

Citizens and Police Community Relations Advisory Committee  
Monday, July 25, 2022 6:00 p.m.  
Polk State College JD Alexander Center  
152 E. Central Avenue, Lake Wales, FL 33853

CALL TO ORDER

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

Chairman Oguntola commenced the meeting by welcoming Troy Schulze to the Board and thanking him for serving.

Chairman Oguntola also thanked the Lake Wales Police Department for their phenomenal help with Polk State College's Backpack and School Supply Giveaway on Saturday, July 23 at the JD Alexander Center.

POLICE ACTIVITY

Lt. Michael Smith reported on the police activity from the last three months. Lt. Smith advised the numbers are not exact, for the investigative analyst has been out of the office with family medical needs.

Below are the number of report-generated calls for service during the last three months:

Alpha Zone:	278
Bravo Zone:	310
Charlie Zone:	311
Delta Zone:	174

Sixteen (16) calls involved firearms.

There were a total of 9,418 calls.

There were 377 arrests.

Traffic is one of the main complaints throughout the City, and below are statistics during the last three months:

Traffic Complaints (calls to the PD):	204
Traffic Stops:	1,438
Traffic Crashes:	379
Traffic Citations Issued:	1,089
Warnings Issued:	161

Also during the last three months, Fred Ansley and Rognel Joseph were hired. They are in the police academy and will be graduating September 8, 2022.

Some of the major cases during the last three months:

April 18: Armed robbery at Gate gas station, male, walked into Gate fully covered, pulled firearm, put in attendants face, robbed of \$86.00. No one was hurt.

May 9: Sexual battery at Eagle Ridge Mall. Adult male groomed juvenile female over the internet, met at mall, blackmailed her, and raped her the family restroom. This adult male also did same thing in Highlands County. The victim in Highlands County would not cooperate. After undercover investigation, the adult male met us at Kiwanis Park on May 20, and he was taken into custody. He had other things in his vehicle, already in process of grooming three juveniles.

June 14: Robbery at 30 West Tillman Avenue. Neighbors called 911 as people were going into neighbor's house that did not belong there. The neighbor went to confront him, and three Hispanic males ran out the front door, and one struck him in head with firearm. The victim did not get hurt. The three males were taking property from the residence. We went in to clear the residence to make sure no one else was inside the residence. A lot of narcotics were found. Got search warrant. At that point, the officers left the residence to obtain a search warrant. Officers seized \$65,000 cash, 760 grams of marijuana that was being sold, 700 grams THC resin. We obtained an arrest warrant on the subject who owned the residence. After learning of the arrest warrant, the subject turned himself into PCSO.

June 24: Armed robbery in the area of 1025 Columbia Avenue. Victim agreed to meet up with one individual to sell marijuana to him. The victim was met with four subjects who at that point pulled a firearm on him and robbed him of the marijuana and cash he had. Patrol set up a perimeter and took two subjects in custody that night. The other two subjects were taken into custody the next day. The victim was shot in the torso, and the charges ended up being attempted murder. The firearm was recovered from the four subjects.

July 1: Attempted murder with a firearm at the Garden Apartments. Suspect was upstairs in an argument with his girlfriend. After the argument, the suspect came downstairs to his vehicle and was met with two or three male subjects where an argument ensued. The suspect pulled his firearm and fired four or five times striking one of the subjects twice. The suspect then fled the scene. On July 2, the suspect was in custody. The suspect is from Bartow.

July 20: Adult male riding around with 3 juveniles at around 2:00 a.m. in the morning, none of which he was related to. The adult male had a firearm and passing it around to the juveniles in the vehicle. The firearm was passed to a juvenile in the rear seat, and the juvenile in the rear seat accidentally shot the juvenile in the front seat. As the adult male was driving all around the City, it is unknown exactly where the incident occurred. The bullet went through the left shoulder and came out the right top of the chest of the victim. Child will make a full recovery. At the end of the business day on July 20, we had the adult male in custody. He was charged with carrying a concealed firearm, culpable negligence, and three counts of contributing to the delinquency of a minor.

Chairman Oguntola asked Lt. Smith to address the car break-ins.

Lt. Smith the majority of the vehicle break-ins are juveniles/young adults between the ages of 13 to 24 who walk through the City pulling on door handles to find unlocked vehicles. It is becoming more rare to have vehicles broke to gain entry. Lt. Smith advised there is small group of juveniles we've taken in custody. There is a group traveling from Orlando to Tampa hitting cities; however, there is nothing consistent about them. The reason we can tie it all in is due to video from residents' cameras.

## COMMUNICATIONS AND PETITIONS

Andy opened the meeting up to questions or statements.

Steve Wiezorek, 1153 Cephia Street. The 9:00 reports have not available in a while. Are they not being done in a while? Mr. Wiezorek advised he looked forward to them each night.

Al Goldstein spoke of the City commission being aware of complaints on Park Avenue with panhandling. As the city is growing, we need to build reputation we are a safe city. Mr. Goldstein suggested one way to do that would be to get bicycles out there. Officers can get around easier and quicker. They are not expected 24 hours a day, but expect more presence. We have to let everyone know we are a safe city and come shop in our stores. We are going to be in a period of inflation for the next two years so we will have to budget more for this.

Chairman Oguntola spoke on strategic planning and his recent tour with the County. Included in the tour is a 12-hour ride along with a deputy. Chairman Oguntola advised he was listening to all the calls for service on the radio, and "Lake Wales" was called many times. The deputy that Chairman Oguntola was riding with commented that Lake Wales has a busy police department, and they are always moving. Chairman Oguntola stated that it is one thing to do a ride along with our police officers, but to ride along with the county and hear how good the Lake Wales Police Department is, puts a different perspective on things. Chairman Oguntola advised he saw the County's budget, and they are hiring 15 deputies each year for the next four years, and it made him think of the Lake Wales budgeted officers. We need to act now to support the increase of officers per the growth of the City, perhaps 2.5 officers every year for the next five years. As our counter-parts are doing it, it is time for us to do it as well. Lakeland is also growing and planning on two major airlines coming to Lakeland airport as a hub station. Chairman Oguntola advised that the county and other cities are preparing for the growth, and we need to start looking at what does that mean for our City and our Police and Fire Departments. Chairman Oguntola testified that they have EMS graduates that do not want to go on and work in Polk County, they are going to work in Osceola and other counties. Chairman Oguntola advised we need to start having that strategic planning conversation of the number we will be needing for our Police Department.

Chairman Oguntola announced that Lt. Michael Smith graduated Saturday from Vincennes University with Bachelor's Degree. He also stated that it shows through the leadership of our Chief the accomplishments of our officers and our Department going through the accreditation process.

Chairman Oguntola spoke about our Citizen and Police meetings touching briefly on the history of the committee, minimal agendas and recent the low participation. Chairman Oguntola attributes the minimal agenda and low attendance to we have a great police department. As attendance is low, do we need to look at holding our meetings bi-monthly/quarterly. Chairman

Oguntola advised that we have a responsibility to meet at the scheduled times. He asked if we talk about this today or put it on the agenda for the next meeting, and we need to make sure we come to the next meeting

Al Goldstein stated if we have any ideas, to get it to the Commission because the budget is in the finalization process. We are open to meeting every other meeting. Whatever support we can give the City and the Police Department, we need to do it.

Tiffany Davis advised the next meeting should be decided at this meeting. Maybe in the summer every other month.

A citizen asked what information is available to help and serve our city.

Chief Velasquez responded to the citizen's question advising of our VOICE Program. No limit or time requirement to serve. We also have the Citizens Police Academy each year. The citizens academy basically gives a crash course in what we do. Once the citizen graduates from the Citizens Police Academy, we encourage them to go through the training and get involved with VOICE, run for City Commission, or apply for an office, seat or committee and get involved with the community. We have not pushed the program the last few years because of COVID, but we are going to get it going. VOICE members can patrol, and help with parades and parking enforcement and more. We also do firearms safety training. We can do crime prevention programs, neighborhood watch programs. The next Citizens Police Academy will probably be at the beginning of next year.

Troy Schulze brought the conversation back to the Committee meetings. Troy advised that meeting every other month would be fine with him. If we have needs or budgetary concerns, we can meet more often.

Chief Velasquez advised we may not need to meet specially for budget concerns, for the budget is prepared. Commission will soon get their budget books. Chief feels that what we have proposed will get support. Most important to focus on is pay. Commission doing what they can to raise salaries. Working to stay in front of minimum wage. We are full staff plus one right now. The full staffing speaks volumes to quality of our staff. Chief added that people want to come work for us.

Chairman Oguntola asked everyone's thoughts on when to meet next.

Chief Velasquez advised September would be fine with him.

Troy Schulze advised that as Chief feels he is comfortable with the budget, we could meet in September.

Chief Velasquez welcomed everyone to come to the commission meetings.

Andy Oguntola confirmed the next meeting will be September 26 at 6:00 p.m. The location is to be determined.

The meeting adjourned at 6:48 p.m.