

POLICE COMMISSION MINUTES

October 8, 2021

2:00 P.M.

IN ATTENDANCE: William Poling – Police Commissioner Chairman
Petar Dragojevic – Police Commissioner Secretary
Gene Guernsey – Police Commissioner
Tom Pawlak – Police Commissioner
Gene Ward – Police Commissioner
W. Luther Cuttino – Chief of Police
Michael Deppe – Commission Attorney

Commissioner Poling asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag and to remain standing afterwards for the invocation by Scott Walton.

ITEM I Motion was made to accept the minutes of the Police Commission Meeting dated September 10, 2021 as presented.

Commissioner Guernsey made a motion to accept September 10, 2021 minutes and was seconded by Commissioner Ward.

Commissioner Poling asked if there were any discussion.

Commissioner Poling stated all in favor signify by saying, “Aye.”
All replied, “Aye.”
Commissioner Poling stated, “Opposed, same sign.”

Hearing none Commissioner Poling stated, “Motion carries”.

ITEM II STATISTICS REPORT

The Chief of Police presented the August 2021 Monthly Statistical Reports as presented.

ITEM III LETTERS OF CORRESPONDENCE

Commissioner Poling read the letter of Commendation from Detective Commander Gonzales.

I would like to make you aware of an incident that occurred on July 25, 2021 where Officer Leto, Officer Kijurna, Officer Decero, Officer Hensley, Corporal Henry, and Detective Van Rite displayed outstanding performance while carrying out their duties.

On 07/25/2021 the Merrillville Police Department was dispatched to 7709 Taft Street in reference to a suicidal subject. Officers were previously advised a male subject left his girlfriend's house after an argument and was on his way to this residence. The girlfriend advised the male subject made suicidal threats and is known to carry a handgun.

Shortly after officers' arrival the male subject pulled into the driveway. As the door to the vehicle opened Officer Leto heard the male subject rack the slide to a handgun. Officers immediately addressed the threat and gave the subject verbal commands. Officers were able to take the subject into custody without incident. A pat down of his person revealed an empty holster but a handgun was not located. The subject was transported for a mental evaluation.

Officers on scene believed the handgun in question to be located in the subject's vehicle and the supervisor in charge, Corporal Henry, made the decision to contact Detective Van Rite. Det. Van Rite reviewed the statements provided by the officers on scene as well as reports involving previous contacts with the subject from other agencies. After speaking with Supervisory Deputy Prosecutor Robert Persin, Det. Van Rite was able to secure a search warrant for the subject's residence and vehicle and seize any weapons as it was determined the subject may present a risk of injury to himself or another under IC 35-47-14-1. Inside the subject's vehicle a handgun and two loaded magazines were located.

On 07/27/21 I was contacted by Supervisory Deputy Prosecutor Robert Persin commending Det. Van Rite for his efforts and work ethic while investigating this incident.

I am recommending Officer Leto, Officer Kijurna, Officer Decero, and Officer Hensley be awarded a Level II Commendation for a successful act involving personal danger performed in the line of duty. I am recommending Corporal Henry and Detective Van Rite be awarded a Level I Commendation and this letter placed in their personnel file for their excellent performance in carrying out their duties. Attached is a copy of the email I received from Supervisory Deputy Prosecutor Persin

Commissioner Poling also read the email from Supervisory Deputy Prosecutor Robert Persin.

I am writing this letter of commendation for the work of Detective Van Rite. This last weekend while on call, Detective Van Rite came in to work drafting search warrants for an individual who was suicidal. So under the Red Flag Statute and the work of Detective Van Rite, this individual's firearm was confiscated and he will not do harm to himself or any other.

Detective Van Rite did a great job drafting the warrants, and I appreciated his professional demeanor while on the phone with him.

Please place this email / letter of commendation in his personnel file.

Commissioner Guernsey made a motion to accept the Level II Commendations for Officer Leto, Officer Kijurna, Officer Decero, and Officer Hensley and Level I Commendation and letter in file for Corporal Henry and Detective Van Rite and was seconded by Commissioner Dragojevic.

Commissioner Poling stated all in favor signify by saying, "Aye."
All replied, "Aye."
Commissioner Poling stated, "Opposed, same sign."

Hearing none Commissioner Poling stated, "Motion carries"

Commissioner Poling read a Letter of Commendation from Director John Dempsey.

I just wanted to let you know, and thank Sgt. Lance Schmidt and K-Officer Goose, along with Cpl. Gary Henry and K9 Officer Dozer, for their assistance on 9-9-21 at the Lake County Juvenile Center, assisting in room searches. All officers helped without hesitation and went above and beyond assisting us. I would appreciate you letting them know that they are appreciated. In the future, if you ever need assistance from the Juvenile Center, please don't hesitate to ask. If this could be placed in their file that would be great.

ITEM IV

OLD BUSINESS

ITEM V

NEW BUSINESS

ITEM VI

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Ward made motion to adjourn and was seconded by Commissioner Guernsey.

Commissioner Poling stated all in favor signify by saying, "Aye."

All replied, "Aye."

Commissioner Poling stated, "Opposed, same sign."

Commissioner Poling stated, "Adjourn."

Commissioner Poling stated next meeting will be Friday November 5, 2021 at 2:00 P.M.

AS THERE WAS NO FURTHER BUSINESS, THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED.