

Salisbury, North Carolina
August 14, 2018

SPECIAL MEETING

PRESENT: Mayor Al Heggins, Presiding; Mayor Pro Tem David B. Post, Council Member Karen Alexander. City Manager W. Lane Bailey, Assistant City Manager Zack Kyle, City Clerk Diane Gilmore and City Attorney J. Graham Corriher.

ABSENT: Council Members William Brian Miller and Tamara Sheffield.

Mayor Heggins and members of City Council met in a Special session in Council Chambers, 217 South Main Street. The meeting began at 10:00 a.m.

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE DIAGNOSTIC CENTER ASSESSMENT

United States Department of Justice (DOJ) Diagnostic Center Analyst Alex Nunez, Analyst Karin Thomas, and Senior Diagnostic Specialist Jessica Herbert addressed Council regarding the Office of Justice Programs (OJP) diagnostic analysis for the Salisbury Police Department. Analyst Alex Nunez thanked Police Chief Jerry Stokes and Deputy Chief Shon Barnes for their proactive approach in seeking assistance from the DOJ to improve the Police Department. He explained the OJP is a component of the United States Department of Justice that works with communities across the country to train and assist in various areas relating to criminal justice.

Mr. Nunez explained the Diagnostic Center aims to fulfill a nationwide call from the criminal justice community to improve access to information on what works in preventing and controlling crime, as well as provide guidance on how to implement data-driven programming in the community.

Mr. Nunez noted the Diagnostic Center works with urban, suburban and tribal communications across country.

Mr. Nunez stated the request for assistance from the Salisbury Police Department was one of the best OJP had ever seen. He added the request included a level of detail regarding the City's problems including an increase in homicide, assaults with a dangerous weapon – gun, and shooting into occupied dwelling from 2012 through 2016.

Mr. Nunez shared the DOJ worked in the community and with law enforcement to understand the issues related to crime. He stated the center collected data and provided analysis and recommendations. He indicated the center also identified training and technical assistance to support implementation of those recommendations.

Mr. Nunez explained the assessment included interviews with law enforcement agencies that partner with the Police Department, faith-based leaders, neighborhood representatives and business owners.

Mr. Nunez noted after reviewing the request from the Salisbury Police Department the Diagnostic Center focused on three priority areas to improve public safety. He stated the intended outcome was to improve safety and reduce violent crime by identifying and implementing data driven strategies that target factors contributing to violence. He shared the Diagnostic Center will work with the Salisbury Police Department to identify indicators that can be tracked over time to show progress toward intended outcomes.

Mr. Nunez reviewed the Diagnostic Center's process of diagnosing, implementing and assessing the community's justice issues, and he added at the request of the Salisbury Police Department, the Diagnostic Center team collected qualitative and quantitative data to better understand the factors contributing to department reported issues.

Mr. Nunez indicated based on the responses from interviews and review of case file samples and police policies, the Diagnostic Center identified four areas and aligned the findings to four phases within an incident response life cycle.

Analyst Karin Thomas discussed patterns of crime in the City. She stated the Diagnostic Center analyzed calls for service and reported crimes to understand place-based patterns and crime problems. She shared information regarding the building on Calls for Service (CFS) analysis. She stated the Diagnostic Center examined the Salisbury Police Department's reported crimes, historically driven by property crimes, drugs and interpersonal violent crime. She shared information regarding interpersonal violent incidents in the North End cluster near the highway. She also noted interpersonal violent incidents in the West End are concentrated throughout residential and commercial areas.

Senior Diagnostic Specialist Jessica Herbert shared reports that gun violence is concentrated on weekends and late night, which is similar to national trends. She indicated that over the past 10 years, 52% of gun violence calls were received Friday through Sunday between 10:00 p.m. and 1:00 a.m. She stated in most recent years, gun violence calls were most frequent between 8:00 p.m. and 1:00 a.m., and there were significantly higher than average incidents in Salisbury. She added the findings show gun violence incidents are most common in multi-family housing units.

Ms. Herbert shared information regarding firearm related interpersonal violent incidents in the West End community, and she shared the Diagnostic Center identified a number of practices and evidence-based strategies for reducing gun violence.

Mr. Nunez stated the Police Department may consider seeking training to support a comprehensive, coordinated, department-wide response. He reviewed the training and technical assistance plan:

(a) Enhance Data Management and Utilization

Improvements to data management and utilization could help the department make better, evidence-based decisions to more effectively address violent and other major crimes.

- Foundational crime analysis training
- Training on basic data processes and their application to public safety objectives
- Data standards and data quality assurance training
- Training on the available suite of components in the department's Records Management System (RMS) and how to utilize them

(b) Develop Violent Crime Reduction Strategies

A strategic approach to violent crime in Salisbury is necessary to produce a measureable impact on current crime levels. Recommended approaches to violent crime reduction strategies include:

- Task Force (TF) Training –an overview of key strategies that are critical to TF operations.
- Development of a problem oriented or place based policing strategy that utilizes data to help determine allocation of resources
- Development of strategy to reduce gun violence
- Development of a Social Media Strategy

(c) Improve Investigation Processes

Larger than normal caseloads have prevented investigators from participating in critical training on investigations. The department would benefit from:

- Additional investigators to help reduce the case load per investigator
- Major Crime Scene Preliminary Investigation to include to include topics such as interviewing, interrogation, report writing and documentation
- Investigation Management Training to include case management systems.

(d) Improve Internal and External Communications

Communication gaps exist both internally and externally, between departmental units and law enforcement partners. The department could benefit from:

- Organizational Communications – education on the importance of effective communication and how to achieve it

- Development of communications protocols for internal and external communications in addressing violent crime
- Improving the 911 Call Center Communications

Police Chief Jerry Stokes stated the Diagnostic Analysis is a voluntary program requested by himself, Deputy Police Chief Shon Barnes, and City Manager Lane Bailey to look at how the Police department can improve their response times to calls.

Chief Stokes reviewed two grant submissions: the BJA Technology Innovation for Public Safety to identify “hot spots” for the West End, and the BJA School Violence Threat Assessment and Technology Reporting to partner with the Rowan-Salisbury School System to focus on crime and security incidents in and around the schools.

Chief Stokes shared the Police Department participated in training at the Department of Justice Crime Analysis Community of Practice Meeting in April and will continue with training the VALOR Survive and Thrive to focus on officer wellness and preparedness to be held in August. He added there will be a training session with the International Homicide Investigators Association (IHIA) soon.

Chief Stokes commented the Project Safe Neighborhood initiative is funded by Council and County Commissioners as a County-wide program. He added the Police Department has contracted with the University of North Carolina at Greensboro to conduct the violent crime incident review for the Project Safe Neighborhood initiative to identify potential victims and offenders.

Chief Stokes noted the Police Department has ongoing partnerships with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Sheriff's Office, and other Federal agencies to support investigations involving firearms and violent crimes.

Chief Stokes stated the Diagnostic Center will do an organizational assessment to see if officers are being employed at the time violence occurs, and he added the assessment will see if clerical staff is an option for transcribing and putting together case studies rather than the detectives.

Chief Stokes commented Rowan-Salisbury School System Superintendent Dr. Lynn Moody is focused on identifying childhood trauma and how it plays a part in interpersonal violence, and its effects on the School System and the community. He commented the City could work with the School System to address problems and find the cause of interpersonal violence and gun crime issues.

Deputy Chief Barnes stated the Diagnostic Center is great for the Police Department since it is difficult to fix a problem unless it is identified correctly. He thanked the Department of Justice for helping with diagnostic issues, and he added the Police Department is ready to meet the challenge and work together as a community.

Mayor Heggins thanked Mr. Bailey, Chief Stokes, and Deputy Chief Barnes for being proactive in seeking assistance from the United States Department of Justice, and she thanked OJP and the Diagnostic Center for presenting the report to Council.

Mayor Heggins asked what kind of communications protocols are needed for the West End community. Chief Stokes explained the need for criminal intelligence for communication between officers, communication of calls coming from 911 to officers, and community outreach strategy by getting information to those in the West End community.

Mayor Heggins asked what type of technology would help with interpersonal crime in the West End. Chief Stokes advised the grant is intended to provide security cameras and possibly license plate readers.

Mayor Heggins asked who investigates the homicide and violent crime cases. Chief Stokes commented the Police Department investigates those and he added the Sheriff's Department, State Bureau of Investigation (SBI), and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives are asked to assist the City, especially with gun crimes.

Mayor Heggins asked the DOJ's diagnostic team about interviews from the Salisbury community. Mr. Nunez mentioned there were two separate site visits with interviews of 30 people each time including a few repeats. He added the people interviewed were from the Police Department, the community, United Way, school system, social services, and criminal justice partners. Mr. Nunez explained 15-20 individuals were interviewed from the community.

Mayor Heggins asked for an opportunity for individuals who live in areas impacted by crime to be able to provide feedback. Mr. Nunez agreed that feedback would be helpful and he would like to speak to the community. Mayor Heggins asked that Mr. Nunez be provided with information from the Stop The Violence group, and she added as the Community Action Team (CAT), Stop the Violence and other groups are working to get information to staff to help reduce crime, they should be supported by staff.

Mayor Heggins asked for clarification of the crime generators regarding festivals and sporting events as it pertains to the City. Ms. Herbert pointed out the crime generators are crime theories used for potential strategies and planning for those scenarios.

Councilmember Alexander asked how the Shot Spotter will be implemented and funded. Chief Stokes explained the Shot Spotter is a triangulation technology using microphones that are placed in an area and as a shot is fired, it is broadcast to officers within 10 to 15 minutes and can differentiate between the sound of a gunshot and noise from cars backfiring. He commented the grant opportunity did not cover the costs for the Shot Spotter but will be used to purchase the security camera system and license plate readers. He added a grant opportunity will be sought into for the Shot Spotter in the future.

Councilmember Alexander asked if the Police Department has reached out to businesses that have shown an interest to help fund the Shot Spotter Program. Chief Stokes commented

Deputy Chief Barnes is looking for ways to provide that opportunity to business owners in the future.

Mayor Heggins asked about the plan for improving the 911 call center communications. Chief Stokes explained it will be by improving and developing protocols for specific calls for dispatchers to be able to distribute appropriately to the officers. Deputy Chief Barnes added in 2017, he and Chief Stokes met with Rowan County 911 Communication Director Allen Cress and the Telecommunications Team to review police response priorities including the strategies and missions of the Police Department.

Mayor Pro Tem Post asked what resources the Police Department needs in order to reduce their caseloads. Mr. Bailey stated a few years ago there was a 20% vacancy in the Police Department so there was not an opportunity for travel for training. He stated with a tax increase, the pay was aligned with Charlotte, but it needs to stay competitive. Mr. Bailey added the right size for the department has not been determined entirely and further training is needed due to younger officers.

Chief Stokes commented the Police Department is fully staffed with 81 sworn officers including six new officers who will begin patrol by the end of 2018. He added in order to reduce detectives caseload help could be provided from the Police Department's administrative staff.

Mayor Pro Tem Post asked if there is a concern for officers leaving the City to seek other job opportunities. Chief Stokes shared there is a concern for officers leaving due to so many new hires and the Department is a training ground for other cities that may recruit them. He added Salisbury is equal or ahead of Concord, Mooresville, and Huntersville but has lost officers to Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department because of officers residing in the City of Charlotte.

Deputy Chief Barnes commented he receives several praises from business owners and citizens for the work that the Police Department does. He added the Police Department needs to find a way to help the people who support the Police Department's initiatives and things we are doing such as with groups Stop The Violence, Salisbury Neighborhood Action Group (SNAG) and West End. Deputy Chief Barnes commented there needs to be a way to recognize those organizations, community members, and churches that want to work with the Police Department to reduce crime, and he added how great the impact of community engagement is with everyone working together.

Mayor Heggins shared it would be good for the teams of Stop the Violence, SNAG, and CAT to connect with other teams and work with the Police Department to strengthen and grow the community.

Mayor Heggins asked if there is a formula to help police departments determine the staffing they need due to violent crime. Chief Stokes advised there is no particular formula for determining the need for Police Department staffing.

Councilmember Alexander asked about violent crime in the West End and if it is from repeat offenders. Chief Stokes commented the University of North Carolina at Greensboro will

help with the study of identifying victims and offenders and once that information is gathered the Department will be able to better intervene in those areas.

Mr. Michael Stringer asked if assistance was available to help those who are released from jail to merge into society. Ms. Herbert referenced the Place Base Strategy, and she noted the initial analysis did not go in depth of the person's issues. She indicated when a person is released from prison it would not necessarily mean they would be considered the area's top offender. She commented the grants would provide additional personnel support to help analyze and determine a response for individuals such as faith-based programs, and criminal justice, or social resources needs.

Chief Stokes commented staff is working on Project Re-entry Programs to help work with offenders transitioning into society and to help prevent relapse offenses.

Mr. Geoffrey Hoy asked if additional reports would be provided to the public, and he asked if OJP information could be provided to the community to make the public aware. Chief Stokes commented the presentation is a public document, and staff would work with the Communications Department to provide a way for the public to review the presentation. He noted there is an additional 1:00 p.m. meeting that afternoon with the Police Department that is limited to law enforcement officers.

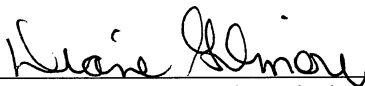
Mr. George Benson commented he attended National Night Out, and he was impressed with the diversity of the department's officers. He asked about costs to the City to request joint investigations. Chief Stokes commented there is no cost when the City requests Mutual Aid Assistance, and he added the City has been asked to provide mutual aid to the County as well.

Ms. Renee MacNutt suggested the City could engage with local universities and companies to brainstorm for ideas on how to address the community's needs and utilize community resources.

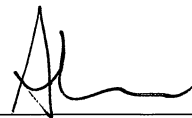
Ms. Latasha Wilks asked if there would be high school programs relating to gun violence prevention. Chief Stokes commented there are plans in place by School Resource Officers (SRO) that are implemented County-wide. He added parts of the grant would help analyze security needs for City.

ADJOURN

Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Councilmember Alexander. All Council members in attendance agreed unanimously to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 11:59 a.m.



Diane Gilmore, City Clerk



Al Heggins, Mayor