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**CITY OF NORWALK
HEALTH AND PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE
SEPTEMBER 24, 2020
VIA TELECONFERENCE**

ATTENDANCE: Nicholas Sacchinelli, Chair; Dominique Johnson; Thomas Keegan; Diana Revulus; George Tsiranides; Manny Langella (7:05 p.m.)

STAFF: Deanna D'Amore, Director of Health; Gino Gatto, Norwalk Fire Chief; Thomas Kalhawik, Norwalk Police Chief

OTHERS: Gregory Burnett; David Heuvelman; Barbara Smyth, Common Council members; Alan Huth, SNEW; Michael Elliott, First District Water Department

I. Welcome and Roll Call

Mr. Sacchinelli called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and called the Roll as reflected above.

September 24, 2020
Health and Public Safety Committee
Via Teleconference
Page 1

II. Approval of the August 27, 2020 Meeting Minutes

- ** MR. TSIRANIDES MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES AS PRESENTED**
- ** MOTION PASSED WITH ONE (1) ABSTENTION (MS. REVOLUS)**

Mr. Langella joined the meeting at 7:05 p.m.

III. Public Participation

Public participation comments are not verbatim and represent a summarization of statements unless otherwise noted.

Ms. Diane Lauricella said that as we come into the colder season, she would love to see the Health Department ensure the Mayor's public relations person help with a more robust outreach. People have Covid fatigue and are not following protocols. People need to be reminded in a clever way and she wants to be sure the Health Department is supported to do this.

Ms. Lauricella said there needs to be more understanding about what is going on with aerosols and what happens when people talk or sing in an enclosed area. She said that the Health Department needs to have access to professional health officials so they can make decisions. She said the issue of ventilation is important more now than ever. She asked Ms. D'Amore to contact her and said that public outreach needs to be stepped up.

Ms. Diane Cece said she hoped this Committee may be able to provide comments to the Zoning Department on the controversial application at Norden Park. She said this project would convert an existing facility to a warehouse distribution center. She described the application and said they expect 198 62 – 67ft tractor trailer trucks per day. The primary and recommended route is Exit 17, to US 1 and then Strawberry Hill Avenue to Norden Place. Ms. Cece said she feels this is a safety and health issue and that there would be serious air pollution from the trucks.

Ms. Cece suggested that the Health Department could look at asthma instances in the schools. She added that there could be serious noise issues as well. Their secondary route would be from Exit 16, to East Avenue, left on Fitch Street and then another left onto Strawberry Hill Avenue to Norden Place.

Ms. Cece said the Health Department issued an approval indicating they had no concerns; however, she said that approval may have been for the structure itself. Ms. Cece asked if this Committee would review the application and send some comments to Mr. Kleppin.

There were no other speakers.

IV. New Business Discussion Item

1. Water Emergency

Ms. D'Amore said she and Ms. DeLucca have been in contact with SNEW and the First District Water Department to work on promoting the water conservation message.

Mr. Huth said that they knew they had a less than average rainfall in August and in addition, saw a significant increase in water use demand due to Covid -19 and more people being home. He said they are currently at 46%. Mr. Huth said they need a significant amount of rain to replenish the reservoir. He noted that typically at this time of year, they are at 69%.

Mr. Huth said they are doing all they can to notify residents and share the conservation message. He noted that there is a \$90.00 fine for violators. If the drought situation gets worse, they are prepared to look for people who are in violation.

Mr. Elliott said their reservoirs are at 47% and they are using their wells to the maximum. He expects that the wells will be producing less as they go further into the fall. He noted that October is traditionally a very dry month.

Mr. Elliott said that they were in a similar situation in 2016 and the reservoirs got as low as 29%. In dry years they do not start filling back up until January and February. He said that education is really important now.

Ms. Shanahan asked Mr. Elliott and Mr. Huth if they would be willing to go to the Ordinance Committee to discuss creating a permanent Ordinance around water conservation. They both said they intended to do that.

Mr. Keegan asked if there was anything that could be done to increase the capacity of the water sources. Mr. Huth said that water use has been trending down over the last 20 years due to high efficiency appliances, but they would consider trying to increase the capacity if the need arises.

Mr. Tsiranides asked what they can do to get the contaminated wells back on line. Mr. Elliott said they have a consultant and they continue to monitor the wells. He said they were awarded a loan, but there is a three – five year program to do the treatment. Mr. Elliott said they have a total of five wells, but three are off line and have not been used for about a year and a half.

Mr. Sacchinelli asked if they looked into a salination process. Mr. Huch explained that it is a very cost prohibitive process and there are very few plants in the country. Mr. Tsiranides said they looked at it briefly but put the brakes on due to the high cost.

Mr. Heuvelman asked what would trigger boots on the ground. Mr. Huch said the question is who is going to enforce it. He added that as the temperatures drop, people stop using as much water. Mr. Elliott said they have seen a significant drop in water usage.

Mr. Sacchinelli asked if the City can handle the load as it continues to expand. Mr. Huth said he has been speaking with Mr. Kleppin who told him that the demand has dropped from 2010. Mr. Elliott said that the First District has seen a significant drop off in consumption over the last 15-20 years. They are also seeing – close to each other – droughts. The projected increase in demand is very small.

2. Police Update & Discussion

Mr. Sacchinelli explained that some Common Council members had questions. Chief Kulhawik explained that they have had very few complaints from residents and he was not aware of any repeat offenders. As a department, they currently have four openings and expect another one shortly. He said he hoped to fill those positions shortly. The bigger issue is getting the new Officers trained, but they can't be hired until they are trained at the Police Academy.

Mr. Burnett said there is a lot going on in the world and various communities. He asked where they stand with de- escalation training. He said it is a critical, relevant and necessary part of training. He asked Chief Kulhawik if there is a need for additional funding to ensure the Norwalk Police are in the best position to handle any situation that may arise. Chief Kulhawik explained there are three different levels of training the Officers go through. In addition, anytime they train with hands on skills, de-escalation is part of that training. He said that every other year, they bring in a simulator trailer and the Officers are put through different scenarios. Their actions are judged and critiqued.

Chief Kulhawik said that a large number of Officers are trained in crisis intervention which also has de-escalation as part of that training. The goal is to have the whole department trained. He said that a lot can be accomplished using their regular budget, but he said he will reach out regarding additional funding.

Mr. Burnett said that in the spirit of making the Norwalk Police Department an even better department than it is today, providing this training will continue to enhance the services that are provided and the citizens of Norwalk will be the recipients of that training.

Ms. Johnson asked if diversity training is provided. Chief Kulhawik said they were one of the first in the State of Connecticut to use the Fair and Impartial Policing program. In addition, all new Officers get this training at the Police Academy. He said he plans to do a refresher course with all of the Officers. Ms. Johnson asked when the policies would be on the Norwalk Police Department website. Chief Kulhawik said they are on the website under FAQ

Ms. Smyth said that Norwalk is many steps ahead of other departments. She said it was important to recognize that Police violence and issues with Black Lives Matters are symptoms of a problem. She said these are systemic issues and asked what the community could do. Chief Kulhawik explained that oftentimes, people will say the Police need to do a better job, but when he asks for suggestions, he does not get an answer. He said they are doing everything they can think of and are open to any suggestions to make things better.

Ms. Smyth asked if teaming up with Mr. Daniels would provide some insight. Chief Kulhawik said he speaks with him regularly and would be glad to reach out to him.

Mr. Heuvelman thanked Chief Kulhawik for the respect and professionalism he brings to the Norwalk Police force. He said that Norwalk has a quality Police force and asked for a walk-through of the disciplinary process. Chief Kulhawik explained that most complaints are provided by e-mail. He said that 99% of the complaints are minor, but the other complaints go to the Internal Affairs Lieutenant, who reports to him. Once he makes his evaluation, he determines if discipline should be initiated. A hearing is scheduled and the Officer can accept the decision or file a grievance.

Chief Kulhawik said that any time a complaint is made, he has to notify the Union President. The resolution is that it was either a substantiated or unsubstantiated complaint. He said that very few go to the State Labor Board.

Mr. Heuvelman asked at what point does the Police Commission get involved. Chief Kulhawik said that by Contract, they do not get involved; however, for higher levels, he will reach out to the Mayor. He said that by Union Contract, the Chief is the only one who can discipline. He said he answers to the Police Commission and they have the power to discipline him.

Ms. Revolus said that the number one complaint is harassment by the Police. She asked when are ideas looked at or instituted when they are given. She said that the training in the Police Academy should be extended. Chief Kulhawik said that Connecticut has one of the most robust recruit training programs in the country. He said what has helped with perception is the use of body cameras. He said that in most cases, viewing the footage helps ease most concerns. Chief Kulhawik said that Norwalk was one of the first in the State to use body cameras.

Chief Kulhawik said they have School Resource Officers in the schools and he and other Officers are Mentors.

Ms. Revolus asked how many Police Officers live in Norwalk. Chief Kulhawik said that when he last looked, it was 40%. He said it may be higher because their last several new hires were from Norwalk.

Ms. Johnson asked about the new Outreach van and asked why it is black. She said it was an imposing color. Chief Kulhawik said the van was ordered about two years ago. It was a difficult vehicle to obtain. He said that Police vehicles have been black for the last 10-12 years, but the doors were wrapped in white. The wrapping did not hold up and it was costly. About two years ago, they went to gold lettering on the cars, but thought they could do better. He described how the new vehicles will look and said that they received a lot of positive feedback on the van.

Ms. Smyth commended the School Resource Officers and said they do great work and a lot de-escalation of issues. Chief Kulhawik said they have a good relationship with the new Superintendent and are fortunate to have good communication with the schools.

Ms. Revolus said that there are missed opportunities, such as at the bus stops. She said the School Resource Officers are great at the schools, but there are missed opportunities to encourage rapport between the Police and the Community.

Mr. Sacchinelli thanked Chief Kulhawik. Chief Kulhawik asked anyone with questions or concerns to reach out to him.

3. Fire Update & Discussion

Chief Gatto gave a breakdown of the Fire Department staff and said there are 33 Fire Fighters on duty each day. He said that there is a total of 144 personnel in the Fire Department and there are five Stations in the City. Their work schedule is 24 hours on and then three days off. They average 17-19 calls per day.

Mr. Sacchinelli asked if there is anywhere in the City where First Responders come from outside Norwalk. Chief Gatto said that the 761 Main Avenue property is split between Norwalk and Wilton, but Norwalk is always the first responder for Norwalk addresses.

Mr. Sacchinelli asked Chief Gatto if he needs any support from the City. Chief Gatto explained there is a \$15 million radio upgrade that will be incorporated in the next couple of years. He said all their equipment is adequate.

Chief Gatto said they only had one person test positive for Covid-19 and it did not spread.

Mr. Sacchinelli asked if they want additional training. Chief Gatto explained the various trainings they go through, including OSHA mandated training, Sexual Harassment Prevention training and sensitivity training. He said he did not believe they had anything new coming. He said he will let Mr. Sacchinelli know if there are any requests for additional training.

Mr. Burnett said he would be interested in understanding any efforts being made to increase the diversity of the Fire Department to reflect the demographics of the City. Chief Gatto explained that in 2015 the City gave an exam for Norwalk residents. They now have four female and several African American and Hispanic Fire Fighters.

Last year, the City got involved with a consortium along with several other towns. Due to what happened, the Fire Commission did not want to use that list. He said he spoke with several groups in the City and tried to get the word out about testing. He said he is working with the Purchasing Department to develop an RFP to get another agency to come in and give the test to Norwalk residents. The goal is to increase diversity.

Mr. Sacchinelli asked if the water emergency is impacting the Fire Department. Chief Gatto said the fire hydrants are always full. He said every municipality rents the fire hydrants from the water company. He said the Second District Water Company increased the cost to stay in line with other water districts.

Mr. Sacchinelli asked if they could harvest salt water. Chief Gatto said they would have to move the water inland. Logistically, it is easier to hook up to a fire hydrant.

Mr. Sachinelli asked Chief Gatto if there was anything he needed. Chief Gatto said a contract has been written for a new ladder truck. It should be here in about a year. Next year, they are switching from a hydraulic rescue equipment to battery operated, which is stronger. Chief Gatto asked anyone with questions to contact him.

Mr. Sacchinelli said he hopes to have a standardized cadence each month.

4. Health Department Update & Discussion

Ms. D'Amore gave an update on staffing and said they are in the process of filling various positions.

Ms. D'Amore explained that the Health Department is planning to hold a drive through flu clinic in October. They are finalizing the communication materials for this event. They are working on collaborating resources to provide Covid-19 vaccines and contact tracing. Ms. D'Amore said another big initiative is that they are looking at community resources, including food access. She said they are stretched thin working to support the community. She thanked her staff for their incredible hard work.

Mr. Heuvelman thanked Ms. D'Amore and said he was confused by the Governor's announcement that Connecticut is moving to phase 3. He asked for any insight. Ms. D'Amore said the Governor had a press conference today at 4:00 and encouraged everyone to watch. She said she would circulate the link. She said they continue to respond to complaints as they come in.

Mr. Keegan asked if the Health Department would test a quarantined student. Ms. D'Amore said the Health Department does not have the capacity to test but can provide information on where to go for a test. She said that they recommended that anyone in close contact of someone with a positive case get tested, but they should wait five to seven days.

Ms. D'Amore explained that they have a contract with a language line and use it often. They also have staff who are trained in medical translation.

Ms. Revolus asked if the Health Department provides information about holistic health benefits. Ms. D'Amore said they have health education initiatives related to wellness.

Ms. Johnson thanked Ms. D'Amore for the sense of safety and security during this time.

Ms. Sacchinelli asked followed up on the public comments made earlier and asked about aerosols. Ms. D'Amore said she will post the latest public health research on the Health Department's website. She added that Building Management could comment about ventilation.

Mr. Sacchinelli asked about air quality with the additional truck capacity. Ms. D'Amore said she will discuss this with her staff. She also said she can provide data to Ms. Cece.

Mr. Sacchinelli said he made purposely the agenda items very broad. Mr. Heuvelman said he liked the broadness of this format. Mr. Sacchinelli said he will maintain this monthly cadence. He thanked Ms. D'Amore for her leadership.

**** MS. SHANAHAN MOVED TO ADJOURN**
**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

There was no further business and the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemarie Lombardi
Telesco Secretarial Services

September 24, 2020
Health and Public Safety Committee
Via Teleconference
Page 8