

Advisory Team Meeting #25

October 12, 2022

Location: Community Development Building
6:00 p.m.

Summary notes are below. An audio recording of this meeting is also available on the website at www.red-wing.org/1032/Policy-and-Practice-Project-Meetings

Team Members Present

Yaneth Santiago Huerta, Cory Koplin, Steve Blaine, Alexis DeVries, Liz Magill

Team Members Absent: Michael Lickness Holmes, Cholwe Hantuba Walker, Samantha Malcolm, Sara Kern

Facilitator: Michelle Leise, City of Red Wing Community Engagement Facilitator

Others: Gordon Rohr, Police Chief; Nick Sather, Police Investigations Sergeant; Travis Bray, Police Captain and Head of Emergency Management; Shawn Blaney, Public Works Department Director

Meeting Notes

Welcome

The meeting began at 6:07 p.m. Meeting attendees introduced themselves.

6:10 to 7:25 – Information Sharing and Idea Swaps between Team Members and Police Department.

Because there was a smaller group attending, the team and staff met in one group, instead of multiple smaller groups as originally planned. Chief Gordon Rohr started out the conversation with a question to the team – what does community policing mean to you and what would you like to see from the Red Wing Police Department involving community policing?

The team had these ideas during the discussion:

- ❖ Ensure all police officers know about the Hope and Harbor shelter, where it's located, and when it opens so they are familiar with it when and if calls come through for assistance. (Liz mentioned some officers check in and talk with the residents, and she appreciates their kindness and assistance.)

- ❖ Encourage police officers to wave and chat with people on the street or in their yards as they're driving around – to build up trust and goodwill with people.
- ❖ Consider having police officers walk more in the downtown area, like they used to do years ago in the “downtown beat.” Officers would check in with store owners, talk to people on the street, and even sometimes check locks to make sure downtown shops were secure.
- ❖ Encourage more police officers to be out on bicycles since this would help officers to get out more on the streets talking to people. (The police staff asked if team members had seen the bicycle patrol out, and people had not but the group liked this idea.)
- ❖ Find ways to make people feel not so intimidated. This could happen through the suggestions above and also by engaging with young people and other community members during specific events.
- ❖ Plan scheduled gatherings like set dates when officers will be at a park to play with kids; times when police will play pick-up ball at the Y, etc.
- ❖ Meet with the Hispanic community on a regular basis to help build relationships. (There is a disconnect for multiple reasons—language barriers, cultural impressions of law enforcement, fear of being deported, and more. Meeting together would help.)
- ❖ Continue making efforts to hire a bi-lingual officer.
- ❖ Try to promote events and get other types of information out to more places and also in Spanish.

Police staff also covered multiple points during the discussion. Some are summarized here:

- Filling open police positions has been an issue for about 1.5 years. Things seem like they are starting to get better, and more officers should be hired soon.
- Red Wing is 42.5 square miles, so police officers have a lot of ground to cover.
- Police officers are assigned areas, similar to a “beat,” but they don't get out of the car as often as they used to.
- There are a couple of officers trained for riding bicycles through neighborhoods. Staff will check on how often this is happening.
- The department now tracks community engagement activities separately so the department can see how much is happening. More engagement will continue after more officers are hired.
- Police officers do some specific events in town, including the annual spring Bike Rodeo, Trunk or Treat, Shop with a Cop at holiday time, and the Holiday Stroll Grinch activity.
- Reserve officers are also encouraged to walk through parks and neighborhoods.

- Staff would like to have a bi-lingual officer and will continue to look for one. They could also look into having a current officer learn some Spanish.
- The Pathways to Policing program has not worked out as successfully as expected, both statewide and locally.
- Make sure that police officers are using Language Line and/or another translation app so people speaking another language can be understood.
- The group talked about a bike program that gets residents bikes that have been previously stolen or donated.

Police staff asked the team for ideas on how to get information out into the community and promote the events or other work they do. Some ideas share include the following:

- Recruit volunteer teens to pass out flyers in the community and at school. This would also help young people to learn what the police department is doing.
- Post flyers and posters in different kinds of places, including school folders

Police staff asked the team what locations or events they think the police should partner with to get out into the community more. Ideas included the following:

- Head Start and open gym at Colvill Family Center
- Reading hour at the library (police shared this one)
- Attend drivers' ed classes and speak—also share with students what to do when a police officer pulls you over.
- Open gym at the Y
- After-school tutoring programs at Twin Bluff Middle School
- Partnering with Youth Outreach
- Partnering with Hispanic Outreach and their after-school tutoring program at high school and middle school
- Go “sledding with the Grinch”
- Invite people to do “ride-alongs” in police cars when appropriate
- Order some kind of give-away like police badge stickers to give out to little kids
- Offer tours through the police station for kids and teens

The time ended with a discussion about the importance of connecting the police department with the Hispanic community. Police can share that they do not check for immigration status and build trust together and answer questions. Meetings would have an interpreter. Drivers' licenses for all is still a very important topic for this community. Having a license to drive, regardless of immigration status, would be extremely beneficial in the daily lives of people. (This is a state issue.)

7:25 to 8:00 – Information Sharing and Idea Swaps between Team Members and Public Works Department.

In the second segment of the meeting, Shawn Blaney discussed the four main divisions of the Public Works Department:

- Solid Waste Division, which includes garbage, recycling, and composting
- Water and Waste Water Division, which includes the water treatment plants and all the sewer infrastructure that gets clean water in and out of buildings, homes, etc. Also includes stormwater ponds.
- Public Services Utilities Division, which includes streets, sidewalks, street lighting, snow plowing, vehicle maintenance, the marina, and the airport
- Buildings and Grounds Division, which includes parks, government buildings, and cemeteries

Team members asked questions or had ideas about the following:

--Question about the lighting of public parking lots and who to contact if a parking lot is dark. Shawn explained that some lights are owned and operated by the City, but many are owned and operated by Xcel Energy, and that sometimes gets confusing. (The City has an online map that helps residents see who owns which lights.) Shawn said he would follow up on this particular request.

--Team members said all the work that happens under the city in the tunnels is interesting. It would be a good idea for the City to promote and publicize more. It's interesting to learn about it, and it would help people understand better why it involves so much (and costs so much) to provide clean water to the Red Wing area.

--It would be good if the City could provide more events like the Electronic Waste event coming up November 5th. This type of event helps when people don't have the money to get rid of their electronics. More of this would be very beneficial.

--One member asked about the stormwater fee on the water bills and why this is so high. Shawn explained the amount of work that goes into the stormwater systems we have so that chemicals don't go right into the river and creeks.

--Some of the traffic signals are not working properly downtown. Shawn acknowledged this and the City is working with the MN Department of Transportation on that.

Adjourn

The meeting ended at 8:00 p.m.