

Minutes of Moderator's Committee on Police Reporting April 4, 2017

Present: Committee Members Brian Bergstein, Tom Elwertowski, Len Weiss, Selectman Bernard Greene, Deputy Superintendent Myles Murphy, Officer John Canney, and Lynda Roseman. Also present, guest speakers Lieutenant Phil Harrington of the Community Service Division and Police Department technology specialist, Scott Wilder.

Phil Harrington began by explaining that the items posted on the blog are gleaned from the daily incident reports and are posted an average of three times per week. Personnel decide which items might be of interest to the community and privacy issues are taken into consideration. What gets posted is left to the discretion of the personnel reviewing the incident reports. Lieutenant Harrington suggested that perhaps a summary of events by category could be posted on the blog at the end of each week. For example, it could list how many thefts or animal incidents had occurred that particular week. Lieutenant Harrington noted that the Department has been working toward including more information and more of a narrative on the blog.

The Department also uses social media such as Facebook, twitter and Instagram. Sometimes there is a link on Instagram to the blog or to Facebook if there is an incident that warrants further detail or description. If there is a trend in a certain type of crime, for example break-ins or bike thefts, the Department might add safety tips to the post and email Town Meeting Members from that neighborhood to ask them to share the information.

Scott Wilder commented that there is a lot of information to filter and that takes time. It generally takes about an hour to an hour and a half and up to 2-3 hours on a Monday to digest what goes on the blog. He noted that getting the information out quickly is not as important as getting it out accurately.

Myles Murphy reported that the petitioner of the Warrant Article 30, Gary Jones, was pleased with what he saw on his visit to the Police Department. He had been previously unaware of what the Department is doing regarding dissemination of information regarding police reporting of incidents to the public.

Len Weiss suggested that the Police Department website include an explanation of how incidents and crimes are reported and perhaps to also publish a brochure to educate the public on how to access this information in order to improve the disclosure to the public of how these things work.

Tom Elwertowski took the position that all incidents should be reported. He suggested they could be listed as one sentence posts so that people who were interested could analyze all of the data. He noted that some nearby towns do publish a laundry list of incidents. Myles Murphy asked whether it would really be desirable to report everything. Phil Harrington gave a few examples of what might not be of interest to the

greater community, for example, someone calling the Department to report a lost passport or an incident of a counterfeit bill being passed at Trader Joe's. He also reiterated the issue of sensitive information being inadvertently published if the reports aren't carefully screened.

Brian Bergstein ended the meeting by suggesting that we are ready to begin writing our report. He volunteered to write a first draft and asked members of the committee to send him bullet points, ideas, etc. Tom Elwertowski volunteered to write a section describing his research and analysis of what other towns are doing. He suggested that his report might appear as an appendix to the committee's report. There was consensus by the committee that this is a good idea.

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 9 in the Selectmen's Conference Room on the 6th floor of Town Hall.