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Safety Committee

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Summary

- **Safety Recruits**: My first takeaway was that the Department of Public Safety is looking for ways to get more recruits. It was noted that they are looking towards a rebrand within the Cleveland Division of Police (CDP), which has been down 128 officers since January.
- **Countywide Aviation:** There were lengthy discussions about Cleveland and Cuyahoga County aiming for a countywide aviation program focusing on having more helicopters on the public safety task force.
- **Fugitive Safe Surrender Campaign:** Council President Blaine Griffin asked about bringing this campaign back.

Follow-Up Questions

- What is the city doing about 1,000+ missing children, and does the lack of officers result in the lack of public acknowledgment on which cases get represented to the public? *[Editor's note: The city responded to reports of 1,000+ missing children saying they're inaccurate. As of Sept. 27, the Cleveland Division of Police is handling 132 cases of missing individuals, according to an email from division staff. Of those missing, 65 are children. Officials discussed the issue at this point in the meeting.]*
- What will CDP do if marketing efforts aiming for younger officers don't work simply based on the crime climate of our city?

Notes

"The Cleveland Department of Public Safety strives to meet its objectives by providing efficient and effective service, establishing public trust through the development of strong partnerships within the community, and by focusing on public safety and improving the quality of life in Cleveland neighborhoods."

Discussion

Committee Chair Michael Polensek thanked representatives of the U.S. Marshals Service and the Ohio Highway Patrol for the assistance they have provided for the Cleveland Division of Police beginning in August.

“I have seen a difference,” Polensek said.

Col. Charles A. Jones of the Ohio Highway Patrol talked about the “surge” that his agency has worked on with Cleveland Police. He said using a helicopter program based in Columbus has been very helpful.

He said safety officials are focusing on drug trafficking and intense traffic enforcement.

U.S. Marshal Pete Elliott said Operation 216, in conjunction with Cleveland Police and Ohio Highway Patrol, hase made more than 100 arrests since mid-August.

Cuyahoga County Sheriff Howard Pretel talked about the establishment of a downtown safety patrol.

Polensek discussed the need for a countywide aviation unit.

Council President Griffin said of the officials at the meeting: “It’s good to see the band back together again.”

- “Sheriff’s extra presence in the central business district was very helpful“
- “Ohio State Highway Patrol with their traffic enforcement and helicopters really helped complement [everything].“

Griffin asked about bringing back the Fugitive Safe Surrender. It worked effectively and showed more partnership with the community, he said.

“We can’t just arrest people and think that that’s going to solve the issue,” Griffin said.

Council Member Joe Jones said the city needs more police and for police to be visible in neighborhoods. “If [I] can’t see you, if I can’t touch you, then you don’t exist.”

CDP Deputy Chief Dorothy Todd said traffic enforcement is a priority. She said the department has written 22,000 citations so far this year.

Polensek said Cleveland Police has lost 128 officers since the first of this year and hired

28. He said the city is down 424 officers from the amount budgeted (1,640 officers).

CDP is hiring. It is offering a sign on bonus of $5,000. Deputy Chief Todd said incentives have boosted applications and the department is working to retain officers.

A new marketing plan tells the story of what it means to be a Cleveland police officer. The focus is on getting new and younger recruits, Todd said.

Council Member Gray, Ward 4, said officials do not have enough answers for residents, which she said is problematic for the inner-city community.

Gray spoke about crime in her neighborhood in Ward 4. Gray described a shooting outside her house on Aug. 24. She said a resident placed a call to police, but a half an hour later, officers had not responded. At that point, Gray called again, and five cars responded to that call, she said.

“These incidents are happening right in our community [in] broad daylight. These kids, these young men are running rampant like it’s Wild Wild West,” Gray said. “It’s a crying shame that they were out there shooting guns period.”

Gray said there has still been no report on the incident and residents have not been asked for security footage.

She asked about ShotSpotter and if it is effective in residential communities. She has received no updates about the Aug. 24 incident.

Legislation

The committee advanced proposed changes to the city’s youth curfew policy. *[Editor’s note: If passed by council, the legislation would stiffen the punishment for the parent or guardian of a child 17 years old or younger who violates the curfew. For a first-time offense, parents or guardians could face up to 30 days in jail and a $250 fine for violating the curfew law. The current penalty is a maximum $150 fine. A second or subsequent offense could result in a $500 fine or up to 60 days in jail.]*

Council Member Howse-Jones, Ward 7, is looking to get data for a root cause analysis for the youth curfew strategy. Looking to get “appropriate solutions” to youth behavior. The committee approved an amendment to the legislation that would require a root cause analysis after the first violation.

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