



MINUTES

February 5, 2025

7:00 p.m.

Ralston Room, Albany Fire Department/VIRTUAL

Approved

Call to Order

Cynthia Greene called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

Roll Call

Members present: Cynthia Greene, Adam Brenneman, Erik Rau, Erik Anderson, Kevin Kreitman, Nicholas Fowler, Katie Pleis, Bessie Johnson

Members absent:

Staff present: Marcia Harnden, Police Chief; Chris LaBelle, Fire Chief;
Julia Tremain, Clerk III

October 2, 2024, Minutes were approved as submitted.

Staff Updates

Fire Update – Chief Chris LaBelle

This has been a record year for calls. In calendar year 2024 we ran 11,884 calls and for this current FY we are well beyond 12,000. We are hoping to maintain or increase our staffing to adapt to the increase in calls.

Fire and Life Safety evaluations were higher in Fiscal Year 21 and 22 due to higher staffing. When we decreased our staff the numbers decreased but have started to increase in FY 25 due to a staff member on light duty doing business inspections. Response times are still improving and so are our community paramedic activities. Our Community Paramedic has applied for and received a grant for \$75,000 to purchase lifting devices for our care facilities as well as some high risk individuals who still live on their own. Individuals are staying at home much longer because they cannot afford the care facilities, meaning more calls for service, especially lift assists. These are the devices that we carry on our emergency vehicles currently so there will be training given to these recipients in order to ensure proper operation. This will ideally reduce the number of times we are called out for a lift assist, leaving our engines and ambulances more available for emergencies.

There have been an increase of calls happening simultaneously which is why we are looking to move our single role ambulance to a 24 hour shift as well as adding an additional person at the North Albany station. This would relieve pressure off the North Albany station as well as keeping coverage in that area. Once you see the crews spending a certain amount of time consistently dedicated to an emergency call you have to think about adding an additional unit to prevent burnout and make sure they can still train, work out, rest and get a meal period.

Comparing Albany to a bigger or similar city to mimic staffing is difficult to do since a house fire requires different staffing than an apartment fire so strictly population size is not enough to compare.

Recruitment and retention is made difficult due to COVID and the decrease in paramedic programs, but also because bigger cities can offer better incentives and fewer calls per station. Oregon and one other state are the only ones that require an Associates degree to be a firefighter. This makes finding lateral applicants difficult because a qualified applicant would not be hired without an Associates even with previous years of experience. We have extended 6 conditional job offers for fire fighter paramedic, three of which are laterals. We have also started a single role academy which will bring us to 6 and let us move from 12 hour shifts to 24 for our single role medic unit.

We sent five people to California to help with the wildfires; a four person engine company as well as our Division Chief of EMS for a full 17 day deployment. This is all reimbursed, at \$100 per hour for the engine as well as wages and benefits for those deployed and coverage for those covering their shifts.

We did a presentation to the council for the levy. It is worth 16 firefighter positions so it is extremely important. Our daily staffing is 21 fire fighters so if we lost the levy it would eliminate an ambulance and engine off the road every day. Last time it passed by 77% so we are hopeful it will pass again.

Police Update – Chief Marcia Harnden

APD is running around 49,000 calls a year. We are a smaller police department than Corvallis, but run more calls. This has a lot to do with the freeway and the situations that go along with being right next to a freeway like narcotics. We successfully stopped a bitcoin scammer who was scamming residents in town for \$10,000 a shot who had come from Washington State and had ties to Chinese organized crime.

Crime stats are looking good and violent crime is in a good place. OD deaths are dropping from where they were in 2023 back to similar numbers from 2022 which are still high but the goal is to get back where we were in 2019. The trend we are seeing is that there is more narc around but we are also not seeing people call 911 for fentanyl. The one we are concerned about now is cocaine since the number of overdoses increased from three last year to seven this year. Every time there is a death from narcotics it is treated like a homicide investigation and the dealer associated with that death can be arrested. Any possession of an illicit drug became illegal September 1, 2024, and we have had 123 misdemeanor arrests since then.

The time of arrival is concerning due to the call numbers increasing with staffing staying the same. This has made us move to an online reporting system to improve efficiency. Hiring is a challenge so we have a goal to be under 1% vacancies. We have accomplished that with only two vacancies, one of which is an over-hire for a retirement in July. We also got a grant for a DUI position from ODOT, and will be asking for funding for three more officer positions. We still struggle with dispatchers, currently we are down three. We have a large pool of applicants but they cannot pass backgrounds. We are in the process of building our budget, since all of our equipment and software has grown 25%. We are anticipating that when asking for our next budget but we are not asking for an increase to the levy. We have 15 positions paid out of the levy, and 91% of money from the levy goes toward personnel including a park ranger, dispatch, records, and four community service officers.

With concerns around federal funding, our drug task force is largely funded by HIDTA (High Incident Drug Trafficking Area). We don't foresee any changes unless its the language around our harm reduction policies. If they see anything as going against presidential orders we have to change the wording, but this will not effect funding.

The camera at Queen and Geary has been upgraded to speed and red light, and North Albany Road at Thorton Lake Road is going to be the next one. Nights and weekends it registers at 11 over posted, school days 11 over the school zone limit. Grand Prarie and Waverly or 34th and Waverly are the next goals.

With concerns about immigration, we will honor the 4th amendment. This means we have to have an arrest warrant signed by a judge. The sanctuary policy law means that law enforcement can work with Immigration if there is a criminal overlap. For example a marijuana grow operation, forced labor, human trafficking or labor trafficking cases will be given to immigration in the event there are undocumented individuals involved. We will also work with them if a suspect is charged with felony or misdemeanor. This will allow us to work with Immigration to deport them to their country of origin. If a location is open to the public, Immigration can go in, if it's a secure facility then to get entry they need a warrant.

Business from the Commission:

Bessie Johnson was nominated for vice chair by Kevin Kreitman and accepted with unanimous agreement.

Cynthia Green was nominated for chair by Nick Fowler and the nomination was seconded by Bessie Johnson with unanimous agreement.

Next Meeting Date

The next regularly scheduled meeting is on Wednesday, April 2, 2024, at the Albany Police Department.

Adjournment

Hearing no further business, adjourned the meeting at 8:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Reviewed by,

Julia Tremain
Clerk III

Reviewer's Name
Reviewer's Title

**Documents discussed at the meeting that are not in the agenda packet are archived in the record. The documents are available by emailing cityclerk@cityofalbany.net.*