

Citizens and Police Community Relations Advisory Committee
Monday, February 24, 2025 6:00 PM
Lake Wales Recreation Center
1001 Burns Avenue
Lake Wales, FL 33853

CALL TO ORDER

Andy Oguntola	PRESENT AT 6:17
Lt. Edward Palmer	PRESENT
Al Goldstein	PRESENT
Kristin Royal	PRESENT
Katherine Nicholas	ABSENT
Yadira Pollock	PRESENT

POLICE ACTIVITY

Lt. Ed Palmer presented the police activity for the period of February 1-24, 2025.

Sector Traffic Activity:

Alpha:	20 Warnings and	25 Citations
Bravo:	4 Warnings and	49 Citations
Charlie:	24 Warnings and	151 Citations
Delta:	14 Warnings and	34 Citations

City-Wide Traffic Activity:

Traffic Complaints:	35
Traffic Stops:	346
Traffic Crashes:	67
Traffic Citations:	262
Traffic Warnings:	62
Directed Traffic Assignments:	35

Police Activity Calls:

Baker Act Calls:	13
Narcotic Calls:	1
Missing Persons Calls:	2
Stolen Vehicle Calls:	1
Burglaries:	7

Sector Reports:

47 Alpha:	357
47 Bravo:	349
47 Charlie:	593
47 Delta:	310

Total Calls with Weapons:	5
Total Calls for Service:	1,609
Total Arrests:	10

City-Wide Calls for Service:
Disturbance Calls: 122
Information Calls: 134
Suspicious Calls: 101
Alarm Calls: 66
Warrant Calls: 16
Theft Calls: 12
Trespassing Calls: 15
Battery Calls: 14
Domestic Battery Calls: 3

Al Goldstein asked the location of Charlie zone, and Lt. Palmer explained the areas of the City broken up into sectors. Alpha is the Northwest section, which is Scenic west to Hwy. 27 and Central Avenue north to Florida. Mountain Lake to Home Depot is Delta. Charlie starts at the high school and goes in northeast direction. Bravo is from 9th Street east to Walmart and goes back to Hunt Brothers.

Al Goldstein had a question regarding traffic calls. If someone calls regarding someone speeding or driving reckless and they report the license number on the vehicle, can anything be done without you seeing it? Lt. Palmer responded that nothing can be done. Lt. Palmer explained that when that call comes in, if an officer is in the area, he will try and get to that area. If he does see that vehicle as described, he has to observe that vehicle in a violation. Mr. Goldstein advised he asked because he has heard from several people and witnessed violations on Thompson Nursery Road. Lt. Palmer advised he could get with Lt. Figueroa to see if a study can be done on Thompson Nursery Road.

Chief Velasquez added that he is aware that we have had a directed patrol assignment for that area, and our Traffic and Patrol has been doing a lot of high visibility in that area. He advised he has heard them stopping the dump trucks and specifically that information was relayed.

Ms. Royal asked if there has been any trends in traffic within the last few months due to the expansion of people moving to Lake Wales. Lt. Palmer advised there has been a lot of traffic, but there have been many crashes. He advised he just has the stats in front of him from the last month, and there were 67 crashes.

SCHOOL ZONE AND RED LIGHT CAMERA ENFORCEMENT PRESENTATION

Lt. Palmer did not have the presentation, but briefed everyone on the status of getting red light cameras in school zones. The programs are violation funded. The City does not have to come up with any money. Lt. Palmer explained how that will work and how the system will work. Al Goldstein asked if our school buses have the cameras on them. Lt. Palmer advised not as of yet. Ms. Royal asked where the cameras would be, and Lt. Palmer advised that it would depend upon what the speed study shows. Ms. Royal asked what kind of time line we are looking at. Lt. Palmer advised we are hoping that it will be October of next year. Chief Velasquez relayed information that he just heard information that the State released, that the State of Florida ranked number one in intersection crashes.

SCAMS

Lt. Palmer advised that Detective Raines is at the meeting via the computer to talk about scams. Detective Raines spoke on the scams of text messages for tolls, FedEx, packages and more, wherein scammers are taking thousands of dollars. If you get a text message, please verify. He advised that in the last 6 months, he has seen thousands of dollars stolen of cases that came across his desk. Detective Raines also discussed scams via phone calls. He has had in the last month a few that started and ended on phone calls. Detective Raines informed that nobody will take gift cards over the phone for payment on anything. Use caution when taking phone calls from people you do not know. The largest scam recently worked by the Criminal Investigations Division was in the last few months is home-buying. Our friends who own a few restaurants were trying to buy a house and at the payment time, the scammers set up an E-Mail with information to wire the money and set up an e-mail, send an e-mail to send the down payment, they wire the down payment. This E-Mail looked like the same E-Mail that the bank was going to be sending to them. The money was wired per the instructions in the scammer's E-Mail, and the money did not go to the bank. It is a fraudulent e-mail. Detective's advice is to verify everything before you do it. Check e-mail addresses and phone numbers. If you have questions, we are a phone call away, and we will be happy to help you verify transactions. He also suggested to stay away from crypto currency. They tell you to go to the bitcoin machine and send money. It is probably going straight overseas.

Lt. Palmer asked Raines if we have had any cases where someone called and said that a relative is in jail. Raines advised yes; we have had those cases. Those scams are usually preying on the elderly. Lt. Palmer expounded on the ways to avoid being scammed. He also advised that we have brought pamphlets on scams that are available to everyone.

Lt. Hampton advised the CID has put together a PowerPoint presentation if anyone is interested in hearing the presentation, we would be happy to show the presentation and take questions. He also advised we have the technology to track a phone number. A lot of phone calls are tracked to overseas. Lt. Hampton also advised that they encourage the phone calls regarding a suspicious phone number or E-Mail, for they have databases they can verify as well as who the subscriber is. He advised that many times it is a Google phone number so you cannot call it back. He advised it takes a detective about eight man-hours for one of our smaller scams. Most of the time it tracks back to Nigeria. Committee members shared sentiments on scams and scammers.

Andy Oguntola suggested sharing the PowerPoint presentations with schools and colleges.

Al Goldstein shared a personal story where he was scammed out of a significant amount of money.

Carl Fish from the Daily Ridge advised to not shy away from reporting the incidents on social media, as they would love to share it. Ms. Pollock added to that advisement.

122 E. TILLMAN AVENUE

Chief Velasquez reported on the status of the acquisition of 122 E. Tillman Avenue for the Lake Wales Police Department. The City has purchased the building, and it will be the Police Annex. We do not have a time frame yet for when we will be in it, but we are working on the plans. We have worked on the design of it, and the next step will be going to the engineers. It will then go out on bid to the builders for quotes. Chief said he just talked to Polk County Emergency Operations Center in Bartow next to the Sheriff's Office, and they have outgrown and are

having to expand. Everybody is in the same situation due to the expansion. Andy Oguntola asked if we would be adding personnel due to the expansion. Chief advised that once we receive our certificate of occupancy, we will be off-loading support services initially, which is our Investigations Division, Traffic, our motorcycles and other vehicles needing processing. This will free up space in our current facility. Chief advised that in regard to adding personnel, we have the green light to add people, but everyone is dealing with hiring the best qualified. We are vigilant in hiring the best.

UPDATE ON THE OVERGROWTH AT INTERSECTION

Kristin advised that overgrowth area was taken care of within a couple of weeks, and it looks great.

APPOINT VICE CHAIR

Kristin Royal volunteered to serve as Vice Chair. Roll call was taken. The vote was unanimous.

COMMUNICATIONS AND PETITIONS

Felita Howard from Highland Crest brought up a concern. She advised that she has a lot of police activity across the street from her. Last week two officers were at this location, and one of the police officers turned around in the yard and on the sidewalk. She said she takes pride in her home and yard, and she felt the officer driving in the yard and on the sidewalk was very disrespectful. She asked that people respect everyone's property.

Andy asked if we could have a conversation with the officers about respecting everyone's property.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Lt. Palmer made a motion to approve the Minutes from the October 28, 2024 meeting.

Al Goldstein seconded the motion.

Motion carried. All aye.

Ms. Pollock thanked everyone for being here and grateful for everyone being here to making your voice heard. We want to do everything we can to help everyone have a great life experience.

Ms. Royal mentioned that at the last meeting there was an interest in meeting at schools for law enforcement careers and doing something informational for the seniors. Ms. Royal advised she talked with Ms. Thompson after that meeting, and they were going to get back together after the holidays. Ms. Royal advised she will circle back with her. Lt. Palmer advised also that career day is coming up, and we will be present there.

Ms. Pollock advised that McLaughlin is now adding 12th grade, and there are plenty of opportunities where we can lift our youth into looking at law enforcement.

Mr. Goldstein thanked all of the officers present for coming to the meeting. He brought up that we need to look at ideas to get more people out.

Chairman Oguntola added that when things are going wrong, the meetings are packed. When things are going right, there are very few present. Chairman Oguntola commended Chief on our amazing police force, and he went over some things that are going right with LWPD. He mentioned he did a ride-along with the Polk County Sheriff's Office and saw how very busy Lake Wales Police Department is. We are not just interested in issues, but we are interested in building great relationships in our community. We will continue to push out to social media. Chairman Oguntola mentioned that the City of Lake Wales and United Way will start having classes here at this location for classes for youth with disabilities. There will be more information coming for that.

Ms. Royal suggested each committee member identify a contact person for a community center or clubhouse that we could connect with for the communities.

Lt. Palmer advised he brought pamphlets from United Way of additional services they provide including the capability to dial 2-1-1 to hear of these various services.

Chairman Oguntola mentioned it is time to get our pastors in this meeting. The best way is to get information out is through the pastors to their congregation. We need to try and get pastors at the meetings.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 7:02 p.m.

Chair/Vice Chair

Staff Secretary