perth South is included on the St. Marys page.
- Documenting community events and increasing community engagement
- Sharing public safety awareness – programs and campaigns
- Created a new recruitment video to attract people to the Stratford Police Service (Mr. Bish shared the video with members)

In the future, there are plans to do a website overhaul, develop a careers page and continued community engagement. It is Mr. Bish's hope to continue in some capacity with the Stratford Police Service assisting with their social media development.

Constable Fisher and Alec Bish no longer present at the meeting (5:45 p.m.)

6. Business Arising from Previous Minutes

6.1 Motion to Increase Taxi Fares/Adoption of Amended By-Law (Schedule D Fares)

As stated above, this item has been deferred pending Board discussions with staff and taxi operators on a long-term solution.

6.2 Update on Stratford Police Station

Chief Skinner reported that the new accessible ramp for 17 George Street is scheduled to be installed in the next couple of weeks and will bring the entrance into compliance with the AODA.

Signage on Erie Street was installed in August to direct the public to the Administration Centre at 789 Erie Street.

Chief Skinner has met with the City's CAO and the options for next steps for moving forward with a new police station are as follows:

- A decision to proceed with renovations and an addition at the existing location on the vacant city-owned property at 39 George Street;
- Create a business case to present to the Board – artist rendering, site elevation, budget cost estimate, estimated construction timelines, etc. Once approved by the Board, this proposal will be forwarded to City Council for final approval.

Is it the decision of the Board to focus solely on an addition and renovation to the current 17 George Street police location, or would they like to investigate other options as well?

An independent review of the current building was previously completed and it was the position of the reviewer that it would be appropriate to renovate the existing building. The space beside the building is suitable to build on and provides adequate space for the square footage required.

Harjinder Nijjar inquired if investigating other locations within the City is a consideration? Such as relocating to the outskirts of town or considering a different building such as the old Scotia Bank building. Chief Skinner stated that the issue they would have at the Scotia Bank Building is that it would not meet the post disaster level of construction that is required for police infrastructure. They could not put any operational units there as it is not built to this standard. This would be the case at any buildings within Stratford and would not be suitable to pass for permits. Dave Gaffney questions if they should be investigating building a brand new building being more feasible versus the costs involved with renovating. Martin Ritsma stated that requesting a report on the renovation and addition of the existing station will answer the questions regarding costs.

Jason Clark has volunteered to form an internal committee to ensure that the wants and needs of the Police Service are also met.

Motion by Martin Ritsma | Dave Gaffney

THAT the Stratford Police Service Board requests Chief Skinner continue working on a feasibility report regarding the addition and

renovation of the existing Stratford Police Station located at 17 George Street. Carried

6.3 PSB Policy Review – Approval of Policies

All policies received to date have been reviewed. At the October 16, 2024 PSB meeting the Board will move forward with the intent of the approval of these policies. Tim Doherty will follow-up with Dave Preston for an update on the status of any additional policies requiring review.

7. Receipt of Monthly Statistical Reports (June/July/August 2024) and Crime Stoppers Reports (July/August)

Board members received the statistical reports for June, July and August 2024. Inspector Clarke reviewed the reports with the Board the statistics for the summer with respect to Stratford, St. Marys and Perth South and was available for questions.

7.1 Stratford, St. Marys and Perth South (total combined June-August)

- (6261) calls for service
- (1506) charges laid
- (7) Hate/Bias Incidents
- (172) Mental Health Calls for Service
- (7) Suicides or Attempts
- (5) Overdoses
- (198) Domestic Calls for Service
- (44) Assaults
- (1) Robbery
- (12) Sexual Offences
- (5) Auto Thefts
- (23) Break & Enters
- (61) Fraud
- (95) Theft Under Charges
- (22) Drug Offences
- (27) Impaired Charges
- (218) Motor Vehicle Collisions

The highest volume over the summer was spent on calls for services, domestic related calls and thefts under. Impaired driving charges were high during the month of August.

Dave Gaffney inquired about the hate/bias incidents all happening during the month of June and if Inspector Clarke could state what type of incidents were happening. Inspector Clarke will look back on the reports and let Board members know.

Motion by Harjinder Nijjar | Dave Gaffney

THAT the Monthly Statistical Reports for June, July and August 2024 be received as presented. Carried

7.2 Crime Stoppers Report (July & August 2024)

Chief Skinner reviewed the July & August 2024 Crime Stoppers Reports:

- (20) total tips received for Stratford in July – (3) were drug related and (17) were intelligence related
- Top tips by type for July: drugs (8), warrants (6), breaches (4)
- (16) total tips received for Stratford in August – (5) were drug related and (11) were intelligence related
- Top tips by type for August were: drugs (8), other criminal code (8), provincial statutes (2) and fraud (2)

Motion by Steve Cousins | Harjinder Nijjar

THAT the July & August 2024 Crime Stoppers report be received as presented. Carried

Chief Skinner noted that as of early September 2024, the Stratford Police Service took over the Huron Perth Crime Stoppers coordination responsibilities.

8. Approval of Monthly Accounts (As of August 31, 2024)

Chief Skinner reported that they would expect to be at 66.7% of their budget at the end of August and they are currently at 66.6% or \$9,208,239.00 of their \$13,821,228.00 annual budget.

One-time expenditures in this year's budget have been absorbed into the original allocations. They would expect to see a small surplus this time of the year, however that surplus has been spent on the one-time expenses for the new location at 789 Erie Street. They do expect that there will be further reconciliation of grants that will add to their revenues that will offset some of the expenses.

They are experiencing higher than usual premium expenses related to overtime costs. They have a number of people off from front line due to injury or illness and in order to maintain community and officer safety they have had to rely on overtime to support our front line officer availability. Specifically, they are anticipating overtime expenses exceeding the budgeted amount by \$100,000.00. They have put some measures in place to try to diminish overtime and allow people to have the time off they need to be able to decompress and re-energize. Now that they are out of the peak summertime workload and vacation period and they have members back from OPC, they should be in a better position to cover their operational needs and reduce their overtime costs.

Legal expenses continue to climb, they are sitting with a significant deficit compared to their anticipated costs that were budgeted. These costs relate to civil proceedings, grievances and the commencement of several processes against the Service and Counsel attempting to have the Court deem that individual to be a vexatious litigant.

MOTION by Steve Cousins | Harjinder Nijjar

**That the monthly accounts for August 2024 be approved as presented.
Carried**

9. Police Association Business

None noted.

10. Public Complaints

Chief Skinner reported that there were (3) new LECA mandated complaints received. All three were screened out and did not proceed to investigation. However, there was information added to one of the complaints that changed the status and is now assigned for investigation. There had been a previous complaint assigned for investigation and that investigation has been completed and the result was that the allegations were not substantiated. The complainant and LECA have both been advised of the finding and they are awaiting the appeal period should there be a request for the review of the Chief's decision.

11. Correspondence

None noted.

12. Consent Items

12.1 Motion by Martin Ritsma | Dave Gaffney

**THAT on the recommendation of the Chief of Police Kaustubh Anil PATIL (Aunt Gail's Taxi), Scott J. DAVIS (Aunt Gail's Taxi) and Anil THAKOLKAREN (City Cab Inc.) be approved for taxi licenses.
Carried.**

13. New Business

13.1 Local Advisory Committee

Chief Skinner reported that a local advisory committee has been formed and Inspector Taylor is taking the lead on this committee. It consists of members from a number of units and areas within the organization, including the Police Association executive. They will be looking at a number of items that could be improved on within the Service and changes that they may be able to make along the way.

13.2 Meetings with Staff

Chief Skinner reported that over the summer he completed a number of one on one meetings with staff. He has four remaining to do. The meetings were all very positive, respectful and constructive. The common themes that came out of these meetings were staffing, structure, consistency and accountability. These types of concerns will be what the local advisory committee will be addressing.

13.3 Leadership Training

Chief Skinner reported that the Board had arranged for Leadership Training for the supervisory staff for the Service with the OAPSB. The training is now tentatively set for November 12, 2024. He had an opportunity to meet with an individual from Global Priority Solutions who has trained people all over the world in the security field on value-based leadership. He will continue these discussions and will look into rolling out this training to the whole county in the future, so it is not police-specific, it will be the entirety of the community safety and wellbeing catchment area.

13.4 Traffic Light and Photo-Radar Technology

Martin Ritsma inquired if a discussion could begin on the feasibility of having traffic light and photo-radar technology in Stratford. He would like to gain some information about this in relation to other municipalities similar to Stratford.

Chief Skinner agrees that having traffic light and photo-radar technology would be a significantly positive enhancement to community safety within the city. The issue is going to be the back office support. It is very expensive to run these programs administratively. Chief Skinner noted that Waterloo is using Toronto for their administrative purposes and are in the process of starting their own data processing centers. It is the Chiefs hope that when they get up and running in 2026-27, that Stratford may be able to piggy-back on Waterloo and put the infrastructure in place so that they can replicate what they are doing with their red light camera program.

Chief Skinner will investigate what cities and local municipalities are using red light and photo-radar technology. He is not aware of any similar sized municipalities as Stratford using this technology, but will look into cities such as London.

Dave Gaffney stated that there are 44 municipalities in Ontario, with 292 total cameras in use. Which indicates that not many cities or municipalities are using them.

13.5 Safety in School Zone Areas

Martin Ritsma has received a large number of calls regarding parking in school zones at drop off and pick up times. Constable Darren Fisher is working at resolving some of these issues, however is there something that can be done to support his efforts?

Chief Skinner stated that schools are trying their best to deal with the situation with little success. It comes down to a voluntary compliance piece. When people do not voluntarily comply with the rules and they want to make up their own rules, there needs to be consequences. The police cannot be at every school every day and they have to rely on some kind of parental system that is in place to support the school to make sure their kids are safe. He has received many calls as well and he too is very concerned that someone is going to get seriously injured or killed by running out from between parked cars that should not be there. He appreciates all the traffic calming measures that the city has put in place to try and slow the traffic down, they just need people to comply and be respectful of the school systems that they have in place.

Staff will contact Constable Darren Fisher to inquire if he can attend an upcoming PSB meeting to discuss this issue.

14. Adjournment to In-Camera Meeting

Motion by Steve Cousins | Dave Gaffney

THAT the meeting adjourn to an In-Camera session to discuss personal matters about identifiable individuals, to reconvene in open session if required. Carried

The meeting adjourned to In-Camera at 6:25 p.m.

cr

Tim Doherty - Chair