

Citizens and Police Community Relations Advisory Committee  
Monday, March 27, 2023 6:00 p.m.  
B Street Community Center  
230 B Street, Lake Wales, Florida 33853

CALL TO ORDER:

Andy Oguntola	PRESENT
Tiffany Davis	PRESENT
Al Goldstein	PRESENT
Narvell Peterson	PERSENT
Troy Schulze	PRESENT
Lt. Michael Smith	PRESENT

POLICE ACTIVITY:

Lt. Smith reported on police activity for the month of February:

1,856 calls for service

474 Alpha

456 Bravo

605 Charlie

321 Delta

70 calls involving firearms

58 arrests

8 Field Interview Reports

TRAFFIC ACTIVITY:

28 Traffic Complaints

142 Traffic Stops

90 Traffic Crashes

77 Traffic Citations

53 Warnings Issued

237 Directed Patrol Assignments

During the month of February, we have seen a rise in vehicle burglaries. Most of the vehicle burglaries are due to unlocked vehicles and people leaving valuable items in vehicles in plain view. 95% of the burglaries were to unlocked vehicles.

Lt. Smith reported on police activity for the month of March:

1,895 calls for service

439 Alpha

465 Bravo

612 Charlie

379 Delta

3 calls involving firearms

29 arrests

TRAFFIC ACTIVITY:

48 Traffic Complaints

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236 Traffic Stops  
66 Citations  
66 Traffic Crashes  
145 Citations  
84 Warnings Issued  
162 Directed Patrol Assignments

At our last meeting in January, we discussed two recruits we had in the police academy. The two recruits are Rashaud Freeman and Tristan Rodriguez. They have graduated from the academy, and they started their Field Training Program with us on January 30. We have another officer, Nicole Peana, who also started on January 30. We had an officer start today, and his name is Tanner Owens. At the last meeting I advised there would be two more to start on January 30. One washed out through the process, and the other started today. Currently we have six that have started the academy on February 15 and February 17, and their names are Tristian Turner, Sammy Natal, Yosuet Acosta, Daniel Mercer, Ryan Phillips and Landon McCosco. The reason for two different dates is because three of those six are currently correction officers, and they had to go back to the academy to do what is called a Crossover. The Crossover training will get them certified as a law enforcement officer. Those three started the Crossover training on February 15, and they will finish in June. We had three that started on February 17, and they have to go through the full police academy. Those three will finish in July.

One other thing we discussed at our last meeting was our two new K9's. The two K9's have completed the patrol portion of the K9 school, which means they can now work patrol duties as police K9 teams. They are now currently finishing the second part of the K9 training, which is the drug aspect, where they learn to search for different narcotics. That is a 200-hour training. They should be completely trained in June and ready for duty.

Also mentioned at our last meeting was the Accreditation process that the police department is currently going through. As mentioned, we went through the Mock Assessment, which we had several assessors come to the police department for review and tell us where we stand in that process. April 24, 2023 is when the actual assessment will begin. The State of Florida will send out a team of three to five assessors to our department who will go through our agency from cover to cover. Once they complete their assessment, they will, hopefully, recommend our agency to be accredited. The accreditation process is a process throughout the Nation, which brings all agencies in compliance with a specific set of rules. By going through this process, it will put us in line with agencies across the country.

Chairman Oguntola talked about crashes. 156 crashes in Lake Wales and some fatalities. Any updates on lights and speed in the Northwest Section. He also mentioned that Mr. Narvell Peterson spoke of speed in the Northwest Section at our last meeting. Chairman Oguntola asked Lt. Smith if there are any updates since our last meeting in the Northwest Section. Lt. Smith advised that one of the fatalities was a young man who was sitting at a bus stop one morning on Wiltshire. That bus stop was one of the unlit bus stops in the area, and the City has obtained a list of bus stops from both the Charter Schools and the Polk County School Board. We then have went out and identified all of the bus stops. We are working with the

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school boards to get lights installed where there are no lights. The bus stops that have lights, but not working, we are also working to get those repaired.

Mr. Narvell Peterson stated we still have the same problem. Since the last meeting, how have we worked traffic? Mr. Peterson advised he has not seen anyone down there. He said he saw a vehicle drive into a house on F Street. He also stated that every day he calls and complains on traffic. Mr. Peterson also asked if we could have new recruits come to our meeting to introduce to board. He stated nothing is happening, and he wants to see some action.

Mr. Al Goldstein talked about speeding on Highway 27 and stated we might as well have a 75 mph sign instead of 60. He asked Lt. Smith if the motorcycles ready to go on the road. Lt. Smith responded that they just finished motorcycle course a week and a half ago. Throughout the motorcycle course, the motorcycles sustained a little damage, and they are being repaired.

Mr. Goldstein suggested we start giving more tickets, and our motorcycles need to be put to use. Mr. Goldstein also suggested having the lights on our cars all the time, as it might slow drivers down. Mr. Troy Schulze agreed with the traffic on Highway 27, and he stated that having the lights on can cause more problems. He stated that enforcement needs to happen on Highway 27 and 60. Traffic has changed drastically in Lake Wales in the last few years. Enforcement needs to be strategic and pin-pointed and safe for the officers to pull out to not create more of an issue. The community wants a safer community without seeing the work of public safety. Mr. Goldstein stated that traffic from Highway 60 and 27 is spreading to 17 and Thompson Nursery Road. With all the new homes going up, it is going to get out of hand, unless we put the hammer down somehow.

Ms. Tiffany Davis asked what the issue is with more officers being out there. Lt. Smith advised we cannot have all officers running traffic. We have calls for service we have to answer. In between answering those calls for service, they are working traffic; hence, 145 citations, 90 crashes, and more. Mr. Peterson stated he does not want his grandkids hit. He said if he saw something every once in a while, but he said he does not see anything being worked. He stated he couldn't buy into that the police are so busy that they are not able to protect our neighborhood. Mr. Peterson asked if the officers work zones, and Lt. Smith responded yes. Mr. Peterson asked if the zone man is so busy, he could not work traffic. Lt. Smith reiterated the traffic statistics.

Mr. Oguntola directed the conversation back to Mr. Peterson's request to have new recruits come see the Board, and Mr. Oguntola agreed that new recruits should come see the Board. Mr. Oguntola brought up a statement from Mr. Peterson two months ago where Mr. Peterson advised he sits in his garage, and it would be great if these new recruits could stop by and introduce themselves. Mr. Oguntola stated that many times, he sits in his garage and nobody comes. Mr. Oguntola requested that the three new recruits go by, visit Mr. Peterson, and come introduce themselves to the Committee.

Mr. Oguntola advised what he has notices is the baseball field. He mentioned he has coached baseball many years, but never had the amount of fights. He mentioned he saw where our new officer, Mr. Freeman, stop a fight. Mr. Oguntola asked if an officer could patrol during games to hopefully lower the assaults. Discussion was held regarding the instances of fighting

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that was witnessed. Mr. Peterson stated we are getting ready for Phase II or III, but why go to the next phase before we cleaned up where we are now.

Mr. Oguntola wanted to take the moment to reiterate concrete ideas from the Board. For the Northwest Section, Mr. Oguntola asked Mr. Peterson what he visioned as to what it looks like there, the ideal scenario. Mr. Peterson stated that Florida Avenue and Washington Avenue is a racetrack. He also mentioned that the Alternate has traffic congestion because of the school. Prepare for incidents before they happen. Mr. Oguntola advised he believes Lt. Smith can get somebody out there on Washington. Mr. Oguntola asked if we could get some awareness in the Northwest Section to reduce the high-speed issues.

Chairman Oguntola asked if anyone in the audience would like to speak.

Bruce Francis, 1601 Sarah Street: Have you examined whether they are increasing or decreasing in certain areas. Mr. Oguntola said that he can say personally that he has looked over the numbers and over the past six months he has seen situations where they have increased and where they have decreased based on holiday seasons. Over the last year, numbers have increased. He also said that one of the things he has done to make sure that not only does he serve on this Board, but he wanted to make sure we are doing things right, so he joined Polk County Sheriff Police Advisory Board. He rode along for a 12-hour shift but also work in the Command Center. Mr. Oguntola stated that one of the things he noticed and understanding the difference between Lake Wales and all the other cities in Polk County, is that all calls are still being ran through Polk County Sheriff's and in one hour there were probably eight calls in Lake Wales. The Sheriff officer next to him in the Command Center said that Lake Wales is small, but they are very busy. Mr. Oguntola looked at the stats from the Command Center for Lake Wales and compared them to other cities; you can see specifically that Lake Wales has the higher frequency of calls. He also saw the reaction time is quick and swift. He said there has been a decrease in the last six to seven months. Discussion was held regarding the stats and the police activity in reaction of the stats.

Michele threat, 606 W. Jackson Avenue: Could you add E street and Wiltshire with Mr. Narvell's? Lt. Smith advised they would do the whole Northwest sector.

Burney Hayes, 348 Sherwood: He believes more presence in the area, and the zone officer should be more present in his zone area. By having more of a presence in the area, the officer can get to know the people in that area. Mr. Hayes stated that more presence would decrease negative behavior. Also, not just more presence, but more contact with the people in the zone. Mr. Hayes expounded on this. Recruits should get to know the community. Burney talked more.

Bruce Francis: Are you guys prepared or are the schools prepared to protect the students from what happened today in Nashville? How prepared are our schools? Mr. Oguntola spoke on this from a Lake Wales perspective and a County perspective, and briefed everyone specifically on the County and City response inside and outside of a school. Lt. Smith advised that 98% of the agencies in Polk County go through Polk County Communications center. Lt. Smith also explained the schools' lockdown process. Lt. Smith cited the recent incident in Haines City in regard to the response of a gun scene at school.

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Mr. Peterson said a liaison officer should be present in the community and at City events especially mingling with the kids. These kids do not know our officers. Mr. Oguntola stated that he thinks they all would agree that officers should get involved in events.

Lady from the audience: She would like to see common courtesy, when you speak to an officer some of them won't open their mouth, and she asked so how can she respect that person. She added that she will speak to someone two or three times, and after that will not speak to him or her anymore.

Al Goldstein asked if some of our reserve officers could be involved with something like this. Lt. Smith responded that our reserve officers are volunteer, but we can ask them.

Ivory Wilson, 139 West Stuart Avenue: What we want is the officer that is going to be in this area, build a relationship with people in that area. You would get a better reaction from the community if we feel like everyone is being treated with respect.

Mr. Oguntola stated that this Committee is straight forward on this, if you have officers being disrespectful, or officers that will not speak to you on multiple occasions, let us know. We have had many meetings with many attending and nobody has made that statement. We will support you. We will not stand for disrespectful officers. Lt. Smith added that if you do not know the officer's name, they have a number on their car to identify them.

Burney Hayes: Is the same response in a shooter situation at a school, the same response for a church? Lt. Smith stated, "Most definitely."

Troy Schulze advised that the police department has met with and discussed safety plans with churches. He added that he knows firsthand that it is about five or six churches. Any church can have a meeting with the police department. They will not write a policy, but there would be good healthy feedback on what someone can do to protect himself or herself. Troy Schulze spoke more on this. Lt. Smith added that we have been doing this for years with several churches in the community. We do businesses, daycare, library, city hall, elderly care facilities, and a variety of things.

Andy Oguntola addressed Burney Hayes' last question regarding if the response would be the same as a school. He advised that the Church would have their own plan. Police response is same, but internal response may be different, and that is because church folks are going to be different from trained active shooters in schools, guns ready to go.

Bruce Francis: How does the concept of everybody having the possibility of carrying a gun if you do not need a permit. How is that going to affect your ability or what would you do now to keep the community safe? Lt. Smith advised that is going to pose a problem. Discussion was held regarding this topic.

Lt. Smith explained the difference between open carry and permitless carry and currently what the State of Florida allows. There is a background check, but no permit. There was further discussion regarding open carry and permit carry.

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Andy Oguntola moved to the fourth item on the agenda regarding reporting to the Commission. It was discussed in our last meeting that we need to present a report to the Commission. Andy Oguntola asked Judi Gladue if we should present at the Commission meeting or workshop.

Andy Oguntola opened the discussion to the next meeting. Discussion was held on past meetings and where we should meet on our next meeting in May. Mr. Peterson suggested the Fuego Church. Andy Oguntola asked Judi Gladue to reach out to Fuego Church to see if we can meet there. If we cannot meet at the Fuego Church, let us see about meeting at the IMPACT Church. Andy Oguntola advised our next meeting would take place on May 22<sup>nd</sup> at 6:00 p.m.

Someone spoke and advised the next meeting should be on May 15<sup>th</sup>. Andy Oguntola confirmed the next meeting would be on May 15<sup>th</sup>.

Andy Oguntola opened up the meeting to last words from the Board members.

Mr. Peterson said that he wants everyone to know that he is concerned with his community. He wants to make sure his Department is intact, but if the Chief retires, we can keep the same people in place. I want the police department to look professional. I want to see them doing their job. He also stated why develop a new area, when we cannot police this area.

Troy Schulze spoke that he wore that uniform, and he knows that there are a lot of guys and girls that are wearing it that want to serve the public. There are some, yes that are posted up under a tree. The community needs the police department and the police department needs the community. Without each other, neither are effective. We have to have each other, so I get the relationships. This board is here an advisory group for the police department. It is easy to come in, for anybody, even me from the outside right now. I am still on as a part time officer, but from the outside right now to come in with problems without solutions...this is open to the community to try to get some feedback for the Board to advise the police department. How do we serve the community better and make that partnership happen? Sometimes it's uncomfortable conversations, sometimes it's tough questions with tough answers that come back. Sometimes it is that they are too busy. The traffic unit guys are working those 160 crashes plus investigations and writing the tickets. The K9's we wanted, those guys are in school and gone for six months while they are in school. The new recruits that we are all happy that we have, they are in school. It is 770 hours of police academy time. I am going to put a shout out to the Northwest Neighborhood Association; they had an event right here. A movie night with the kids. There were cops all over the place and loved it, and the kids had a great time with them. They were invited, and the police were there. Somehow, there has to be a gap that is created where the uniform can meet the non-uniform in a setting that is not even formal like this. We've done the pop up tents where people come to meet each other to build relationships, not to come in with, right of the bat, these are the problems and why aren't you! That puts guys in a posture like this in a minute. I have worn that uniform; I know what happens that way guys. I am not taking sides, here but as an Advisory Board to the position of this Board to be able to tell Lt. Smith and Chief Velasquez. We have to have community input and again if it's awkward, if it's difficult, it's tough well then that's what it is going to be for that meeting. However, I think a lot more progress would be made with some one-on-one face time when there is not a table between us and you guys. So if you have suggestions for the police

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department, and you do not feel comfortable, come to one of us. I am very passionate about it, this is my home. My son wears that uniform, I still wear it and I wear it really proud when I do wear it. The thought of going outside does not even hit the table. The thought of working in partnership with the police department is everything that is brought to the table. That is what I think needs to happen. Troy advised the neighborhood needs to tell the officer or the Board what is going on in their neighborhood. Yes, the office works the zone, but they may not know everything that you know is going on in your neighborhood. Anything that you guys got that is constructive that's building where we can grab it and make our police department better...the got the Accreditation status, they just went through some \$60,000 audit, they've got cameras in their cars, they got cameras on their bodies. They meet all the standards that every other agency does. There is people involved though. There is the person factor, and relationships are what is important. So when you see somebody, please do not shut him or her off because they ignored you three times, try a fourth time.

Al Goldstein stated he would like to echo what both men said. We need to get people to talk to each other.

Mr. Oguntola thanked everyone for coming out that his or her presence is important. For almost two years now and over 30 meetings and this is probably one of the fifth highest to attend the meetings. He said that Troy Schulze said it best that our goal is to make sure we meet the needs of the community. We want to make sure, when we leave this meeting each time that we accomplished something. When you look at this left side of the Committee, this left side of the community never wore a police uniform. This group did, and so when they speak, we want to listen to the wisdom that is being said. I do not know how it feels to chase an individual, I do not know how it is to try finding someone, and I never know what it is like to be shot at. What I do know is how to make sure we look at laws and policy to make our community better.

Bruce Francis: Are you satisfied or is the police department satisfied with their communication with the citizens? Most institutions fail because in their public relations because by people not knowing what is going on. What you are doing. I do not know if you are speaker is loud enough to let people know, hey, we are doing this. Sometimes the solution is just communicating.

Andy Oguntola spoke that the police department can tell more of what they are doing, because they are doing a lot that people do not even know about. He stated that he believes we can communicate a little better. He suggested the police department show their accolades more.

Lady: Can SRO's attend the meeting? Andy Oguntola asked Lt. Smith if we could have our resource officers at the next meeting to introduce them to the community.

Narvell Peterson asked the Chief if we could have one officer for half the day to meet with kids at the summer event once a week. Chief responded, "Absolutely." Chief asked Mr. Peterson to let us know more information about this.

Burney Hayes closed the meeting with prayer.

Adjourned at 7:19