



Town of Cedar Lake Board of Safety Public Meeting Minutes Wednesday, May 24, 2023 at 6:15 PM

CALL TO ORDER: Norm Stick called the meeting to order at 6:15 pm.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

ROLL CALL:

	Vacant, Member	Present	William Fisher, Police Chief
Present	James Olthoff, Member	Present	Todd Wilkening, Fire Chief
Present	David Villalobos, Member	Present	Carl Brittingham, Deputy Chief Police
Present	Lester Kaper, Vice Chairman	Present	Nick Mager, Deputy Chief Fire
Present	Norman Stick, Chairman	Present	Ralph Miller, Town Council Liaison
		Present	Nick Recupito, Town Council Liaison
		Present	David Austgen, Town Attorney

PUBLIC COMMENT: Stick called for Public Comment. Diane Korach (14630 Euclid Street, Unit D), stated she addressed her concerns to the Board last month and has not heard anything from anyone in the last month. Stick explained that no one was able to call until an investigation was completed. Stick explained the Board reviewed the investigation findings, 911 audio calls and the body camera footage today and would address it in the Police Department Report to follow (noted below). Stick explained to Korach that he was unable to return her call until the investigation was complete. She asked why the other six did not return her call and he explained he was unable to answer why they did not respond to her. Stick asked Korach if she would like to view the body camera footage from the officer who responded and she responded she did not need to see it as she knew what happened. Korach stated someone needed to address matters and no more houses or subdivisions should be built or added if they cannot take care of what is already here.

Stick called for Public Comment three times; none received.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES for Wednesday, April 26 22, 2023 Public Meeting: A motion was made by Charlie Kaper, seconded by Jim Olthoff, to approve the meeting minutes. Roll call vote: Olthoff – Yes, Villalobos – Yes, Kaper – Yes, Stick – Yes. Vote: 4-0.

VIPS REPORT: Lieutenant Layer reviewed the report noting everyone made their hours except Van Diver. Van Diver was given his first written warning for not meeting his hours. Layer reviewed call outs including crossing guard duty, utility problem and an agency assist at Walmart.

POLICE DEPARTMENT:

Investigation Results/Follow Up – Korach Public Comment from April 26, 2023 Meeting: Stick asked Chief Fisher to review the complaint from Ms. Korach. Fisher explained he was not at the meeting when the complaint was made but that Deputy Chief Brittingham investigated the complaint. Fisher stated Korach stated the response time was 48 minutes and they have radio logs and evidence of the officers being on scene within the first 7-8 minutes. He explained that

dispatchers noted the first call would have an officer come check the area because on the recorded call, the individual that knocked on her door, which Korach stated he knocked on the wood part of her door on the 911 recording, officers checked the area to search the area, but they did not go to the residence as it was reported the person had left the scene. Fisher explained that sometimes during a suspicious person call, depending on how it is dispatched, is whether or not an officer will stop to speak with someone. After the call was cleared, the second 911 call came in about 10 minutes later with Korach asking why the officers did not come. The dispatcher explained to Korach that the officers had previously been out but did not stop to speak with her since the person was not in the area. Dispatcher asked Korach if she wanted an officer to speak with her and Korach confirmed "yes please." The dispatcher told Korach that she would send an officer when one was available. Fisher explained there had been a large domestic dispute happening at that time and since the person at the Korach residence was no longer in the area, they believed there was nothing further going on at the time. He stated Officer Matson arrived after a third 911 call arrived from Korach's son, who was routed through Will County. Fisher stated Matson explained officers previously had come out, he stayed with her, as seen on the body camera footage, until Korach left with her daughter. Fisher stated that possibly more discussion should take place with dispatchers on how the calls are presented regarding suspicious people and whether or not the resident wants an officer present to speak with them or not. Fisher stated that her claim is considered to be unfounded and believed the officers did what they needed to do at the time. Stick told Korach they reviewed the actual 911 audio recordings, reviewed the body camera footage, the pictures Korach provided and spoke with the officer. He stated the Board has deemed the complaint as unfounded. Korach stated that most of what was stated was true but she stated that the person was not knocking and that she called because the person was jiggling her door, trying to get in. She did not feel he was a suspicious person but rather someone trying to get into her home. Korach again told Stick she did not need to hear the recording. Fisher stated the recording notes her stating he knocked on the wood part of the door and states the person had the wrong house. Korach stated she would not have wasted anyone's time for someone knocking on her door. Fisher stated that the "jiggling part" was not ever mentioned in the 911 call. Korach then stated to go ahead and play the call. Fisher played the call for Korach and everyone in the room. Korach apologized.

Communications: Chief Fisher read a thank you regarding a call from Dennis Keesey regarding assisting his wife with a medical assistance call. Fisher stated that Protecting K9 Heroes, who donated our canine to our department, is having Open House for being in the office one year in Cedar Lake and will be held June 11 from 12-4. He invited everyone to attend to meet the K9, other dogs, have some food and meet her.

Finances – Purchase Orders, Expenditure Reports & Grants: Chief Fisher stated there have been a lot of vehicle repairs lately, including a VIPS vehicle that had a mouse that caused some damage. Fisher referred to a table across the room for individuals to check out the shields that had been purchased with donation money from Crown Point Community Foundation and Cedar Lake Summerfest. He noted five had been purchased, one for each supervisor vehicle and one for on station and Sergeant Miller would be providing training for all of the officers on how to use them.

Staffing: Chief Fisher stated the department inspection and photo was going to be moved from May 31, 2023 to August 30, 2023 as several officers due to previous obligations and the K9 officer still being in training. He reported the new recruits are doing well. Enyeart is in phase 2 and

should be finished before the next meeting, noting things were very close to being identical to what he did at his previous department. Stolarz is in phase 2 and goes for physical assessment for the academy on July 24.

Training Report: Chief Fisher reported K9 Johnny 1 had some issues during training that could not be worked out. He will become a house dog. Officer Tomko was issued K9 Johnny 2, they are still in training and should have certifications issued with just an additional week of training. They will be working one-on-one with trainers for the last week.

Equipment: Chief Fisher stated 4 squad cars are sitting at Thomas Dodge, the Council approved the purchase in April, the Clerk Treasurer completed the financing, the financing company is awaiting the Town Attorney signing off on the documentation. Austgen stated he was unsure about receiving it. Fisher stated the Clerk Treasurer sent it two days ago in an email and as soon as the attorney signs off on it, the cars can be taken to PDS. He stated it would take approximately 8 weeks once they get to PDS to be completely outfitted with equipment before they can be on the road. Fisher stated they are in desperate need of operating vehicles as two vehicles were completely down with major repairs, noting #53 and #55.

Monthly Activity Report: Chief Fisher reported 1231 calls for service in the month of April, averaging 43 calls per day. He reported: 139 state citations, 491 traffic warnings, 29 arrests with 46 charges, 36 misdemeanors, 8 felonies and 2 warrants for 115 total year-to-date arrests and 192 charges filed. He stated traffic stops are on an increase with 534 for the month.

Lexipol Recommended Policy Update: Chief Fisher reported the Wellness Policy would be brought back for approval at the next meeting. He stated that as part of the Wellness Program, a Peer Support Group, which he asked Sergeant Miller to come in and explain what the department was doing. Sergeant Miller, who was selected anonymously by the department as the Peer Support person, presented a Power Point presentation on peer support, statistics, collaborative work with the chaplains, Fire Department, DNR and Lake County to provide support, process stressful situations and PTSD, coping with depression and anxiety, and address the needs of our department. Miller explained the interactions would not be recorded, remain confidential, would not be used for disciplinary action, would not be considered mental health treatment and is completely voluntary. Miller explained, when he was in the military, he had something similar to this program and it did help him. He noted that the department has not had a program like this and feels it would be extremely beneficial moving forward. Olthoff expressed how helpful using critical incident debriefing when he was working. Miller clarified for Villalobos that voluntary would become mandatory if the person was struggling with thoughts of hurting themselves or others and they would be referred to someone with more qualifications for treatment. Chief Fisher stated this would also be addressed in the Wellness Policy under self-reporting and mandated-reporting. Miller explained that for group debriefings, they would collaborate with the EAP to bring in trained professionals to assist on a higher level as well.

Other: Chief Fisher reported he would be meeting with Lisa Scott from Geminus to go over the Too Good for Drugs program with the Hanover School Administration.

Chief Fisher introduced Brian Dieckmann, Director of Access to Care, who presented information regarding a pilot program with Region Mental Health Services, and requested the Board to send Favorable Recommendation to the Town Council to approve the MOU, noting it would not cost the Town anything. Dieckmann explained this program would utilize officers to clear the scene for safety, make contact with Access to Care to have their staff respond to the scene and they would provide services anywhere from hospitalization to linking to community groups. He stated there would be no cost to the Town. The Towns chosen to participate were Cedar Lake, Griffith and St. John for geographic reasons and noting they are more progressive in this way especially with CIT policing. He stated there are 15 officers in Lake County trained as part of the Critical Incident Team. He stated the target date was initially September 1, but believes that may be delayed a few months, noting there was to be on July 1 a crisis receiving and stabilization unit up and running, but the State has not finalized anything. The program would take stress off of the responding officers and not leave people in jail that would be suited in a mental health environment. Chief Fisher stated the MOU would need to go before the Town Council and attorney for review, would add no cost to the Town and Dieckmann would be working on attaining grants to provide for mobile units responding to Cedar Lake. Fisher confirmed to Villalobos that there was an error in the wrong MOU being placed in the packet for their review, he would supply them with a copy of it and they could vote on it for next month.

FIRE DEPARTMENT:

Communications: Chief Wilkening indicated the Volunteers sent out their fundraising mailer with a drawing to be held in July.

Finances – Purchase Orders, Expenditure Reports & Grants: Chief Wilkening reviewed the purchase orders and expenditure reports noting \$34,491.22 in purchases and repairs, highlighting \$10,000 in bunker gear to replace outdated gear. Wilkening confirmed to Stick that the pants and coat were \$3500 each, not including the boots, mask, etc., and the entire cost to fully equip someone was \$10,000. He stated Lucas ProCare Service included service to the cots and equipment that do chest compressions and pull the unit in/out of the ambulance. He stated he tried obtaining a 3-year contract with them to save some funds, but the Clerk-Treasurer did not want to enter into a contract, so they are paying a 1-year contract at a time in the amount of \$7,000.

Staffing: Chief Wilkening stated they interviewed three new candidates for the emergency hire and are prepared to make an offer to Firefighter/Paramedic Todd Konradi and asked the Board to consider approving and sending Favorable Recommendation to Town Council for the conditional offer of employment, contingent upon his PERF approval. Wilkening stated Konradi is a 17-year veteran of another department, coming to CLFD with a lot of experience, and would be a lateral transfer. Wilkening stated another paramedic/firefighter is currently on administrative leave and one paramedic/firefighter off for the past couple of weeks on family medical emergency leave, hoping he will return this weekend as the family member is improving. Wilkening stated that the other two interviewed who were not selected would be placed on a hiring list, noting one as a paramedic and 3 EMTs, if any openings become available. Wilkening confirmed with Stick that a policy was being developed regarding the hiring process and would be presented at the next Board of Safety meeting for their approval. A motion was made by Charlie Kaper, seconded by Jim Olthoff, to approve hiring Todd Konradi as Firefighter/Paramedic. Roll call vote: Olthoff – Yes, Villalobos – Yes, Kaper – Yes, Stick – Yes. Vote: 4-0.

Wilkening stated the volunteers approved at the previous meeting start at the academy in July. He stated they were able to find bunker gear to fit them and would not need gear.

Training Report: Deputy Chief Mager reviewed the monthly report, noting 534 total training hours logged for the month. Chief Wilkening reported agencies throughout the county participated in dive week, in which Cedar Lake hosted a couple days. Boat and sonar operations training along with dredging awareness training took place. He stated the boat would be on the lake this weekend with the anticipation of nice weather and the holiday weekend.

Equipment: Chief Wilkening reported the ladder truck was back in service after repairs for electrical issues with the outriggers. Township Engine 1212 had airbags replaced. The second ambulance is in the shop for drive shaft issues. Stick asked for Wilkening to share with the Board photos of the damage to the ambulance and an update. Wilkening stated it had a gouge, but did not penetrate, is scheduled for Auto Touch Body Shop to repair but was waiting on availability in the next two weeks. He reported the 1994 Suburban was fixed with the assistance of IT Director Wroe.

Monthly Activity Report: Chief Wilkening reviewed the report noting 156 calls for service for the month and 750 for the year.

Lexipol Recommended Policy Update: Chief Wilkening reported two updates that were being reviewed and he is going to be putting together a policy for the hiring process for the Board's approval.

Other: Chief Wilkening reflected on previous discussion on the Peer Support Program noting he remembers quite a few difficult calls that have stuck with him all of these years. He said that if he did not speak to someone about it, it really would have been more difficult, especially in cases involving children. He said he is proud of the people driving this program and it is not easy for police and fire staff to admit there might be a problem or they are struggling. He reported a department firefighter recently left to take a job at the mill because he was struggling dealing with a call from a few months prior and no one realized he was having trouble and he did not exhibit any signs. He said living and working in a small community, we often know the people we respond to and it stays with you. He appreciates those who are stepping up to provide a variety of options to obtain help.

OTHER

Legal Report from Town Attorney: Attorney Austgen reported still working on the Reconstruction Team MOU. Austgen stated the training reimbursement agreements are items in process that he has been directed to prosecute. Kaper requested that individuals must have an exit interview with the Board before they receive their final paycheck. Austgen suggested it could be included in the agreement or in the personnel policy. Wilkening and Fisher both agreed that the interview was a great idea, but felt it was illegal to withhold a final check. Fisher stated you cannot force an individual to do the interview. Kaper expressed concerns over wanting to learn more why staff were leaving, understanding that some of them were for retirement reasons. Fisher recommended the Board draft a letter to present to individuals leaving requesting they have an exit interview to discuss that. Olthoff and Kaper agreed that the paycheck would not need to be

withheld. Kaper stated the exit interview they did have; they were able to learn more about why the person left. Deputy Chief Brittingham gave an example of another company that had an online survey exit interview. Stick felt a questionnaire given to them to return in a sealed envelope would work. Brittingham stated with the Board's direction and through the Chief of Police, he could come up with a letter inviting them to an exit interview &/or come up with a short survey with questions. If the staff person does not want to do the interview, Brittingham stated that maybe the person would complete the questionnaire. Moore offered to work with Brittingham to come up with something.

Stick stated Austgen wanted to address the policies Mobile Audio/Video and Body Worn Camera, Use of Force and Vehicle Pursuits. Austgen stated he did not need to address them, but felt the Chief of Police needed to make a report on what training took place with them. Fisher reported the Training Coordinator is providing training with each individual crew for those policies mentioned. Fisher stated each officer was required to read and acknowledge the policy. The training coordinator is now going back over and reviewing the policies with them. Fisher indicated they were trying to come up with the policies to be put into a format that can be placed in Police One training where testing could take place to ensure they know the policies. He clarified the review with the Training Coordinator is being done on shift to avoid having to pay out any overtime, other than the Training Coordinator staying over. Villalobos expressed the importance of the review of these and thanked Fisher for staying on top of this. It was agreed that it could be listed as a training report update item for next month. Attorney Austgen requested an executive summary with a few sentences or a paragraph stating it has been processed, noting there is a legal requirement about the Use of Force and Vehicle Pursuits needing documentation.

Town Council Liaison(s) Report: Councilman Recupito reported receiving an email from May 22 regarding a house fire where a resident assisted and asked that the resident be recognized. Chief Wilkening reported obtaining the individual's name and contact information for the Good Samaritan. He stated they were working on attaining a plaque for recognition to have the Board present to the person for waking up a family during a house fire they happened to observe.

New Building Update: Chief Fisher reported dirt expected to start moving next week.

Other: None.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Stick called for Public Comment. Councilman Carnahan announced the Open House for the dredging project to be held at Pinecrest Marina on May 30 from 5-7 pm. Recording Secretary Moore thanked everyone for their good support at the chili cookoff fundraising event. She reported 13 pots of chili competed, many guests, 3 winners (Linda Kralek, Amy Early, and Cliff Wroe) and a little over \$2000 raised for Social Worker Intern Mona Garcia, who not only is making improvements but was also present at the event. She thanked everyone to helped set up, tear down, made chili, CL Vending for donation of beverages, Amy Early and the Chaplains.

Stick called for Public Comment; none received.

ADJOURNMENT: Stick called the meeting adjourned at 7:44 pm.

TOWN OF CEDAR LAKE BOARD OF SAFETY

Norman Stick, Chairman

Lester Kaper, Vice-Chairman

James Olthoff, Member

David Villalobos, Member

Vacant, Member

ATTEST:

Sarah Moore, Recording Secretary