

POLICE COMMISSION MINUTES

May 6,2022

2:00 PM

IN ATTENDANCE: Petar Dragojevic – Police Commissioner Vice Chairman/Secretary
Thomas Pawlak – Police Commissioner
Michael Rich – Police Commissioner
Gene Ward – Police Commissioner
W. Luther Cuttino– Chief of Police
Kosta Nuses – Assistant Chief of Police
Michael Deppe – Commission Attorney

Commissioner Dragojevic asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag and to remain standing afterwards for the invocation by Attorney Deppe.

ITEM I Motion was made to accept the minutes of the Police Commission Meeting dated April 8, 2022, as presented.

Commissioner Pawlak made a motion to accept April 8, 2022, minutes and was seconded by Commissioner Ward.

Commissioner Dragojevic asked if there were any discussion.

Hearing none Commissioner Dragojevic stated, “Motion carries”.

ITEM II STATISTICS REPORT

The Chief of Police presented the March 2022 Monthly Statistical Report as presented.

ITEM III LETTERS OF CORRESPONDENCE

Commissioner Dragojevic read letter of commendation from Commander Bunnell.

On March 30, 2022 at 11 :00 p.m., police units were dispatched to the 7100 block of Van Buren Court in reference to an individual

threatening to commit suicide. Officer Reid #400 was the first officer on scene and located the subject sitting in the driver's seat with the door open of a 2008 red Chevy. Officer Reid began a conversation with the subject to await arrival of his backup officers.

Officers kept a safe distance from the subject not knowing if he had access to any type of weapons. During the conversation with Reid, the subject even spoke about committing suicide by cop.

The subject then took jumper cables and wrapped them around his neck in an attempt to hang himself. Officers converged on the vehicle and quickly pulled the subject out of the vehicle and took him to the ground and removed the jumper cables from around his neck.

Once the subject was secured the officers had the EMS come on scene and transported him to Methodist Hospital for treatment.

The actions by Officer Reid by keeping the subject involved in a conversation in an attempt to de-escalate the situation allowed the other officers to get on scene and quickly got the subject under control and get him the treatment he needs. Nobody on scene was hurt and the subject didn't commit suicide. I would like to see Officer Reid receive a Level II commendation and a Level I commendation for Lt. Smith #249, Officer Solis #398, Officer Olson #409 and Officer Dugan #413 who assisted with the success of the incident. Job well done.

Commissioner Dragojevic read letter of commendation from Commander Bunnell.

On March 31, 2022 at 10:50 pm, police units were dispatched to a welfare check for a male subject possibly attempting to commit suicide by standing on the I-65 overpass at US 30.

Officer Solis #398 was the first unit on scene and located the subject standing on the overpass. Officer Solis make contact with him and began speaking to him while keeping a safe distance until backup arrived. Officer Reid #400 arrived on scene and blocked the east bound lanes of US 30 to keep the area clear from passing cars.

Officer Reid then sprinted up the embankment onto I-65 to assist Officer Solis. Officer Solis kept the attention drawn towards himself which allowed Officer Reid to come up behind the victim and pull him away from the bridge edge. Both Officers took the subject to the ground and detained him until the EMS arrived on scene. The subject was transported to Methodist Hospital for treatment.

The teamwork and rapid response that both Officers displayed on this call prevented the victim from jumping off the overpass and possibly killing himself and injuring a passing motorist traveling on US 30.

I would like to have both Officer Solis & Reid recognized for their efforts by recommending them for a Level II commendation.

Commissioner Dragojevic read letter of commendation from Commander Bunnell.

On Monday April 11th, 2022, Police units were dispatched to a carjacking at Clean 4 Less at 1521 W 81st Ave. Officer Wright arrived on scene and was able to obtain the vehicle description and the victim's information and give it out to the other units. Officer Kloc was able to locate the vehicle plate number off the information given and broadcast the information to the other units.

Once the information was gathered, Officer Osborne entered the vehicle information into the Vigilant License Plate Rear system onto the hot list in case the vehicle passed through the LPR cameras. A short time later, Officer Osborne advised that he received an alert from the LPR camera located at I-65 & US 30, that the stolen car was traveling northbound on I-65. Officer Fultz and Indiana State Police located the vehicle and attempted a traffic stop. The vehicle failed to stop and Officer Fultz along with ISP and other agencies pursued the vehicle northbound on I-65 to Dunes Highway where the vehicle crashed. The suspect was taken into custody without incident by units. The vehicle was recovered. The Indiana State Police took custody of the suspect and advised that they would be charging him with the Felony Resisting of Law Enforcement and our department would be filing charges for the carjacking.

I would like to commend these officers who worked as a team to gather the information from the victim while another Officer was looking up the information and getting the plate and VIN number for the call. Officer Osborne entered the information into the Vigilant License Plate Reader on their hotlist so it would alert as a stolen vehicle. I would like to recommend Officer Wright, Fultz and Osborne for a Level I commendation and have this letter place in their personnel files.

Commissioner Dragojevic read letter of commendation from Commander Bunnell.

On Friday April 8, 2022 at 5: 15 p.m., Officer Buchanan #420 observed a white SUV driving erratically on 6th Avenue from Broadway. Officer Buchanan attempted to stop the vehicle for traffic but the vehicle refused to stop and fled at a high rate of speed causing Officer Buchanan to lose sight of the vehicle in the area of Johnson St. Officer Reid #400 was checking the area and was able to locate the vehicle sitting in the driveway in the 6200 block of Johnson St. The vehicle was a white 2004 Mercedes Benz bearing an Illinois temp tag.

The vehicle then fled through the yards with officers in pursuit. The suspect drove eastbound on 61st Avenue, still driving in an erratic manner. Hobart Police were notified to assist and were able to deploy stop sticks near 61st Ave and I-65. The vehicle struck the stop sticks causing the vehicle to lose control and strike the utility pole causing the pole to split at the base. The suspect exited the vehicle and fled on foot towards the Key West Inn at 61st Ave and Mississippi St. Officer Olson #409 located a key card for the Key West Inn and responded over to the motel and located the vehicle owner there. The driver of the vehicle had identification that turned out to be false. Officer Dugan #413 transported the suspect to Methodist Hospital for medical clearance and during the visit, the suspect repeatedly made threats towards Officer Dugan and the suspect continued to give false identity to hospital staff.

Officer Dugan had to sit with the subject under guard until his alcohol and drug test were low enough to be accepted at the Lake County Jail. During the Investigation, Officer Solis #398 continued to research into the identity of the individual we had in custody and was able to determine his true identity. Officer Reid contacted the person whose identity was being used by the suspect. The person is the son of a Cook County Judge and the address given was to the Judge's residence. The information that was located is now being investigated by the Illinois Marshalls for the Cook County Courts. These officer's commendable performance led to several felony and misdemeanor charges against the suspect in the Lake County Court. I recommend that the following Officers receive a Level I commendation and a copy of this letter be placed in their files. Reid #400, Dugan #413, Olson #409, Solis #398 and Buchanan #420.

Commissioner Dragojevic read letter of commendation from Commander Bunnell.

I would like to bring to your attention some great police work done on Friday April 15th through Sunday April 17th that resulted in numerous arrest that resulted in misdemeanor and felony charges where most of the calls were self-initiated by the police officers. All of these arrest that I speak of are on the attached memo from Shift Commander Lt. Berzac # 133 that highlights great police work in a Seventy-two-hour period.

One of the incidents you should be made aware of is 22ME07288 on April 12, 2022 where Officer Osborne #411 utilized the Vigilant LPR system camera that is mounted on his Police Commission and the system picked up a Suspended driver. Officer Osborne attempted to conduct a traffic stop on the suspect vehicle where the suspect

refused to stop and the offender led officers on a pursuit into Gary. The suspect vehicle sustained a flat tire and the vehicle became disabled.

The suspect attempted to flee on foot and Officer Osborne gave chase of the subject. With the assistance of Sgt. Schmidt and his K-9 partner Goose, the suspect was taken into custody. This is just one of the types of arrest that occurred during the time period along with multiple warrant arrest, traffic misdemeanor arrest, drug and OWI arrest.

I agree with Lt. Berzac that Officers Leto #383, Kloc #396, R. Kijurna #402, Wright #408 and Osborne#411 should be awarded a Level II commendation for their efforts in keeping the town a safer place to live and work.

I would also like you to recognize the command staff of this crew for the leadership and guidance where their subordinates continue to work hard make these types of good arrest every month. The Supervisors are Lt. Nick Berzac #133, Sgt. Lance Schmidt and Cpl. Matt Reynolds.

Commissioner Dragojevic read letter of commendation from Commander Bunnell.

On May 2, 2022 at 8 :46 a.m., Officers Reid and Enyeart were dispatched to a Suspicious Vehicle over at 5541 Grant St. The resident at this address reported that a suspicious black male parked his vehicle in front of her residence and came up to her front door and was shaking the door handle attempting to gain entry. The suspect walked off from her residence when her dog started barking and she observed the suspect walk over to a neighbor's residence and enter the back yard.

Officers arrived on scene and were speaking with the complainant about the incident, when they heard glass breaking from the residence across the street. Reid and Enyeart went to investigate and observed the suspect placing a ladder up to the second story window that he just broke. The suspect was taken into custody and incarcerated at the Lake County Jail on the pending charges of Criminal Mischief and Criminal Trespass.

Lt. Smith advised that later Officers were dispatched back to the scene to meet with the homeowner because of the broken window. Speaking with the homeowner about the incident, it was discovered that he was home sleeping during the entire incident.

For information, the homeowner advised he sleeps with a firearm next to his bed and if he had woken with the suspect inside his residence, he probably would have used deadly force against the suspect.

If it hadn't been for the quick actions of both Officers who prevented a daytime burglary and possibly a more tragic event of the suspect entering the home through the window and possibly being shot and killed by the homeowner during the burglary attempt.

I would like to recommend that both Officer Reid and Enyeart receive a Level I commendation for their actions and a copy of this letter be placed in their personnel file.

Commissioner Dragojevic read letter of commendation from Commander Bunnell.

I received a memo from Lt. Dan Kijurna #123 about two Officers who continually preform above and beyond the call of duty by making numerous felony and misdemeanor arrest while working. Officer Solis #398 and Officer Davidson Dugan #413 were recommended by Kijurna to receive recognition for their outstanding arrest records for the past year.

Officer Solis is credited with 40 arrest and Officer Davidson Dugan with 41 arrests. Lt. Kijurna has attached highlights of their activities and arrest on his memo.

These officers continually go above and beyond to get the job done with the arrest to keep the people of Merrillville safe.

On top of their regular duties in the patrol division, both officers are involved with the Merrillville Tactical Apprehension Squad which requires additional monthly training on the unit along with extra duties that are required by the Squad.

I would like to recommend that Officer Solis and Officer Davidson Dugan receive a Level II commendation for their many accomplishments of getting drugs, guns, and bad people off the streets of Merrillville.

Commissioner Ward made motion to accept all 7 letters of commendations as presented and was seconded by Commissioner Pawlak.

Commissioner Dragojevic asked if there were any discussion.

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

All replied, "Aye."

Commissioner Dragojevic stated, "Opposed, same sign."

Hearing none Commissioner Dragojevic stated, "Motion carries

ITEM IV OLD BUSINESS

NONE

ITEM V NEW BUSINESS

Motion was made to expire the 2022 Emergency Police Officer hiring list.

Commissioner Rich made motion to expire the list and was seconded by Commissioner Ward.

Commissioner Dragojevic asked if there was any discussion.

Hearing none Commissioner Dragojevic asked Chief Cuttino to take roll call vote.

Chief Cuttino took a roll call vote.

Commissioner Dragojevic, "Aye"

Commissioner Rich, "Aye"

Commissioner Pawlak, "Aye"

Commissioner Ward, "Aye"

Commissioner Dragojevic stated, "Vote is unanimous, and the motion carries."

Commissioner Dragojevic read Ordinance 22-13 Approving the increase of Tow Release Service fees. That Section 12-41 of Chapter 12, Article II of the Merrillville Town Code be, and the same is hereby amended to read, as follows, Namely: "Section 12-41. – Tow release service fee."

- a) A fee in the sum of forty dollars (\$40.00) for non-offense related tow release services.
 - a. **By definition Non-Offense** Related tows include, but are not limited to, vehicle accidents (unless charges apply), disabled vehicles, emergency situations (medical & non-medical) and stolen recoveries (victims).
- b) A Fee in the sum of one hundred dollars (\$100.00) for offense related tow release services.
 - a. **By definition Offense** Related tows include, but are not limited to, arrest involvement, vehicles used in the commission of a crime, traffic and/or ordinance violations, no or improper insurance and improper licensing or registration.

Commissioner Ward made motion to accept Ordinance 22-13 amendment and was seconded by Commissioner Rich.

Commissioner Dragojevic asked if there was any discussion.

Hearing none Commissioner Dragojevic asked Chief Cuttino to take roll call vote.

Chief Cuttino took roll call vote.

Commissioner Dragojevic, "Aye"

Commissioner Rich, "Aye"

Commissioner Pawlak, "Aye"

Commissioner Ward, "Aye"

Commissioner Dragojevic stated, "Vote is unanimous, and the motion carries."

Attorney Deppe requested an Executive session with the FOP for May 16th 2022 at 1pm.

Commissioner Ward made motion to accept the executive session and was seconded by Commissioner Rich.

Commissioner Dragojevic asked if there was any discussion.

Hearing none Commissioner Dragojevic asked Chief Cuttino to take roll call vote.

Chief Cuttino took roll call vote.

Commissioner Dragojevic, "Aye"

Commissioner Rich, "Aye"

Commissioner Pawlak, "Aye"

Commissioner Ward, "Aye"

Commissioner Dragojevic stated, "Vote is unanimous, and the motion carries."

ITEM VI

ADJOURNMENT

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

Commissioner Dragojevic stated all in favor signify by saying,
“Aye.”

All replied, “Aye.”

Commissioner Dragojevic stated, “Opposed, same sign.”

Commissioner Dragojevic stated, “Adjourn.”

Commissioner Dragojevic stated the next regular meeting will be
Friday June 3, 2022 at 2:00 P.M.

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