

STRATFORD POLICE SERVICE BOARD

A meeting of the Stratford Police Service Board was held on the 11th day of December 2024, City Hall – Auditorium, 1 Wellington Street, Stratford ON

PRESENT: Tim Doherty (Chair), Martin Ritsma, Steve Cousins, Harjinder Nijjar, Chief Greg Skinner, Deputy Chief Gerry Foster, Inspector Mark Taylor, Sergeant Rob McMillan (Stratford Police Association), Casey Riehl (Executive Assistant), Phil Psutka

MINUTES

1. Call to order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

2. Adoption of the December 11, 2024 Agenda and Addition of Agenda Items

Motion by Steve Cousins | Harjinder Nijjar

THAT the agenda for the regular meeting of December 11, 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 November 20, 2024

Motion by Martin Ritsma | Harjinder Nijjar

THAT the minutes of the regular meeting of November 20, 2024 be adopted as printed. Carried

5. Hearings of Deputations and Presentations

None noted.

6. Business Arising from Previous Minutes

6.1 Police Station Update

Chief Skinner reported that Inspector Clake has now convened an internal committee to discuss the police station and the needs of the existing building. This is a group of interested people who are willing to look at having input into a new building or build onto the existing building. 17 George Street has recently experienced some challenges with respect to the upgrades currently taking place. This has caused understandable frustration with staff, most notably the leaking roof. The elevator has now been fixed and is functional. The committee did discuss some alternatives to the 17 George Street location, given the problems encountered with renovations recently and the attempt to maintain the building. Chief Skinner will request Inspector Clarke discuss some of the concerns and options at the next PSB meeting.

Tim Doherty inquired if the issue of a renovation or new building for the police station is gaining any traction? Chief Skinner stated that it has been a discussion for a very long time. There has been a renovation plan worked on, as there was a desire to remain in the downtown location. However, with the current renovations taking place and the issues that have created many new challenges, it raises the question if the structure of 17 George Street is suitable for the long term. Do they continue to invest in a building that is past its useful life or do they look at something else. Plans are moving forward, unfortunately at a very slow rate.

Harjinder Nijjar inquired what specifications are required to be followed when building a police station? Is it a municipal by-law or is it governed provincially? Chief Skinner explained it is the Provincial Building Code that is followed; however, it is also the local CBO's interpretation of that building code.

Martin Ritsma inquired if based on what is currently going on at the police station now, should a new engineering report be done? Chief Skinner stated that there were two parts to the original report. Part one was the structural suitability of the existing building. At the time the original report was completed, the building was structurally sound. There had been some additional supports added over the years but was structurally sound and suitable for any renovation that the City or Police Service wanted to do. The second part of the report was if there is any additional land surrounding the building that is suitable for construction. The engineering report came back and stated that the parking lot at 100 St. Patrick Street was not suitable for excavation and remediation of the soil, which would make it cost prohibitive. The piece of property between Barr's and 17 George Street would be suitable for construction and could possibly house a 30,000 square foot structure. As far as requiring a subsequent engineering report, Chief Skinner will consult with the City's Engineering Department to see what their assessment of the issues has been and if it would be required.

7. Receipt of Monthly Statistical Reports (November 2024)

Board members received the statistical reports for November 2024. Inspector Taylor reviewed the reports with the Board with respect to Stratford, St. Marys and Perth South and was available for questions.

7.1 Stratford

- (1536) calls for service
- (325) charges laid
- (56) M/H related occurrences
- (21) break & enters
- (25) shoplifting occurrences

- (26) theft under
- (91) MVC's

7.2 St. Marys

- (176) calls for service
- (32) charged laid
- (3) false alarms
- (5) M/H related occurrences
- (8) MVC's, up from (3) last month

7.3 Perth South

- (129) calls for service
- (68) charges laid
- (1) M/H related occurrence
- (21) MVC's, up from (5) last month

Motion by Steve Cousins | Harjinder Nijjar

THAT the Monthly Statistical Reports for November 2024 be received as presented. Carried

7.4 Crime Stoppers Report (October 2024)

Chief Skinner reported that there were 41 new calls that came into Huron-Perth Crime Stoppers during the month. (14) were Stratford Police tips – (4) drug related, (10) intelligence related. Top tips by type were drug-related (11), provincial statutes (6) and impaired driving (5). Additionally, there was (1) child pornography and (1) racism tip called in.

Motion by Steve Cousins | Martin Ritsma

THAT the Crime Stoppers Report for October 2024 be received as presented. Carried

8. Approval of Monthly Accounts (As of November 30, 2024)

Chief Skinner reported that they are eleven months into the fiscal year and would expect to be at approximately 91.7% of the budget. To date the Services has spent \$12.7 million, which represents 92% of the budget allocation. One-time expenditures at 789 Erie Street have been absorbed into the budget and he expects to see some reconciliation of reserve accounts at year-end to offset some of those expenditures. There will also be further reconciliations of grants that will add to the revenue and offset expenses, specifically overtime costs. They have budgeted to receive approximately \$1.7 million in grants, and to date have received \$620,000.00. The overtime costs have been a challenge on the budget and to staff. The overtime payout in December will be approximately \$113,000.00, which will put them over the \$100,000.00 in that budget line. Legal expenses continue to climb and the Service is at a significant deficit on that line item.

Chief Skinner noted that the overtime to cover minimum staffing levels for November went down drastically, due to changes in minimum staffing, call-ins and changing shifts.

MOTION by Steve Cousins | Harjinder Nijjar

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

9. Police Association Business

Sergeant Rob McMillan reported that the Association has been working closely with various internal committees and groups. Tim Doherty inquired with Sergeant McMillan what he feels is the level of frustration among members with the current facility being provided to them. Sergeant McMillan stated it would likely be a nine.

10. Public Complaints

Chief Skinner updated the Board that there were two new complaints from the public received through LECA in November and both have been assigned for investigation.

There were two other complaints that had been under investigation with the final investigative reports completed and submitted. In both incidents, the allegations of misconduct against the officers were unsubstantiated. The closing letters have been written and distributed to the complainants. They are now in the waiting period to hear from both complainants if they are requesting a review of the unsubstantiated findings through LECA.

At the January meeting, Chief Skinner will have the report outlining the public complaints relating to the members of the Police Service for 2024 and any outstanding complaints.

11. Correspondence

None noted.

12. Consent Items

12.1 Motion by Steve Cousins | Harjinder Nijjar

THAT on the recommendation of the Deputy Chief of Police, the Stratford Police Service Board approves Ryan E. McLean (City Cab) for a taxi license. Carried.

13. New Business

13.1 MCRT Funding

Chief Skinner reported that Stratford, as well as surrounding police detachments they work with, submitted applications for MCRT funding for the next three years, unfortunately none of them were successful in receiving funding. Not having funding for the next three years will have a huge impact on how the Services can deal with mental health and homelessness issues, particularly after hours. The hospital will continue to receive funding for 2.2 FTE's. As part of the executive committee, they determined that eight FTE's would be the proper number to have to deal with the workload for Huron, Perth, Stratford and St. Mary's. The MCRT program for frontline officers will be greatly missed to have the support and help navigating the processes of assessing people's mental health prior to having to be transported to the hospital.

Martin Ritsma has sent a letter on behalf of Stratford to the Provincial Government stating that police services such as Stratford also require funding as the recent announcement was just made that there will be \$77 million funding for the O.P.P. Tim Doherty noted that at a recent Region 5 PSB meeting, West Grey reported that they have sent a letter to the Solicitor General outlining their disappointment with the funding that has been sent directly to O.P.P. serviced municipalities and leaving out local police services. Mr. Doherty suggested that the Stratford PSB could also send a similar letter and volunteered to draft the letter and will share with Board members.

Chief Skinner clarified that the \$77 million is going towards supporting municipalities, it is not going to the bottom-line budget of the O.P.P. The process put in place by the Solicitor General has been to offer funds to municipalities that are policed by the O.P.P. to cushion the increased costs as a result of wage settlements that have been made.

With some smaller municipalities moving to being policed by the O.P.P. due to rising costs of having their own police service, Tim Doherty stated that moving to O.P.P. is the farthest from the Boards intention to even consider. They absolutely want to maintain a municipal police service.

Tim Doherty inquired what Stratford and Area will do moving forward now that they did not receive any funding? Chief Skinner stated that the feedback they have received from the Ministry is that if the MCRT program is important to your municipality, you should be funding it locally. Alternatively, there are other grants that will be coming out that can be applied for. Chief Skinner stated that there is an MCRT Executive Leadership

Committee meeting next week where they will discuss with people who are fully engaged with the Ministry of Health and their funding of the MCRT program. There is also the possibility of using the Medavie program to fill the gap after someone has been hospitalized and discharged to provide follow up and after care, however it is not for responding to people in crisis.

13.2 Jim Aitchison, Mayor Perth South

Chief Skinner updated the Board that the Mayor of Perth South, Jim Aitchison has recently passed away. Deputy Mayor Sue Orr has now been confirmed as the Mayor of Perth South for the remainder of this Council term.

13.3 Budget Update

Chief Skinner reported that he and the Deputy Chief presented the Board approved budget to the Finance Committee on November 28, 2024. There were many good comments and questions about recent policing issues and the interaction with the Committee was positive. It was mentioned by some members of Council on the Committee that it would be helpful for the police to do in-year presentations to Council. It is important to note that the Police Service has a legislative responsibility to report to the Board. If there was a desire to do semi-annual presentations to Council by Police, he would recommend that the Board request the opportunity to present and that senior leadership make that presentation alongside Board representatives. Tim Doherty stated this would be a worthwhile process to have in place.

Motion by Martin Ritsma | Harjinder Nijjar

THAT Stratford Police Service Board representatives and Senior Leadership present semi-annual updates to Council. Carried

14. Adjournment to In-Camera Meeting

Motion by Martin Ritsma | Harjinder Nijjar

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 3:46 p.m.