

Observer: Mary Gavin

Members present: CM Eleanor Revelle, chair; CM Peter Braithwaite, CM Bobby Burns, CM Devon Reid. No appointment has been made to fill the position vacated by CM Cicely Fleming

Staff present: Health and Human Services Department Director Ike Ogbo, Deputy City Attorney Michelle Ozuruigbo

Two items for consideration, one for discussion and two for communication were on the agenda.

William Logan Way: The first item, a resolution designating the portion of McDaniel Avenue between Nathaniel and Greenleaf streets “William ‘Bill’ Logan Way,” passed unanimously. Mr. Logan, Evanston’s first Black police chief, implemented several programs and policies that have lasted: community policing, school resource officers and focus on youth. He cofounded Chessmen Club of the North Shore and has been honored in many ways as a venerable member of the Evanston community. The resolution will be forwarded to City Council for a final vote.

Amending the Noise Ordinance: The second item, amending the noise ordinance, was tabled and returned to staff for clarifications and refinement of the language. CM Revelle proposed the amendment after several of her constituents complained about loud music, etc., from events at American Legion Post 42.

Parts of two sections are involved: The section that prohibits noises that are unnecessary or that would annoy a “reasonable person of ordinary sensibilities” and has several other vague or subjective criteria would be eliminated. The amendment would apply to the section that governs the extent to which sound from a loud speaker, paging system or the like should travel without annoying others. At present, the “perimeter of annoyance” (writer’s term, not legal term) is within 150 feet of the boundary of the property on which the loud speaker or paging system is located; the amendment would extend that to 750 feet. The amendment would govern the intensity of the sound (perhaps 65 decibels, but that will be decided) that could be heard at a distance of 750 feet from the property line of where the loud speaker is located.

CM Reid asked what the consequence of violating the noise ordinance – as proposed to be amended – would be. Deputy City Attorney Ozuruigbo read the current fines for violating the current noise ordinance and said she assumed they would be the same – as low as \$100 for the first offense and escalating fines for repeated violations.

There was discussion and questioning about who would be “collaterally” affected by this amendment that is specifically targeting noise levels from Legion Post 42 events. CM Revelle said this portion of the noise ordinance would not apply to events for which a City permit had been obtained, such as the Out of Space concerts on the lawn at Post 42. Interim Police Chief Richard Eddington suggested that situating speakers to face east would minimize the noise of the concerts. He said that had been part of the solution worked out in addressing noise from Dillo Day at Northwestern.

It is expected the Human Services Committee will consider in April a revised proposed amendment that contains specific acceptable decibel levels and fines for violation.

General Assistance Update: Director Ogbo said the General Assistance office in 2021 expended \$507,528.63 for personal benefits, housing assistance and utility stipends to residents. Using debit cards eliminated the need for checks and allowed the funds to be transferred and used more quickly. Because more people were home during the pandemic, utility bills increased, the City increased the GA allotments for utility bills, rental support and other basic needs; these had not been increased in 10 years. Through the Community Relief Fund, created by City Council in November 2020, the City was able to offer assistance to undocumented residents.

CM Reid said he was concerned that the City now had a list of the names and addresses of undocumented residents that could be subject to subpoena. Mr. Ogbo said the aid to undocumented residents could be provided through the General Assistance program because of the federal declaration of the pandemic and it would likely be halted soon.

Committee members thanked Mr. Ogbo, accepted the report to be placed on file, and requested quarterly updates on the General Assistance program.

Two Complaints Against Police Officers: Commander Ryan Glew described the disposition of two complaints against police officers: In one instance, the officer was found to have failed to turn on his body-worn camera when handling a parking complaint. The other complaint – that a police officer had questioned a juvenile about who lived at a certain address – was determined to be unfounded: No evidence was found that this had occurred. Committee members thanked Mr. Glew and accepted the report to be placed on file.

Crime Rates and Personnel Staffing 2017-21:

CM Reid had requested information about the current staffing levels and vacancies in the Evanston Police Department. He asked whether there is a correlation between decreased staffing and increased crime.

The response contained several charts about crimes and crime levels between 2016 and 2021.

Police departments nationwide now report using the UCR, Unified Crime Report, indices. Part I UCR crimes are classified as either violent crimes – aggravated assault, forcible rape, murder, and robbery – or property crimes – arson, burglary, larceny-theft, and motor vehicle theft.

Chief Eddington said that while reduced staffing does not necessarily result in an increased crime rate, it can decrease the availability of certain services and increase the response time to calls for service. He said he is “very focused on Part I crimes” – and that he feels his job and the job of the Evanston Police Department is to “prevent victimization.” He said the Police Department has certain things the officers can do, but charging, convicting and incarcerating individuals is out of their hands. He suggested that the present State’s Attorney is not doing a good job at preventing repeat gun offenses.

Picking up on the Chief’s comment about what the police department can do, CM Burns suggested that there could be “other measures” to prevent victimization. He did not elaborate

but said there should be a longer conversation with the new City Manager about who should respond to calls for service.

Chief Eddington suggested to the Committee members that if they would like further responses, they send their questions in as soon as possible so work on the answers could begin before the new police chief is appointed.

Committee members voted to accept the report and place it on file. On a motion by CM Braithwaite, they adjourned to executive session.

CM

Committee members accepted the report to be placed on file.