



**Town of Cedar Lake Board of Safety Public Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, June 28, 2023 at 6:00 PM**

CALL TO ORDER: Norm Stick called the meeting to order at 6:01 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 three times; none received.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES for Wednesday, May 24, 2023 Public Meeting: A motion was made by Charlie Kaper, seconded by David Villalobos, to approve the meeting minutes. Roll call vote: Olthoff – Yes, Villalobos – Yes, Kaper – Yes, Stick – Yes. Vote: 4-0.

VIPS REPORT: Chief Fisher reviewed the report noting a total of 71 hours including motorcycle parade and crossing guard details.

FIRE DEPARTMENT

Communications: Chief Wilkening reported dialogue with Hanover Township Trustee Kevin Toth in regards to their food pantry being low. The Firefighters Association agreed to provide financial assistance to the Trustee's food pantry in the amount of \$2000. Councilman Robert Carnahan, present in the audience, mentioned that Project Love Food Pantry was also in need of support. Wilkening indicated they would consider assisting Project Love as well.

Finances – Purchase Orders, Expenditure Reports & Grants: Chief Wilkening reviewed the purchase orders and expenditure reports noting \$9547 total including truck repairs and equipment. Wilkening clarified for Kaper that the tumbler purchase was for employees for EMS week. Wilkening reported one round of the SAFER grant for personnel has been awarded, noting that CLFD was not awarded but they were not cut. He stated they applied as they need more staff for the new station, and it is a 4-year grant. Wilkening reported writing another grant for a training center for to be used by police and fire, which would be 100% funded. He reported overtime high due to loss of 2 firefighters, noting one left to go to the mill and the other resigned. He stated one was replaced with Konradi, the other is going through the PERF process now. He stated he has one staff person on administrative leave. He reported the part-time budget is running high to cover the overtime shifts and they will need to look the line needing increased during their budget discussions.

Staffing: Chief Wilkening stated advertising has taken place for part-time and full-time EMT/firefighters and full-time paramedic for a list to be formed. Stick called for a motion to accept the letter of resignation from James Schultz and the fire department report. A motion was made by Charlie Kaper, seconded by

Jim Olthoff, to approve the resignation and fire department report. Roll call vote: Olthoff – Yes, Villalobos – Yes, Kaper – Yes, Stick – Yes. Vote: 4-0. Villalobos requested a letter be drafted thanking him for his multiple years of service. Wilkening stated Schultz was one of the fire inspectors and he would like to start the process to prepare for the budget next year and preparing a policy for a position that would be part time up to 20 hours a week that he will bring before the Board. He indicated Deputy Chief Mager does all of the new construction inspections now, noting annual inspections average 280 a year.

Training Report: Deputy Chief Mager reviewed the monthly report, noting 888 total training hours logged for the month. 413 hours were noted as special operations and technical training, noting hours being higher than average due to MABAS and rope rescue trainings. Wilkening added training hours were high because training is a high priority with their department and the figures are based on all persons included as a total. Wilkening stated it is important that individuals maintain their certifications. Olthoff stated that it is better to make mistakes in training and also commended Captain Early on the great helicopter training. Wilkening noted the training was a joint training with the police and a great educational experience, despite visibility issues limiting the ability for flight.

Equipment: Chief Wilkening reported discussion with the Council Affairs on replacing the 1993 ambulance. He indicated 18-24 months before it would be received and would like to find a way to get them on rotation. He stated the oldest ambulance is getting work done. Wilkening confirmed to Villalobos the average cost is \$300-350,000. Stick confirmed the Board of Safety is working closely with finance. Councilman Ralph Miller confirmed Council is working on a budget. Wilkening stated they should also strongly consider ordering another engine, which the wait time is approximately 24-36 months. Wilkening stated the manufacturer for the 2006 Township truck is no longer in business, so the parts are getting more difficult to obtain. He reported waiting on an estimate for #1263, noting estimate was \$4-6,000. Mager clarified for Stick that replacement doors would need to be custom built and estimated \$4,500, but noted that did not include the additional body work for the decals and details.

Monthly Activity Report: Deputy Chief Mager reviewed the report noting 170 total calls for service for the month: 133 EMS, 27 Fire and 9 PI Accidents. Incidents by area: 133 Cedar Lake, 28 unincorporated Hanover Township and 9 mutual aid. Mager pointed out the report for the overlapping incidents and incidents by day and time of day. Mager stated their yearly total calls are at 774. Chief Wilkening stated the overlapping calls were at 30%, noting it depletes their staff. He confirmed for Villalobos that that in turn creates longer response times.

Lexipol Recommended Policy Update: Chief Wilkening reported 3 policies ready and 2 they are finishing up. He will plan to review all 5 reviews together.

Other: Chief Wilkening had no other items to report at this time.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

Communications: Chief Fisher reported Deputy Chief Brittingham receiving email from the Molly Lanham family and foundation regarding a golf outing on August 4 and butterfly release June 25. Brittingham had assisted with the murder investigation. Fisher read a thank you note from the Yniguez family regarding their father passing away, noting their donation and food. He reported a phone call received from John Christopher out of Demotte, who is a disabled veteran. He was in his wheelchair in Demotte when he a pothole and flipped his wheelchair, noting many vehicles passed him on the side of the road before Officer Corbin stopped to assist him. He expressed his thanks to Corbin. Fisher reported multiple staff attending

the Open House and 6th Anniversary Celebration of Protecting K9 Heroes, noting CEO Staci Goveia was the one who donated the funds to purchase our police dog. Fisher read a letter from Town of Schererville Fire Department Chief Robert Patterson thanking the department for the funeral escort for Army Corp Medic Special Luke Rhoades on June 14. Fisher read a thank you card from St John Police Department K9 Handler Shane Adams for the support during the passing of his K9 Match and his escort to Lowell Animal Hospital.

Finances – Purchase Orders, Expenditure Reports & Grants: Chief Fisher reviewed the financial reports noting vehicle repairs, new equipment for new officers, DARE graduation through donation funding and revolving account at Pinecrest for boat fuel. Fisher reported budget meeting discussions scheduled for July 7. Fisher reported the Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General is auditing the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) hiring program, noting it was not auditing our grant specifically, however they were reviewing grants and pulled that of Officer Ben King. Fisher supplied them with specific documents they requested within the timeframe requested. Fisher reported receiving donations from Casey's (\$100 gift card) and Albanese (800 candy bags) to be used for the 4th of July parade.

Staffing: Chief Fisher stated all is going well.

Training Report: Chief Fisher reviewed the training report including SFST Refresher course. Fisher stated completion has been done with policy reviews with 12 of the officers so far, as recommended by the Town Attorney, noting the remainder of the department will be completed in the next 2 weeks, along with a Power Point being created that will be used on Police One for annual training on those specific policies. He stated an update was received from the Law Enforcement Training Board for physical tactics training that takes effect January 2024, which will update in Lexipol for the mandatory physical tactics training within the 14 specific categories. Fisher clarified for Stick that the training would be done internally with the department's Physical Tactics Instructor Sergeant Miller. Attorney Austgen stated this was good news, adding embracing the department about initiating the monitoring and vigilance in training and scheduling and it plays a role with regards to the town insurance carrier, by state statutes amended and adjustment and by training changes. Fisher reported K9 Johnny is doing well, training everyday and specialized training with other agencies. Fisher confirmed for Villalobos that Johnny is 18 months old and is taking to and absorbing the training fairly well.

Equipment: Chief Fisher reported the four new squads were at PDS ready to be outfitted, noting one could be ready as soon as 2 weeks.

Monthly Activity Report: Chief Fisher reported 1105 calls for service in the month for a total of 6134 calls for the year, averaging a little over 40 calls per day. He reported 93 citations for the month and a total of 982 for the year, 397 warnings for the month and a total of 3176 for the year, 23 arrests for the month, 34 charges, of which 22 misdemeanor, 8 felony, and 4 warrants for a total of 139 arrests for the year and 228 total charges for the year. He reported 53 town ordinance warnings for May and 66 citations.

Lexipol Recommended Policy Update: Chief Fisher reported meeting with the Policy Review Subcommittee to review and update policies: Officer-Involved Shootings & Deaths, Line-of-Duty Deaths, Wellness Program, Personal Appearance Standards, and Volunteers in Police Services (VIPS). Fisher reported the Wellness Program policy was a large one which brought about the EAP and some changes to a few of the other policies noted. It has brought light to the need for incident and stress debriefings, peer support and the EAP. A motion was made by David Villalobos, seconded by Jim Olthoff, to approve the

policies as presented. Roll call vote: Olthoff – Yes, Villalobos – Yes, Kaper – Yes, Stick – Yes. Vote: 4-0. Fisher expressed his appreciation to the policy review team for taking the time, the discussions and how they benefit the officers. Discussions ensued about the policy regarding Performance Evaluations, they were completed in January and the frequency. Fisher confirmed to Villalobos that the frequency would be reviewed for an update.

Other: Chief Fisher reported he is waiting on the Hanover school board to accept the Too Good for Drugs program before it can be approved. It has been presented to the Assistant Superintendent/Director of Curriculum along with the Program Director of Geminus. Once it is approved by the school board, it will be brought back to the Board to send to the Town Council for approval. Fisher clarified for Kaper that Crown Point Schools are wanting to have consistency throughout the school corporation, therefore MacArthur School will remain with the DARE program and be instructed by Crown Point's DARE instructor. Kaper requested it be tabled.

Chief Fisher introduced Brian Dieckmann, Director of Access to Care, who presented information last month 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 a development since last month that the mobile unit that is tied to the crisis receiving center was approved from the state. The mobile deployment unit, which is an extension of the program, would allow for the officer to clear the scene. He stated there would be no cost to the Town and would include Cedar Lake, Griffith and St. John, noting they are more progressive with CIT policing. Dieckmann stated this would work with and impact the Sergeant Miller's Peer Support program as well. Discussions took place to explain the "988" hotline, noting it not only provided support as a suicide hotline but also support as a mental health hotline to connect community members to services available in their area. Estimated response time would be approximately less than 30 minutes and take the stress off of responding officers, taking some of the calls away from the justice system that really needed more mental support and programming services. He stated the response team would consist of two persons, generally a clinician or medical provider and a trained emergency services specialist. Villalobos noted this program would definitely benefit the client but also assist with EMS and officers. Fisher noted that if the MOU is approved, training would be received on how and when to call, would work in conjunction with the Wellness Program and proposed addition of a department social worker. Dieckmann stated this training mirrors the CIT training just completed by 13 officers in Lake County, and the mobile team program is expected to be up and running by the end of the year. Fisher confirmed to Stick that he is on board with the Access to Care program. A motion was made by David Villalobos, seconded by Jim Olthoff, to approve the program and send Favorable Recommendation to the Town Council. Roll call vote: Olthoff – Yes, Villalobos – Yes, Kaper – Yes, Stick – Yes. Vote: 4-0.

OTHER

Amendment of Favorable Recommendation to Town Council (ProTeam Tactical): Stick requested an amendment to the Favorable Recommendation to the Town Council for approval of ProTeam Tactical Performance, previously recommended by Town Manager Chris Salatas and approved on March 22. Stick recommending an amendment to denote the Town's Workers Compensation Protocol be followed and clarifying that ProTeam Tactical is a rehab facility, not a medical facility. Stick confirmed to Villalobos to clarify workers comp issues would be referred to workers comp. A motion was made by David Villalobos, seconded by Charlie Kaper, to approve the amendment and send Favorable Recommendation to the Town Council. Roll call vote: Olthoff – Yes, Villalobos – Yes, Kaper – Yes, Stick – Yes. Vote: 4-0. Chief Wilkening asked for clarification on the motion. Stick indicated the workers compensation protocol for the Town is

to be followed. Villalobos stated that if someone was injured on duty, they saw a medical doctor first before being sent to physical therapy for referral.

Legal Report from Town Attorney: Attorney Austgen reported the Reconstruction Team MOU is being updated and would have report at the July meeting. In regards to the Training Reimbursement Agreements (Fire Department – Cummins & wording/cost and Police Department – Holzhauer update), Austgen stated these were normal monthly items regarding hires and separations and there is nothing currently pending. Austgen stated the Conditional Offer of Employment IC Code has been changed and updated. He reported the Special Event Permit draft is in order and is scheduled for review at the next Council meeting. Austgen reported the Emergency Operations Plan is still being reviewed.

Town Council Liaison(s) Report: Councilman Miller confirmed for Villalobos that the Council accepted the resignation of Board member Govert and they are working on obtaining a replacement.

New Building Update: Chief Fisher reported having met with the team and moving forward.

Other: Stick confirmed with Attorney Austgen that they would resume in Executive Session upon completion of the public meeting as advertised.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Stick called for Public Comment.

- 1) Kevin Toth, as Hanover Township Trustee, thanked Chief Wilkening for the donation to the pantry, noting a grant was applied for but grants are getting less and less. He reported applying for and receiving approval for a fire levy increase. He stated the township is aware of the truck's age and wear and they are exploring the idea to refurbish it. He expressed interest in being included in trainings. Toth confirmed to Villalobos that their levy was granted and doubled the funding, but up to the board on how they would be moving forward.
- 2) Kevin Toth, as resident of W 129th Pl, thanked the police department for their fast action regarding issues with traffic, speeding and burnouts at the Dairy Belle. He noted the seeing the speed sign being put up and the policing at the boat launch.
- 3) Councilman Robert Carnahan stated speaking with Attorney Austgen regarding the need for transparency. Carnahan requested the Board of Safety provide a report regarding the helicopter, noting one had been presented at the Town Council. Carnahan inquired on K9 Johnny failed training. Chief Fisher reported the first dog Johnny was unable to achieve the marks for certification and is now a house dog, as he is no longer eligible to be a police dog. Fisher stated that part of the agreement with the donor of the funding for the dog was the name was to be Johnny. He stated this current dog will be named Johnny per that agreement.
- 4) Mary Joan Dickson, resident of 132nd Pl, expressed safety concern for officers not having enough lights on the vehicles, especially for those without lights on top of the car. She reported speaking to the Town Council regarding the special events permit fines being \$25-\$2,500, noting \$2,500 can be a lot especially for that of a non-profit group. She inquired on who determines the fee and upon what criteria and who was assigned as the contact to report to, but indicated her inquiry was not answered. She stated the agreement as she interprets it reads that if the applicant has a building or structure, one would not be needed but wanted clarification. Stick noted that the Board of Safety did not regulate the Special Events Permit, with Fisher clarifying to Dickson it was on the agenda as an update item because of public safety's involvement in those permits. Olthoff noted a county car he recently approached not being very visible. Fisher stated they currently

spend \$11,000 on their light packages and would gladly if funding available. He noted lighting along the back of the vehicles for those without light bars. Villalobos acknowledged issues of officer safety.

- 5) Diane Jostes, Chamber of Commerce Director, stated she was present on behalf of the Chamber Board to speak about concerns with issues occurring at the access site and a possible meeting or to be included in discussions on making plans. Chief Fisher stated IT Director Wroe was reviewing the contract between the Town of Cedar Lake and the Department of Natural Resources and the property itself. Fisher reported the DNR removed everyone from the property at 9 pm the other night. He stated there is a possibility proposed of no loitering for everyone after a certain time. Jostes reported concerns with the increased aggression of the activity taking place. Fisher stated that the department often times is not notified when it happens, but rather days later. Fisher encouraged Jostes to have those parties who are having trouble to call 911 when it is happening. Fisher indicated extra patrol has been set for the parking lot with both his officers and DNR, but unfortunately, when the patrol is in the lot, the activity is not taking place. He stated he does not have the additional staff to have someone sit there all night, and Jostes indicated she is not going to be there late in the evening either due to safety concerns of her own. Jostes confirmed to Stick that the security cameras are able to see out to the ramp, but when dark, there is not a lot of detail. Fisher confirmed the infractions need witnessed and that the Chamber is part of the Town of Cedar Lake property but the parking lot is DNR property. Fisher stated they are discussing options with DNR regarding loitering and a solid plan moving forward and would keep Jostes and the Chamber involved.

Stick called for Public Comment three times; none received.

ADJOURNMENT: Stick requested the meeting adjourned, motioned by David Villalobos and seconded by Charlie Kaper, calling the meeting adjourned at 7:33 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