

**Minutes of the Safety Committee
City of Sheffield Lake, Ohio
September 6, 2023**

The regular meeting of the Safety Committee was held Wednesday September 6, 2023. Chairwoman Stark called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS:

Present: Stark, Gee, Kovach, Mayor Bring, Fire Chief Novak, Police Chief Kory.

Excused: None.

Attending: Members of the police dept.

MINUTES:

*Motion by Gee/Second by Kovach to accept the minutes of the July 5, 2023 meeting with any noted corrections. Yeas All.

CORRESPONDENCE: Email from resident. Geoffrey Sherrill, 4606 Hawthorne Ave. states in addition to the letter, I also gave body cam footage of the most recent dog attack, the 911 call and responding officer and call logs. I would like to express my gratitude for providing me with the opportunity to address you today. I appreciate your willingness to listen to my concern. I have been a resident of Sheffield Lake for the majority of my 26 years. I graduated from Brookside High School and in that time, I have witnessed our community evolve. I am very passionate about this place; I love it here. As a child I roamed freely enjoying the parks, sidewalks and camaraderie of my friends and never once felt fear or apprehension. However, recently I have seen a significant shift in the safety that once defined our neighborhood. I have been denied access to public resources like our sidewalks and parks and have been compelled to take alternative routes. The reason for this change is the alarming increase in dog attacks and apparent lack of accountability or action by the local law enforcement. I have had to call for help repeatedly, but our officers have consistently stood by indifferent to the danger I face. This situation has forced me to arm myself simply to venture outside in our town. I no longer feel safe. Even as I approached town hall today, I'm armed with anxiety coursing through me. Passing a barking dog behind a fence, I couldn't help but feel anxious and uneasy. This is a direct consequence of the circumstances that have unfolded over the past few years. I find myself yearning to stay home where I feel safe. This is not how I want to live. In my eyes, the responsibility for this predicament lies with two key entities in our local government. Forst and foremost, our law enforcement. My aim is not to point fingers. I sympathize with them, but I must address the stark reality of three separate times in the last two years that I have been attacked by large, potentially dangerous dogs. On each occasion, I contacted our local police only to be met with a cavalier attitude and apparent indifference to my plight. I heard a range of excuses including advising me not to traverse areas in our town known for vicious dogs. It is rather difficult when such a dog resides just a few houses down from me. I have been told that due to the city's lack of appropriate ordinances, law enforcement's hands are tied. I have even had officers tell me they prefer not to get involved. The responses and indifference speak volumes. It seems our officers prioritize their own well being over public safety, eroding our trust in the very institutions entrusted with our protection. I believe we should either require assistance in

establishing proper ordinances or further training on what the ordinances are. I spent a considerable amount of time researching our laws and in comparison to those of our neighboring cities, the results seem to be concerning. Either the ordinances themselves are inadequately documented for law enforcement's awareness or they are in need of desperate updates. I implore the safety committee to take action on this matter and implement dog leash laws that our police can actually enforce. Act now to protect our city or guide me on how I should proceed. The situation is escalating and may soon necessitate a real risk of harm to life on our streets and parks endangering innocent bystanders due to a reckless dog owner who refuses to leash their pet or take responsibility for actions. Each instance where law enforcement fails to hold them accountable, conveys to them that they are doing nothing wrong. We are inadvertently encouraging these individuals through our inaction. With numerous complaints about irresponsible dog owners on public forums, our leaders must comprehend that this inaction is not only creating but exasperating the issue. I beseech you to act to restore safety to our neighborhoods.

Chairwoman Stark asks what is it that you ultimately want the city to do? Mr. Sherrill responds I would like to know what am I supposed to do? I'm just coming home and get attacked. In the pursuit of defending myself, I get the book thrown at me. I would rather have someone be held accountable so it stops repeatedly happening.

Mayor Bring says the proximity to where this young man lives is by Dock's Tavern and the home where the dog is has not had the taxes paid, the water has been shut off, and in speaking with this young man, the fence the dog is behind is just chicken wire. His concern is not only him, but he is very close to Tennyson school.

Chief Kory says the last incident I was aware of was about two months ago. The detective bureau is reviewing it for criminal charges. We haven't forgotten about you. I will review all the incidents and get in touch with you.

Chairwoman Stark says we can have a discussion with the ordinance committee which I suggest you also make an appearance at.

Member Gee gives a copy of the city ordinances pertaining to dogs. Member Gee says I also reached out to the county dog warden. I was under the impression they had to do things and our department had to contact them. The warden made it very clear to me and sent documentation that the warden can intervene, but they do not have to. She emphasized after reviewing our ordinances, that our police dept. can fine. You will see the fines on the paper I gave out. Member Kovach says I would suggest to send a request that the ordinance committee reviews what we have here and if it can be strengthened.

PRESENTATIONS: Chief Kory says Charles is going to talk about the drug interdiction program and Detective Sivert will talk about some of our case load. Officer Charles Ehlinger says I have been working on getting an overdose quick response team started in Sheffield Lake in partnership with the MHARS Board of Lorain County. When an officer responds to an overdose, I collect the information from our reports and send it to the MHARS Board. From there, myself and a clinician respond typically within 7 days, to the victim of an overdose and provide them with resources and information. Our goal is to get them to accept treatment which is fully funded by grants that the MHARS Board has obtained. The city does not pay for any of the costs for the resources or treatment. The MHARS Board actually pays us for any interaction we have. It's \$50 for any interaction with an overdose victim and \$100

for any interaction with the victim and family. I expect this program to generate around \$1,500 annually given the amount of overdoses we have had since the beginning of the year. The amount of money can be redirected back to the police dept. for events like community engagement and have a huge effect on the city. Ex: In May, Cardinal Scoop was kind enough to host a cones with cops event for the community. Both the police dept. and fire dept. as well as a member of city council donated their own money so those who came out could get a free ice cream cone. In the end, we gave away \$240 worth of free ice cream. Instead of members of our dept. using their own money to put on events like this, we could use the modest amount of money generated from this overdose program to fund events like this in the future. Mayor Bring says I think this is a good idea. Chairwoman Stark agrees. Member Gee asks is MHARS going to be doing any training of our officers? Officer Ehlinger replies they do have various training they offer, but specifically for this program, they do not require officers to have any extra training. Member Gee asks is there anyway council can stipulate that the money goes to community outreach? Mayor Bring replies we can sit down and discuss that. Member Gee says I think it's a great idea and program.

Reports from Safety Forces:

Police Chief's report – Chief Kory reports for the month of August we had 1,347 calls and in July we had 1,041. Speaking of animals, we have had 142 animal complaints this year and have written 7 tickets, 4 dog at large. We try not to have a zero-tolerance policy on any of our city ordinances. It is something that might need reviewed because we do have quite a few dog incidents. Tickets are up overall. We just fixed the transmission on 720 and there is a small problem with the front left tire and will hopefully get that back on the road soon. I do have concerns that we might run out of money again in the next few months. I just wanted to bring it up. Right now, the detective bureau is running the road. Brooks, our full-time detective works the road and cases. I do feel we are lagging behind in cases. It's a balancing act of if we are going to use our overtime to fill shifts or if we are going to use our detective. Patrolman Sivert states I have been assisting with investigations. There are a couple approaches you take in a follow up investigation. For example: somebody calls and reports their garage was broken into, usually an officer goes and takes a report and that is then forwarded to the detective bureau. The detective bureau then decides which cases you have time to investigate. You have to prioritize the type of investigations you do. What happens is if you get a couple serious cases like we have in the last month, and you have one detective who also has to work the road and somebody has to fill in, a lot of small cases get pushed to the back. Reality is if the manpower and time aren't available, they get pushed back. That doesn't mean they aren't important, but you have to prioritize the seriousness of the crime. Investigations are now more detailed as far as the evidence you have to collect, i.e., cell phones, body cams, home cameras, etc. Having the ability to have full time people investigating cases, you will start to see the quality of life of the people with minor cases, getting better. You will see things getting solved and the attention the smaller crimes need. Without that, you have to prioritize calls. Patrolman Sivert gives an example of a recent call where subject ran and only 2 officers were on. Subject was issued a summons for court. Patrolman Sivert says criminals talk to each other and if word gets out that if you are stopped in Sheffield Lake and run and the worst you get is a ticket, then it's dangerous for

officers and citizens. When you don't have the proper structure, manpower, etc. things start to fall to the side. The longer you wait to get those things, the larger the pile on the side gets. Member Gee asks what do you think the top priority in helping improve the situation is? Patrolman Sivert replies the FBI has statistics on the amount of police officers there should be for a population and I don't know the exact number, but Sheffield Lake is not at the recommended level. I know there are budget restraints and we do have some part-time people, but I know sometimes there are grants and things to hire police officers. I think manpower is what is lacking here. Patrolman Sivert goes on to give examples of situations where more manpower would be helpful. Member Kovach says off and on we have had a K9 program which I don't think the city can afford, and it seems to me the money that would be spent on that program would be better spent on hiring another officer. Patrolman Sivert says I was a K9 officer in Lorain for 7 years and I know the value of it, but I don't know all the circumstances in Sheffield Lake. I look at a K9 as another piece of equipment that could be used and I think the cost of another officer would be more. Chairwoman Stark says Tammy should be working on the budget for next year and I'm assuming we will have some type of report to give to her, a wish list/priority list, etc. I know summer is a hard time with everyone taking vacations, etc. but towards the end of the year it's not such a strain, I don't know if that is something that has affected the department or not or will help in the next couple months. Chief Kory replies I have been talking about more people for 2 years, since I became chief. It boils down to cost and overtime is always cheaper than another employee. Another employee is \$110,000, overtime say even at \$80,000, we still save money. I think there is definitely a conversation to be had. I have talked to Tammy and our budget for next year is higher. Chairwoman Stark asks is there a way we could have something showing our part timers and how many hours they are giving us a week, their availability? I think if we have a little more information, that might help us out. Mayor Bring says we have moved \$45,000 to the police dept. this year. We have been watching the budget. The issues are the older officers there get 6-7 weeks' vacation, sick time, comp time, etc. and the dog handler had 100's of hours of comp time. Comp time turns into days off and days off turn into overtime from other officers. That is where a lot of our money is going. You can get new officers, but you will end up in the same situation. Chief Kory says last month we had 20 call offs. Mayor Bring talks about nationwide officer shortage. Member gee asks due to the fact that the eclipse is coming and you have to have trained men, is there anyway that you can look for grants and considering our cities size and income, is there a way of reaching out to the county and seeing if there can be a little more county presence to help? Chief Kory responds usually mutual aid doesn't come out just because we are busy. If we were in an emergency and something happened, we would mutual aid Avon Lake or the village because they are quicker to respond. Chairwoman Stark asks with the report about the tickets and how something would be coded, say you are going down Lake Rd. east and you turn at 301 and use the bike path, is there a way to put a sign there that you can't do that or is that some place we are patrolling and giving out warnings? Mayor Bring says you would have to have an officer there 24/7. The problem is that for so long we had the turning lane there and everybody got used to doing it. Can we put up a sign? Absolutely. Will it stop it? Not at all.

Fire Chief's report – Chief Novak reports during July we ran 132 calls. In August we had 114 calls. We are at 885 runs for the year. Squad 72 had some suspension, front end and brake work done at a cost of \$2,800. The new squad was ordered on August 1st and we should be taking delivery in late 24, early 25. Our gas detector had to be repaired at a cost of \$520. The engines will be going out in October for the annual pump testing. With the August 11th water rescue that people had some concerns about, I want to assure you that at no time were any firefighters locked in the cage. This is a new program and we are working out the bugs. We never got a stand down. A statement was also made about our policies and procedures for the jet skis and I attached them to my report. We had a house fire on August 18th and the guys did a great job. We are continuing with the hydrant testing and flushing. There were some remaining funds from the 2021 regional radio grant, \$16,560 that has to be used for specific things. We are going to replace 2 chainsaws, 2 cut off saws, purchase some ground monitors, some hand tools, rope rescue equipment and hose. That will be \$16,410.70. We received a grant from the state for \$2,650 and we will use it to purchase EMS equipment. August 1st we did joint training with Sheffield Village and hope to do another one in October. August 9th the department heads met and discussed the solar eclipse. I'll be working with University Hospital to try and have the community center become a first aid station. The state said there will be \$1 million dollars available for reimbursement of costs incurred from the event, but they don't know how it's going to be disbursed. We are 215 days away from the solar eclipse. We did rope training in August at Shell Cove Park. Member Gee asks how is everything running with the new unit? Chief Novak replies fantastic. Member Kovach says I want to commend you on working through the water safety issues. Some people don't understand that you are fire, EMS and water safety rescue. Chairwoman Stark says I received an email and it states, "As it has come to the public's attention, I would like to know what the recommendations were made by the safety committee to the council and safety director regarding the construction of the cage and launch facility for the fire dept. jet skis at the boat launch. Was funding recommended by the safety committee and were there any concerns about the construction?" I know you have publicly addressed this and asked her to come to the meeting tonight, but I wanted to give you a chance on the record to address it if you like. Chief Novak states the funding to purchase the jet skis came from the money we had left over from our equipment fund. The fencing was out of this year's budget. I did a presentation here before we moved forward on this. Mayor Bring says I think it is in such poor taste that these guys are out there trying to save lives and someone is trying to make an issue out of it. It disgusts me. Member Kovach states this is not the first time we tried to start a water rescue program. Mayor Bring says on the issue of cost, when I first became mayor, to purchase a vehicle for the police dept. was \$42,000, it is now about \$60,000. The white ambulance we purchased was about \$300,000 and the new ones are \$332,000. Mayor Bring describes handling the budget. Chairwoman Stark says no one ever wants to put a tax levy on the ballot, but is it something that we may at some point might have to talk about? Mayor Bring replies right now we don't have to, but if we continue to spend money, we absolutely may have to. Member Gee says I know the county is in charge of all the properties that are behind in property taxes and I know we only get a tiny amount from that, but if we are talking 30 properties, that can add up. Is there anyway we can start pushing the issue with the county that we need them to do something about this? It is out of our hands. Mayor Bring says the

majority of that goes to the school. I have talked to the auditor, but it's always someone else's fault. Member Gee asks Chief Kory, as far as the contract with the union, do we have everything that the union said we needed to have for our officers? Chief Kory replies we just need an AED. I'm trying to get one donated or find a cheaper one, but I'm having no luck. They range from \$1,500 to \$3,000.

Mayor's report- Mayor Bring reports above.

NEW BUSINESS: None.

OLD BUSINESS: Solar eclipse discussed above.

CITIZENS COMMENTARY: *Tammy Asire, 648 Maplewood Ave.* says there has been a lot of talk about the K9 and what it cost. I'm a little confused. I served in the Air Force with military working dogs. When the dog was not working, it was in its' kennel. If his handler was sick, there was another handler for the dog. My understanding is the K9 units here, if the handler isn't working or on shift, the dog isn't either. Is that correct, there is only one handler? Chief Kory replies correct. Ms. Asire says if an emergency came up, and we had to call the handler in, we are going into more overtime. I'm not a financial genius, but it seems to me that one patrol officer costs less than a patrol officer and a K9 unit at the same time. Speaking of the dog attacks, I see a lot of stuff on social media about dogs. A lot of dogs we are having issues with from what I'm reading are on leashes, but the owners will not call their dogs off when it goes after another dog or person. I don't understand why when people who live and work in this city see something wrong, they don't stop it. The response I hear so often is you'll have to make a call, call the police or call the building inspector. I've been hearing the only way to get a response is to call. When a call goes to them, the people find out because they use your name. Our little friendly town is getting a lot less friendly and it's time for the people to have a responsibility in this town to do what their supposed to be doing. I understand the police officers can't see everything, but I believe they see a lot and don't react. I believe the building inspector has blinders on 90% of the time. Mayor Bring says I know we have a lot of issues, it's hard to correct them all but we try. There are so many people right now struggling. It's pretty sad. Chairwoman Stark says I grew up in New York and Philadelphia and it used to be I could walk to the neighbor's house and everyone knew who you were. You felt safe walking around and knew who your neighbors were. A lot of times now when I get calls, I ask have you tried to talk to your neighbor? People aren't talking to their neighbors anymore or communicating with each other. We have lost the sense of knowing our neighbors. I think it would take a lot of pressure off our safety services if people would have a conversation.

Kathy Kovach, 850 Hollyview Dr. asks when you get vests, belts, etc. for new police officers and they end up leaving, can't that stuff be reused? Chief Kory replies some of it. Ballistics vests are fitted specifically to the individual. Mrs. Kovach asks we don't stipulate that they have to work x amount of years, etc.? Chief Kory replies most officers worked here at least 3 years. Mrs. Kovach asks you said they would rather have comp time and not be here? Mayor Bring replies yes. Chief Kory says studies have been done and the younger generation values time off more than overtime, etc. and you can't really blame them. Chief Novak says I think if you had to sign a contract where you would be here for 3-5 years, I don't think you would get many people to sit for the test.

MEETING ADJOURNED: With no further business before this committee, *Motion by Kovach/Second by Gee to adjourn at 8:27 PM. Yeas All.

CLERK OF COMMITTEE AFFIRMATION: This meeting of the City Committee of Governing The Sunshine Laws of the State of Ohio as they may apply. All meetings are recorded and available in Council's Offices.

CLERK OF COUNCIL

Brandy Randolph

CHAIRWOMAN

Leanna Stark

I, Brandy Randolph, duly appointed Clerk Of Committee Of Sheffield Lake DO HEREBY CERTIFY that this is a True and exact copy of the minutes of the Safety Committee of Sept. 6, 2023.

PRESIDENT OF COUNCIL

Rick Rosso