



City of La Crosse, Wisconsin

City Hall
400 La Crosse Street
La Crosse, WI 54601

Meeting Minutes - Final

Neighborhood Revitalization Commission

Monday, September 28, 2020

6:00 PM

Common Council Chambers

In an effort to keep members of the public, City staff and City Plan Commissioners as safe as possible from the spread of COVID-19, City Staff highly encourages the public to submit any comments, concerns, questions, or support in writing ahead of the meeting to Tim Acklin at acklint@cityoflacrosse.org.

The meeting will also be conducted through video conferencing and may be viewed and accessed with the following link:

<https://stream.lifesizecloud.com/extension/4796124/c7d43560-fea7-4613-9625-63af875bee87>

Members of the public will also be permitted to ask questions or provide statements via video conferencing. Members of the public will also be able to attend the meeting in person. The meeting will be held in the Council Chambers of City Hall located at 400 La Crosse Street. Social Distancing policies will be followed.

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:00pm.

Present: 11 - Tim Kabat, Linda Lee, Steve Nicolai, Ralph Geary, Jennifer Trost, Will Kratt, Jim Bagniewski, Nora Garland, Larry Sleznikow, Janet Allen, Christopher Woodard

Roll Call

Present: 7 - Tim Kabat, Linda Lee, Ralph Geary, Jennifer Trost, Nora Garland, Larry Sleznikow, Christopher Woodard

Excused: 1 - Janet Allen

Absent: 3 - Steve Nicolai, Will Kratt, Jim Bagniewski

Approval of Minutes

1. Approval of the August 3, 2020 Meeting Minutes.

Ralph Geary moved to approve the minutes. Christopher Woodard seconded.
The motion passed 7-0 by voice vote.

Agenda Items:

2. [20-1062](#)

Review and Possible Action on the NRC Statement: End racially disproportionate policing through changes to appropriations of public funds, August 2020.

Mayor Kabat stated that he would like allow Police Chief Shawn Kudron to offer commentary, then the Commission can ask questions, and then the Commission can get an update on the statement and discuss next steps. Police Chief Kudron stated that he did view the previous meeting where the statement was presented to the Commission. He stated that he would like to clarify a couple items in the statement. He stated that the line in the statement indicating that Police Department budget had increased by \$400,000 was inaccurate. This is a change in how the City's Finance Department does their accounting. In previous years the City did not include outside payments for officers in the Police Department on its revenue and expense lines. Starting in 2020 the Finance Department added these to the budget. In 2019 the PD showed \$36,000 in revenue. In 2020 the PD shows \$336,000 in revenue. That \$300,000 difference in revenue needs to be subtracted from the \$400,000 as it was related to outside revenues to fund school and neighborhood resource officers. The remaining \$100,000 is to cover an increase in expenses and pre-negotiated contractual agreements. Chief Kudron again stated that the \$400,000 language in the statement should be clarified as a result of this information.

Chief Kudron then stated that he agreed that we do have disproportionate minority contact. It has been studied for years and does not have a simple answer. Poverty, lack of health care, educational issues all relate to criminality. This is something the Police Department is working on. Specifically, as noted in the statement regarding the use of force, it is important to understand that the use of force reports that the officers fill out are called to response to resistance reports. This is when an officer has to respond to resistance when an officer is attempting to take someone into custody lawfully. These reports are on our transparency page and it should be noted that only 1.6% of all of their actions resulted in a use of force. It is important to understand that 34 of those instances were uses of force against individuals of color. Chief Kudron asked if there were any questions.

CM Slezniow thanked the Chief for being present and commented of the Chief's statement that the disproportionate use of force or enforcement for minorities has been studied for years and asked the Chief what those studies have revealed in the way of trying to address that. Have there been recommendations? Have the PD look at them as new best practices to try? Chief Kudron stated that often the studies dive into the numbers to try and understand what they mean, which can also become the most difficult piece. Disproportionate minority contact occurs across the nation and state as well as like-size communities. One of the things the PD will seeking is to look at like-size communities and their policies and procedures that relate to disproportionate contact to get a better understanding. The studies can be difficult because it is difficult to know if the numbers are all counted in the same way. Not every instance is the same. An arrest warrant from the County for someone on parole counts as an arrest for the PD. Also, 82% of the calls in 2020 are for calls for service from citizens for some instance that results in an enforcement action. Of that 82%, about 20% is minority enforcement or enforcement against people of color. Looking at those numbers and trying to

understand why this is happening has not resulted in specific best practices or ways to reduce that. The PD has looked at trainings for fair and impartial policing and training that relates to implicit bias and have not shied away from the topic. They also understand that very difficult societal issues can play into criminality. Many times there is no clear path as to how lower the numbers to the demographics of the community. They work with the District Attorney's Office and other criminal justice partners on this issue and if there was an easy answer it would have been brought forward.

Jennifer Trost thanked the Chief and asked what percent of the police force lives in La Crosse. Chief Kudron stated that he did not have that information available and did not want to guess but stated that he could get that information for her. Mayor Kabat stated that that information would be helpful as it has been a number of years since the City has collected residency data for all City employees. Last time it was assessed it was roughly about 50-50 for all City employees. The Mayor also stated that this information should be update and that it can certainly be broken down for the Police Department an be brought back to the Commission.

CM Slezniow asked when the PD has "use of force" cases if there is a debrief where the people involved get together and discuss what happened and/or bring in others and analyze if anything different should or could have been done. Chief Kudron stated that they do in different ways. Informally shift commanders speak with the officers about the situation, use of force, and the report. The reports also go through the training director as well. Depending on the level or severity of the use of force there may be a more specific type of briefing that may be done. This that may include a team that reviews the case and its details.

Ralph Geary thanked the Chief for being present. He stated that he wanted to respond to the question about the percent of officers that live in the City. There was a similar issue with the County and the residency requirement was bargained out of their contracts and assumed the same was done for the City. He is a strong advocate of residency requirements. If you work for the City you should live in the City and the same for the County. Ralph then asked the Mayor if that was correct. Mayor Kabat stated that State legislature also was changed so that municipalities could not require this. Ralph thanked the Mayor for the clarification.

Nora Garland thanked the Chief for attending. Nora stated that she had a follow-up question to the "use of force" reporting. There is a Citizens Criminal Justice Panel that the PD has been recruiting member for. She asked if the reports are shared with that panel. Chief Kudron stated the reports are shared with anybody who wants to view them. They are all provided on the web page. Nora then stated that the page only gives numerical data was wondering if the incident reports will be made available as stated in their long-range plan. Chief Kudron stated that the actual reports that the officers complete are available through the open records process. In terms of having them made available on the website they are still developing a plan to do so. They are also looking at adding a broader yearly report that will to the page.

CM Gary Padesky stated that it was in the late 90s when the residency requirement was negotiated out of their contracts. He then stated that has

family that are police officers and one family member had a finger bitten off during an incident. He then stated that it is important to remember that police officers want to get back to their loved ones each day and are not looking for a fight. He then urged the Commission to keep this in mind when voting on this statement. We should be proud of our City and County police forces. Chief Kudron reminded the Commission that their last report showed that they have only used force 1.6% of the time which is a really low number. It takes a lot of restraint to only use force 1.6% of the time which shows the training of our officers and the dignity and respect of their actions.

Jennifer Trost stated that in 2019 there were 103 incidents and asked the Chief if he was able to say what percent of those were initiated by the police or a member of the public. Chief Kudron stated that he did not have those specific numbers broken down between those that were initiated by officers or those that were initiated by the call for service. Jennifer stated that it would be interesting to know and also to further break it down by persons of color versus white.

CM Slezniak asked the Chief that with everything going on in the country presently what has he taken away from these events and how might he make changes for La Crosse's Police Department. Chief Kudron stated that their jobs are a very serious and important one. It is not an easy job. There have been things that have happened across the country that he has been disgusted with. Training is important. People need to be treated fairly and to know that when we interact with them they will be safe. It is important for our officers to understand that each interaction is important for them to show respect and dignity. It is also important to remember that policing can not be pleasant to observe or read about especially if they have not experienced them before. La Crosse's PD has tried to stay on the forefront of training and technology based on the budgets they are provided and believes they have done a good job of that. He then stated that he is not content with that. There are always areas that they can get better at. No matter what model adds or takes away in regards to training or co-respondents to incidents there will always be levels that will be hard to understand by people but they will always continue their training to police with respect and dignity.

Mayor Kabat stated that there have been several protests and marches here in La Crosse that have all been peaceful. Much of the credit goes to the organizers and Police Department who have really worked together. The Mayor stated that he is trying to address the call to have more citizen involvement and oversight into policing. Issues involving choke holds and body cameras have been already been addressed here in La Crosse. Looking for next steps, whether it is more transparency, or implementing Campaign Zero recommendations or the recommendations from the 21st Century on Policing that President Obama put together several years ago. Several have already been implemented or are in the process of being implemented. The Mayor then stated that he is interested in having the processes associated with the Police and Fire Commission be more transparent and clear on the City website. The Mayor then stated that he is a member of a subcommittee of the County's Criminal Justice Management Council who is looking at models at what a citizen advisory or oversight board would look like. The Mayor also stated that there will be a listening session on October 6, 2020 at 12pm and again at 6pm where community can provide input on what the roles of a

citizen committee will look like. This will be followed up with a survey and then formulating recommendations that will go back to the Management Council. The Mayor then stated that while the focus has been on policing, we obviously have systemic racism in our country, state, and community that we also need to address. The City has, and will continue, to actively work on these issues and make positive actions moving forward.

Ralph Geary stated that, on behalf of the Logan Neighborhood Association, they like the community policing that has occurred and asked what direction will be taken for better interaction with the public as they feel it has been working in their neighborhood. Mayor Kabat stated that the Neighborhood Resource Officers have been a huge positive for community engagement. The City has ten total NROs to continue build those relationships. Would like to have more and are working with UWL on this. Also looking at ways for the Fire Department to get into neighborhoods the same way the PD is. Chief Kudron added that community engagement and building stakeholder relationships was the philosophy he wanted the PD to expand on when he became the Chief of Police. The buy in from the department was fantastic. COVID made it difficult to meet these goals but the PD has adjusted and are moving back in the right direction of creating more stakeholder relationships and integrating the interactions set by the NROs throughout the Department.

Jennifer Trost stated that she wants the Commission to be careful about who they might be speaking for when we talk about folks on the north side being excited about having the police in their schools. A number of black student leaders from Logan High School may not agree with how cooperative they find having police officers in their school. She then stated that there are multiple voices regarding this issue and currently this is a room of white people who do not represent all of the views. Mayor Kabat clarified that Ralph was talking about the Neighborhood Resource Officers and that the School Resource Officers are a different issue. The SRO program has been discussed for awhile now with the School District about ending the program. The Police Department has submitted recommendations to the School Board for changes to the program for them to review and developing a plan for the SRO offices should the program discontinue. Chief Kudron added that he has submitted changes to re imagine the program. He has heard many positive things about the program, as well as being a SRO at Lincoln Middle School. A decision is expected from the School Board in November.

Mayor Kabat asked what the Commission would like to do with the Statement. Jennifer Trost moved to adopt the statement as submitted to the Commission. Ralph Geary stated that perhaps this item be referred to the appropriate committee as he feels the PD should have the budget for additional training. Nora Garland seconded. Mayor Kabat suggested the Commission vote on this statement as was not sure if another Committee would be able to address it in the same fashion. He also suggested that it could be modified to reflect the information that was discussed earlier. Ralph Geary suggested that parts of it may need to be reworded differently. Jennifer Trost stated that she was just using publicly available information when developing the statement and that rewording will likely not change the sentiment of the Commission and prefer that a vote is taken on how it is currently written. The motion fails 1-6. Lee, Woodard, Geary, Garland, Slezniow, Kabat voting no.

3. [20-1389](#)

Review and Discussion of the Downtown Parking Study and Analysis of

Expanded Areas.

Mayor Kabat stated that to the Commission that the final report was attached to the agenda. Greg Elsen stated that the study was a continuation of a study that was started in 2015. Restarted it back in May of 2019. Open House and Stakeholders Meetings were held as part of the process. Surveys were also conducted. At the end of July 2020 a presentation was given to the Board of Public Works with the recommendations of the consultant. Plan focused on four areas. Downtown District, UWL District, Gund-Mayo District, and the North Side District. With the Downtown District the perception was that there was not enough parking available or hard to use. A lot of the on-street parking is used by Downtown employees. One recommendation that was tried to be implemented right away was an employee parking permit. Allowed for employees to get a parking permit at 50% of the cost and park in any ramp. Another recommendation was to improve signage, adding ADA parking, and curbside pick-up areas. In the other districts the plan looked at the Pay-to-Park zones and how they were working. Plan stated that they were working well. The plan also recommended to improve the website to better illustrate what the parking options are in La Crosse. Greg stated that the residential permit process is 100% online. Greg also stated that the plan states that there should be more promotion of public transportation and more ADA parking in the Northside District.

Mayor Kabat stated that he liked how the plan expanded the parking assessment beyond just the Downtown and went into neighborhoods, especially those that are impacted by various institutional parking challenges. Mayor Kabat asked if there were any specific highlights to note or comments in those areas. Greg Elsen stated that they had asked the consultants to look into the pay-to-park system in the Gund-Mayo District due to the amount of employees that parking in the residential areas. Initially there was a strong effort to institute this program around Gundersen however, due to COVID the effort has slowed down but will still likely be instituted at some point.

Chris Woodard asked if there was ever a joint venture between the hospitals and the City to build up rather than provide additional surface parking. Greg stated that additional ramps have not been discussed or preferred at this time. Assistant Police Chief Rob Abraham stated that they asked the consultants to look at availability within private lots. He then stated that Gundersen has parking available it is just not convenient for their employees to park there so they choose to park in the neighborhoods. Would need to push them to make sure their employees park in their designated lots.

AC Abraham also stated that the discussion of Parking Benefit Districts and Pay-to-Park zones would not be at the expense of the homeowners or resident in those neighborhoods. It is designed for commuters coming into that neighborhood, for the funding to improve that neighborhood and to discourage them from parking in that neighborhood. Legislation is in place for neighborhoods to request from the Board of Public Works and Council to start the program in their neighborhood/

CM Slezniow stated several recommendations in the plan promoted bicycling in the City. He then asked Greg Elsen how the Parking Utility is addressing these recommendations. Greg stated that one recommendation is to have enclosures in the ramps for bicycle parking. Currently there are lockers. They

are looking at other options. Downtown streets are a little tight for bike lanes. CM Slezniow then asked how the effort to establish a bike sharing program would integrate into this. Greg stated they are considering on how to accommodate a program such as this. AC Abraham also stated that the Parking Utility can certainly be a partner in developing this program in the City with other departments.

Nora Garland asked if the one-hour parking pilot that was supposed to be around UWL still in effect and are there any findings or feedback. Greg stated that it was a pilot program. It started in September of 2019. With COVID there was not a lot of time to gather data but it did seem to be a program that was working so they will likely attempt to look at continuing it to gather more data. Nora asked what indication did he have that made them think it has been working. Greg stated that the program was designed keep commuter traffic flowing and residents being able to park which seems to be working. Nora then stated that the Grandview Emerson Neighborhood would like them to attend a future meeting to discuss the Parking Benefit District in their neighborhood. Greg said they would.

Jennifer Trost stated that the plan states that parking was pushed out from the regulated streets which would then push for the argument to implement it in the entire district. Jennifer then stated that her takeaway from the plan was the City has plenty of parking everywhere. That there only needed to be a few changes in policy to manage that demand in some places, particularly the Gund-Mayo District. We met best practices of the City controlling 50% of the parking in most places. Not having enough parking in some areas is mostly perception and that she would like to start talking about eliminating parking minimums now. Mayor Kabat stated that he agrees and would like to have this item on the agenda at the next meeting. Jennifer also stated that the plan states that the fees collected from parking do not cover the cost. Mayor Kabat confirmed this and stated that La Crosse taxpayers were subsidizing the commuters that live outside the City.

CM Slezniow stated that once the pay-to-park program was started around WTC the streets became barren and the streets further east became crowded with parked vehicles. Mayor Kabat stated that indirectly the program has increased the number of parking ramp passes for UWL and WTC has discounted theirs. Would like to see if their number of passes purchased has increased. COVID likely has affected these numbers.

Tim Acklin stated that the topic of parking minimums has been a discussion in the Planning Department for awhile now and would like to discuss parking maximums.

4. Update on the Comprehensive Plan.

In the interest of time Mayor Kabat asked staff if they would like to move this item to next month. Staff stated that their update would only be about 5-10 minutes but any discussion or questions from the Commission may make it a longer item. Mayor Kabat suggested that we move the Comprehensive Plan update to the next meeting along with a discussion on parking minimums/maximums.

Adjournment

Larry Sleznikow moved to adjourn the meeting. Nora Garland seconded. The motion passed 7-0. The meeting was adjourned at 7:31pm.

Notice is further given that members of other governmental bodies may be present at the above scheduled meeting to gather information about a subject over which they have decision-making responsibility.

NOTICE TO PERSONS WITH A DISABILITY

Requests from persons with a disability who need assistance to participate in this meeting should call the City Clerk's office at (608) 789-7510 or send an email to ADAcityclerk@cityoflacrosse.org, with as much advance notice as possible.