

## GENEVA POLICE BUDGET ADVISORY BOARD MEETING- February 5, 2024

### Attendees:

Jeremy Busch, board member

Amaris Elliott-Engel, board member

Andrew Spink, board member

Acting Police Chief Ronald Eveland

Elyse Nepa, Geneva resident and Ithaca College ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, CLERY ACT AND PREVENTION EDUCATION, PUBLIC SAFETY & EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Absent: Stefanie Newcomb, City Comptroller; Board Members Geoffrey Geiger and Michelle Neary

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Andrew gave overview of board and its past to guests and explained that biggest focus of board at this time is to potentially expand mental health services within GPD.

Andrew stated board has learned that the three models for incorporating mental health services into law enforcement agencies are:

- officers with mental health training respond on their own
- Officers and mental health workers respond together
- Mental health worker respond on their own (e.g. Eugene,
- Oregon)

Eveland: Former Chief Passalacqua wanted all GPD members to be crisis intervention trained (CIT), which he is. He also is trained hostage negotiator and disability awareness instructor.

Eveland also noted that Monroe County is using FIT model (Forensic Intervention Team) where mental health professionals work with law enforcement to assist individuals experiencing a behavioral health crisis who come to the attention of law enforcement. The current situation with Clifton Springs Behavioral Health Clinic is staff only can tell officers if a person experiencing a mental health crisis needs to be brought in for Mental Hygiene Law 9.41 arrest. "I do see how this could be beneficial" Eveland said of having mental health services incorporated into GPD.

Eveland says GPD reporting system is antiquated and involves a level of error, and that 154 mental health calls per years is "light."

Eveland noted there is behavioral intervention team at Hobart and William Smith Colleges and also that Ontario county is starting a behavioral intervention team (GPD SRO Randy Grenier is on it).

Nepa noted that BIT teams are multidisciplinary teams.

Eveland said that municipalities are now being sued civilly for not getting someone in crisis mental/behavioral health crisis assistance.

Response to MH calls by GPD is “normally reactive,” Eveland said. He shared story of recent incident where a citizen was showing signs of serious mental illness. Clifton Springs could not assist and GPD doesn’t have BIT model.

Nepa said best model is co-response model. She also said all Officers should be trained in mental health aid as a baseline to understand what a MH crisis is. Counselors should go too but stand back to provide deescalation. Then there should be follow up with a BIT team; the team will know all details of situation so don’t retraumatize the citizen by having to tell story again.

Eveland said Clifton Springs doesn’t do “knock and talks”. He said he supports having a social worker to assist the GPD and is interested in a multidisciplinary team model. He further noted that he acknowledges that some people in crisis don’t want to talk to officers in uniform.

Jeremy said he thinks it’s important to have non-911 phone line to contact GPD.

Nepa, who works at Ithaca College, says she started in mental health counseling working with DV/sexual assault victims and sex trafficking victims. As community mental health worker/crisis counselor for victims after sex trafficking raids, she was expected as counselor to respond to dangerous situations at shelters without law enforcement with her, which is part of why she recommends a co-response model.

When she joined the Ithaca College Office of Public Safety and Emergency Management, it was first time department was working on community relations. The programs are for prevention so if there is a MH crisis there already is a bridge in place so the community feels safe when see officers in uniform. “The purpose of a bridge is to connect 2 points that would not otherwise meet,” Nepa said. Nepa also noted it’s the selfless nature of law enforcement to show up to do things that no one else will do. There are 21 officers serving 5,000 students.

It was discussed that Ithaca College Office of Public Safety and Emergency Management has sworn deputies whereas HWS campus security are security guards.

Nepa said she does not think it’s a good idea to have one social worker/counselor position serving community and officers as it would present a conflict of interest and hard to be on same team.

Eveland said GPD has 34 officers directly and essentially is fully staffed and overtime is down. However, one officer is on mental health leave; one is on light duty; and four going through academy. Would prefer to have 36 officers. Coverage is bare bones most days and can’t get out in community on bike patrol and walking the beat downtown. For Mental health/DV calls always send multiple officers for safety.

Nepa said many law enforcement agencies are missing a critical position of community engagement, and that team member would lay groundwork with community for officers.

It was shared BIT team contact Ontario County Sheriff's Office is Keith Green.

Eveland reiterated he would like to see counselors available.

Nepa said a BIT team is able to talk about what can provide to a person in mental health crisis in the moment and such teams provide both preventive measures and reactive measures.

Eveland shared that the CIT training gave him so many skills he didn't have before, including letting him deescalate situations he wouldn't have been able to otherwise. He wants all GPD officers to do this training.

Nepa also recommended mental health training, etc. be done annually.

Shortly after, meeting adjourned.