



Agenda Item: Resolution

Title: Policing Activity within the Municipal Boundaries of Laramie

Background

On May 28th, Councilor O’Doherty requested a work session on municipal policing policies and a work session was scheduled on the next available date of June 23. As protests began to occur in Laramie in early-June, it was clear that many protesters were keenly concerned with the actions of the Albany County Sheriff’s Department in the death of Robbie Ramirez in 2018. On June 11th, the City Manager requested a meeting with two persons know to be organizing those protests, Billy Harris and Timberly Vogel, for the purposes of rectifying unsafe conditions stemming from individuals causing unpermitted traffic obstructions and gaining understanding of any specific concerns as there might be with municipal policing practices.

The meeting occurred on June 16th with the City Attorney and Executive Assistant also in attendance. Ms. Vogel and Mr. Harris provided a “List of Demands,” and general discussion occurred surrounding individual items on that list (attached). The City Manager indicated the scheduled work session would cover much of the same information to ensure it was made available to the public and all other interested individuals.

Relevant Information

These facts are provided to enable policymaking dialogue and decisions to occur in a fully-informed, knowledgeable and thoughtful environment.

Four (4) law enforcement agencies are legally permitted to conduct policing activities within the municipal boundaries of Laramie, as per Wyoming State Statutes.

Laramie Municipal/City Police (LPD)
University of Wyoming Police (UWPD)

Albany County Sheriffs (ACSO)
Wyoming Highway Patrol (WHP)

Neither Laramie’s municipal Staff, nor its Appointed & Elected Officials, may exercise any authority over the policies and practices of the three (3) non-municipal agencies as a matter of law.

As an elected body, the City Council may determine to leverage its political power to gather information about policing policies and practices used by non-municipal law enforcement agencies exercising police powers within the municipality (ACSO, WHP and UWPD). Those non-municipal agencies would have no legal duty to respond, however.

With respect to policing practices and policies of municipal officers at LPD, a public work session was held on June 23rd to share information with the community regarding topics of intense, current national and local interest and that information remains available on the city website at https://www.cityoflaramie.org/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Agenda/_06232020-1197?html=true.

The facts provided at the public meeting last week, coupled with the additional information below and reference to each section of the proposed resolution, clearly illustrate the diligence, trusted care and legality of municipal policing policies in Laramie.

*Considerations with respect to **Section 1** of proposed Resolution 2020-38:*

Civilian oversight of LPD has been in place for many decades at a multitude of levels. Nine elected city councilors, with an appointed civilian city manager, oversee the municipal police department. By Statute, the Chief of Police reports to both the City Manager and to a Civil Service Commission comprised of the President/Mayor of City Council and two independent Laramie residents. The Civil Service Commission approves hiring and promotional processes and must be involved in any disciplinary process for police officers and dispatchers, particularly suspensions and terminations. LPD strictly follows the Wyoming Open Records Act and, when release or non-release of information is unclear, seeks direction from the City Attorney to ensure another, independent level of oversight. For more, see <https://www.cityoflaramie.org/323/Civil-Service-Commission>.

With respect to use of force (UOF) and citizen complaints, there are nine (9) levels of review within the LPD alone for every UOF and every citizen complaint, including at the top with the Chief of Police in every instance. The City implemented the top industry-recommended software tool in 2014 to help ensure comprehensive and robust management, oversight and tracking of UOF. We track UOF incidents, citizen complaints, pursuits, crashes, and internal investigations. Every year since obtaining the software LPD has reported statistics publicly at City Council meetings. The statistics are reported in total since, in Wyoming, personnel records are not releasable. For more, see <http://www.iapro.com/>

The City Manager and Police Chief welcome additional opportunity to work with residents to educate about policing matters and to continue providing releasable data considering all aspects of LPD operations. Through its work with the Human Rights Campaign, the City Manager's Office has proposed the establishment of a local Laramie Human Rights Commission (LHRC). Considering recent dialogue about a civilian oversight boards (COBs), we've begun researching whether a properly structured board might function dually in both capacities as a hybrid LHRC/COB. For more, see <https://www.hrc.org/mei>.

*Considerations with respect to **Section 2** of proposed Resolution 2020-38:*

LPD has participated for many years on the Albany County Mental Health Board, a citizen-involved board that considers best-practice approaches to dealing with the mentally ill and those in crisis. Board members include the Albany County Attorney, members of the professional counseling community, the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI), and attorneys familiar with Wyoming's Title 25 process. The processes used by LPD when encountering mentally ill or in-crisis subjects have been well-defined by this Board and solidly adhere to Wyoming State Statute. LPD seeks out collaboration with these professionals and civilians to inform its policing policies. Further opportunities to involve the mental health treatment community, who also realize that police cannot be excluded from these oftentimes explosive and dangerous encounters, is welcomed by both the City Manager and Chief. For more, see <http://www.co.albany.wy.us/community-mental-health-board.aspx>

Considerations with respect to **Section 3** of proposed Resolution 2020-38:

As discussed at the June 23 work session, LPD has been rooted in community policing principles for decades, and prior to “community-oriented policing” becoming a popular term in the early-1990s. Here are a few of the current activities and programs...

Prevention

A fulltime Crime Prevention Officer is tasked with interacting with and supporting the public, including crime preventative building and neighborhood enhancement, public talks on personal safety, school visits, etc.



In addition, LPD policy encourages all staff to interact regularly with the public in a positive and educational manner.

Coffee with A Cop is a well-known community event. On average, LPD documents over 5,000 educational and interactive contacts each year.

Community Transparency

The PD implemented body worn cameras in 2013, prior to nation-wide recommendations and calls for body camera implementation, and led the State as the first department in Wyoming to do so. Body cameras, while incredibly valuable, are only part of a well-defined and monitored system of administrative oversight of a police department, which was explained in detail during the June 23 work session and in Section 1 above.

The City seeks outside, third-party experts to evaluate our policies, practices, and staffing and make recommendations for improvement. LPD’s most recent evaluation was completed in 2015 by the Center for Public Safety Management (CPSM) which has evaluated 211 communities ranging in population from 8,000 to 800,000 across 39 states and provinces. LPD was determined to be properly oversighted, with “model” use of force policies, and staffed correctly

for a city of our size. Since 2015, sworn staffing levels have decreased by four (4) officers due to reductions in State of Wyoming funding to Laramie. Based on the CPSM's findings, LPD's current staffing level would be inadequate. For more, see <https://www.cpsm.us/>.

Problem Solving / Quality of Life / Partnership

LPD has long-established relationships with residents, organizations and professionals designed to address community issues and solve problems that affect quality of life in a collaborative setting. Here are just a few...

- Albany County Mental Health Board
<http://www.co.albany.wy.us/community-mental-health-board.aspx>
- Laramie Town & Gown Committee
- Juvenile Services Board
<http://www.co.albany.wy.us/community-juvenile-services-board.aspx>
- AWARE: A-Team
 - <http://www.uwyo.edu/ucc/aware/a-team.html>

Considerations with respect to Section 4 of proposed Resolution 2020-38:

Funding is not impeding LPD's CIT training plan. Laramie Police Department began using the "Memphis Model" of Critical Incident Team (CIT) community policing in 2008. Both then and now, this model, endorsed by the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), recommends that approximately 20% of a patrol force be trained in CIT concepts. LPD meets that recommendation. The remaining 80% of officers are required to be trained in ASIST or QPR (**A**ppplied **S**uicide **I**ntervention **S**kills **T**raining or **Q**uestion-**P**ersuade-**R**efer). For more, see <http://www.cit.memphis.edu/overview.php?page=2>, <https://qprinstitute.com/about-qpr>, and <https://www.livingworks.net/asist>.

Logistics require extensive coordination between prosecutors, victim advocates, psychology and counseling professionals, and actors. In additions, it is logistically unrealistic to have every officer trained in CIT due to it being a 40-hour, labor-intensive training coupled with the occurrence of natural attrition. LPD held its last CIT training in June 2019 and had planned a class this month, which had to be cancelled due to the Covid19 pandemic. This is NOT a training that can be done virtually.

In closing, Laramie's municipal policing practices have been validated by outside evaluators. LPD is a department of highly trained, professional, and very self-critical officers. By instilling these expectation and attitude, and continually striving to do and be better by inviting outside evaluation, we ensure our officers act, and react, in legal and appropriate ways. Laramie's municipal police officers live and work in our community; they are as fully vested in Laramie's quality of life and with the same aspirations for our shared-community as is every resident. LPD officers do one of the most difficult and unpredictable jobs in public service and work every day to serve and protect Laramie's residents - their friends, their family members, their coworkers and their neighbors.

Responsible Staff:

City Manager

Chief of Police

City Attorney

Attachments: Use of Force Considerations Power Point Presentation
List of Demands