

**REPORT TO THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PARK RIDGE**  
**Summary of Activities of the Chief's Advisory Task Force and Future Goals and Priorities**

**Presented by Frank Gruba-McCallister, Chair**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**AREAS OF FOCUS FOR THE PAST YEAR**

- Monitoring work of Parent Patrol and proposing changes to municipal code regarding disposition of underage drinking cases.
- Supporting work done to integrate a community policing model into work of the department, including establishment of Beat Officer model.
- Monitoring areas of police-community relations, department morale, and ability of the department to carry out its mission.
- Developing proposal for building renovation program and working to implement Phase I of the plan.
- Assisting the department to develop more effective ways of understanding and addressing the needs of individual with mental illness in our community and their family members.

**PROPOSED GOALS FOR THE COMING YEAR**

- Continue work on Parent Patrol and underage drinking.
- Continue to advance initiatives relating to the needs of those with mental illness and effective strategies for the department to assist such individuals.
- Investigate and propose means to involve citizens in the formal complaint process.
- Provide consultation and recommendations to Chief about police-community relations, department effectiveness and morale, and ensuring professionalism and transparency.
- Continue to support the integration of community policing into departmental operations.
- Expand scope of Task Force to include public safety.

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**Introduction**

This is the fourth report made to the Mayor and City Council regarding the activities of the Chief's Advisory Task Force for the Park Ridge Police Department. Previous reports and presentations were given on September 20, 2010, June 13, 2011 and January 23, 2012. As was done previously, this report will first summarize the work of the Task Force since its last report on issues pertinent to the three areas noted in its Statement of Purpose—police-community relationships, promoting the safety and security of citizens and of members of the police department, and identifying ways in which the police department and community members can collaborate on shared concerns to advance the quality of life in Park Ridge. Following this summary, there is a discussion of the goals of the Task Force for the coming year. These goals

were developed first to maintain and build on the progress that has been made on issues that have been part of the Task Force's work and next to consider additional issues where the work of the Task Force can be devoted.

This report was prepared based on a review of the agenda and minutes of the meetings of the Task Force in order to summarize areas of focus. In addition, the Task Force devoted several meetings to discuss what should be included in the report and what goals and priorities should be set for its future work. Finally, in an effort to secure input of community stakeholders into the report, the chair of the Task Force, Frank Gruba-McCallister prepared a letter for distribution to those interested in providing feedback regarding their experiences with the Police Department and their efforts to foster stronger and more collaborative community relationships. A copy of the letter asking for this feedback is included with this report. In response, fifteen citizens provided written feedback. Included among the respondents were three elementary school principals, local business people, and a member of the Citizens Police Academy. The feedback provided was consistently very positive in terms of the establishment of stronger and positive relationships with the community, the charity work done by members of the department, and the responsiveness of the department to achieve resolutions for problems impacting various neighborhoods within the city. Of particular note was the enthusiastic response to the recently implemented Beat Officer model. The feedback provided has also guided the preparation of this report.

The Task Force marked the third year of its operation in February 2013. Over that time, there has been stability in its membership as well as the addition of new members to replace those lost. Throughout the Task Force has sought to recruit diverse membership in order to solicit as broad a range of perspectives and opinions on the issues discussed as possible and to achieve representation of the different interests and needs of members of our community. The Task Force has also engaged in activities to inform and educate its members on issues being reviewed so as to help them better understand the various parameters involved in a problem and thus make better recommendations on how to address it. The achievements of the Task Force over its time of operation are a testimony to the diverse talents and expertise brought by its members and the commitment they have to achieving its Statement of Purpose. Going forward, it is important to establish a regular means for recruiting citizens and filling vacancies as they occur. The process should continue to identify citizens with a strong interest in the purpose and goals of the Task Force and who offer areas of knowledge and skills that will enable it to carry on the important work it has done thus far.

### **Summary of Activities of the Task Force Since the Last Report**

The issue of underage drinking has continued to be an important area of the Task Force's work. This has included an ongoing review of the Parent Patrol program that grew out of its earlier work. The Task Force has continued to work with MYCAF and the local schools to determine the impact of the Parent Patrol program on the issue of underage drinking. A survey on the experience of those who volunteered for the Parent Patrol program was done by MYCAF in 2012. Twenty-five individuals who participated in the Parent Patrol responded to the survey. Overall, the participants expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the Parent Patrol and a desire to continue their participation in the program. The opportunity to ride along with police

officers investigating an underage drinking incident not only allowed for an opportunity for police-citizen collaboration, but also enabled participants to see first-hand how these complaints were handled. Based on this experience, participants developed more positive views of the competency and capabilities of police officers and confidence in the Police Department. Finally, as a result of the program participants developed a greater appreciation for the importance of involvement of all members of our community in addressing the problem of underage drinking. These survey findings offered additional validation of the value and effectiveness of the Police Patrol program.

The most recent work of the Task Force in this area has been its collaboration with MYCAF and the Community Health Commission on proposing changes to the municipal code regarding underage drinking disposition which have since been implemented. These changes were designed to encourage youth cited for underage drinking to get timely and proper assessment for problems that may be contributing to their drinking, thus increasing the likelihood of their getting appropriate treatment.

The Task Force's continued involvement in examining the issue of underage drinking has dovetailed with consideration of other issues involving the role of the Police Department in promoting the safety and security of youth and teens in the community. This has included cyber-bullying, abuse, drug use, traffic safety, crisis intervention and mental health. Much of the feedback received based on our request from community members supported the work that had been done by the Task Force in these areas. This included praise for the Parent Patrol program and school administrators who spoke highly of the work the Police Department is doing with the schools and of the recent implementation of the Beat Officer program.

Following on the last point, the implementation of a Community Policing model by the Department has also been part of the Task Force's work. Chief Kaminski has been very active in educating both department personnel and citizens about the Community Policing model through in-service presentations. A number of members of the Task Force have attended these in-service presentations. In addition, work has done during regular Task Force meetings to familiarize members with the core principles of this model and how these are translated into various initiatives being taken by the Department. Based on reports provided by Chief Kaminski, the Task Force has reviewed a number of examples of the positive impact of this policing model on resolving previously persistent problems within local neighborhoods. These efforts have also created a stronger sense of community presence by police officers and allowed for the development of effective solutions to problems incorporating strategies that enable the police and citizens to work collaboratively. The utilization of community policing also offers benefits by enabling the Police Department to cope more effectively with decreases in resources by making use of community resources in dealing with common problems.

A major initiative of the Task Force in the past year has been the plan it developed to make cost effective changes to the existing police facility and working toward the approval of phase I of the plan. While the central purpose of this work was to provide the City Council and Mayor with recommendations on how to make much needed improvements to the existing police station while being mindful of current budget pressures, the plan developed by the Task Force reflected

more broadly another example of the benefits of volunteerism. The work done by the Task Force on this initiative was only possible because of the time, commitment and talents of its members.

The resulting recommendations provide a road map for how citizens and government can work collaboratively on shared concerns and, in doing so, find creative solutions that optimally utilize existing resources for dealing with these concerns. As adverse economic conditions are anticipated to continue place limitations on available resources while needs for services continue or even increase, it is essential that drastic measures being taken by other municipalities (e.g., Chicago Police curtailing its investigation of burglaries) be avoided. Collaborative problem-solving, making the best use of the resources available throughout the community, and channeling the energies of committed citizens and city employees has guided much of the work of the Task Force and will continue to inform its future work.

A final area of attention for the Task Force in the past year has been an examination of the ways in which the mental health needs of citizens of Park Ridge impact the operations of the Police Department and the quality of life in our community. As with other issues that have been considered by the Task Force, a number of activities have been conducted in the past year to help members become better informed about parameters of this complex problem. This has included the prevalence and types of mental health issues in our community, the ways in which the Police Department currently responds to these needs, the decrease in resources within our community to provide care for those with mental health problems, and the negative impact of the recent economic downturn on individuals' mental well-being.

Out of these discussions, the Task Force has decided to launch two initiatives. The first was completed on February 27<sup>th</sup> and was a free in-service training presented on strategies for better understanding and responding to individuals with mental illness or in mental distress. There were 16 attendees including members of the Police and Fire Department, security personnel for Lutheran General Hospital, the Director of Community Relations at Lutheran General Hospital, and a representative from JCRRT. Based on information provided to the presenters about common types of calls involving mental illness, the presenters reviewed information on six major forms of mental disorders, including how to better identify the disorder and strategies for effectively working with individuals with these conditions. Similar to national trends, the amount of time and resources devoted to dealing with mental illness by the Police Department in Park Ridge has increased due to a lack of services and treatment for these individuals. Such calls often require more time (recent research indicates an average of over an hour per call) and often involve complexities that pose risks to the well-being of persons requiring assistance and officers. With a corresponding reduction in available resources and personnel in the Police Department, the growing demand placed on the department by mental illness related calls is all the more challenging, especially at times when competing needs also require the department's time and attention. In-services such as the one offered are one important step that can be taken to better equip our first responders to respond optimally to this need in our community. Feedback from those who attended the in-service was very positive. The plan is to use experience with this first educational program to next provide a briefer in-service training program on a rotating basis to all Police Department this November. Data will be collected to document changes in knowledge and attitudes before and after the training to document its impact. There is also some exploration of possible grant money to continue and further develop these types of program.

The second initiative related to mental health issues in our community is a Town Hall meeting planned for later this year to help raise greater awareness of mental health needs and issues. This meeting is included as a means of expanding opportunities for the Police Department and members of the community to work together in better serving the needs of those with mental illness and their families. Planning for this Town Hall has currently underway. This planning is coordinated with the Healthy Community Survey being conducted by Lutheran General Hospital. As an article in the *Park Ridge Herald-Advocate* on February 14, 2013 reports, assessing the mental health needs of members of our community and using this data to devise more effectively ways of providing care and assistance is an integral part of this survey. Paula Besler who is the Director of Community Relations at LGH is also a member of the Task Force. She has been involved in discussions and planning for the Town Hall meeting and Lutheran General Hospital will participate in the Town Hall.

### **Going Forward: Goals for the Coming Year**

As this and previous reports made to the City Council and Mayor have spelled out, we believe that the Task Force, in response to its statement of purpose, has over the past three years established a record of proposing and implementing positive measures that have contributed to the Police Department's fulfillment of its mission and to improving the quality of life of our community. That being said, however, the work is not complete.

One of the first major tasks undertaken by the Task Force was to conduct a review of the 2008 Audit of the Park Ridge Police Department by Terry Ekl. Three major areas of concern were included in this audit: police-community relationships; problems with department leadership and oversight/promotion of officers; and department climate and morale. As described in the audit, a lack of confidence in the police department as well as the perception of a lack of professionalism and failure to apply the law fairly and equally was held by members of the community. The enforcement of municipal code for underage drinking was noted as a particular area of concern for both citizens and members of the Police Department. The lack of strong and effective leadership, accountability for officer misconduct, and uniform and consistent disciplinary action all had an adverse impact on morale and effective departmental operations. The Ekl Audit further made note of the adverse impact that these issues had not only for the Police Department, but also for city elected officials who were devoting a growing amount of time and attention to responding to citizen complaints and discontent.

As detailed in the report made to the Mayor and City Council of its review of the Ekl Audit, the Task Force found that substantial improvements were made in all of the areas of concern. These positive changes can largely be credited to the strong leadership of Chief Kaminski and the hard work of members of the Department to restore a positive working relationship with the community and elevate the professionalism of the services provided by the Department. While progress has been made, this does not mean that the work is over or that continue vigilance is no longer needed. As the findings of the Ekl Audit make clear, the positive climate, well-being and effectiveness of the our city cannot be separated from the health and effectiveness of its essential services—among them it's Police Department. The process of changing an organizational climate is typically protracted and requires ongoing attention and diligence. Strong community



relations take active involvement by citizens in monitoring departmental operations and initiatives. Thus, additional opportunities to strengthen the relationship between the department and the community remain. These opportunities include the following:

- Taking additional steps to implement community policing.
- Continuing to strengthen the formal complaint process to ensure accountability and transparency.
- Examining the next models of policing in response to challenges the future holds.
- Strengthening the role of volunteers in public safety.
- Considering methods to evaluate the Department's ability to re-build public trust, professionalism and teamwork.

In light of this, goals for the coming year include:

- Continuing to monitor the Parent Patrol Program and determining what other initiatives can be considered in dealing with alcohol and drug use among Park Ridge youth and teens.
- Continuing to support the work by the Police Department in integrating a community policing model while examining what new and developing models of policing might be considered to best promote safety, security and quality of life for our community and members of the department.
- Proposing means to involve citizens in formal complaint process.
- Conducting the Town Hall Meeting on mental health and offer additional in-service programs. Use outcome from these initiatives to develop others aimed at better serving the needs of the mentally ill and their family through more effective interactions with the police.
- Facilitate the completion of Phases II and III of building remodeling program.
- Work with the Chief to develop methods for assessing department initiatives designed to enhance transparency, accountability and professionalism and to utilize data in future programming.

The work of the Task Force has made clear how effective means for addressing complex problem—such as underage drinking, mental health and coping with the budgetary stresses experienced by governmental bodies—requires the involvement of individuals representing diverse parts of our community and the integration of the efforts of different city employees involved in dealing with these issues. The Task Force is an excellent example of the City's commitment to transparency and citizen involvement as it affords members of the community the opportunity be informed of departmental performance and efforts to realize it's mission and values. Over its three years of operation, members of the Task Force have come to realize that the issues facing our community have grown in complexity and urgency. For example, the Task Force began its consideration of the issue of mental health and the growing involvement of the Police Department in managing those with these problems before the tragic events at Sandy Hook. However, the terrible tragedy that occurred there has brought the issues of growing threats of violence, mental illness and law enforcement to national attention. The event also made clear how any community is vulnerable to the impact of devastating tragedy. While many of the terrible after-effects of these tragedies are inescapable, the ability of a community to create

strong bonds between citizens and first-responders and to find ways of collaboratively working to make their community safe and secure all serve to better protect all of its members.

In light of this, we believe that the model set by the work of the Task Force has established a clear record of success and offers a valuable example of ways in which people working together can lead to creative and effective solutions. However, the scope of a number of issues addressed by the Task Force goes beyond the Police Department and involves other parts of the city government, most particularly the Fire Department. The synergy of citizens working with police can become enhanced by inclusion of another important group of first responders. Issues such as underage drinking, mental illness, critical incidents, community security and well-being are part of the broader scope of public safety. For this reason, we propose that the scope of the Task Force be broadened to Public Safety so that others, such as members of the fire department, can be included in its work. Chief Zywanski had indicated an interest in involvement on the Task Force.

We look forward to continuing our work and building on the progress that has been made on the issues we have considered thus far. However, we also recognize how important it is for there to be a continued commitment to this work to maintain the advances that have been made and to be proactive in anticipating what new challenges may await us. We ask your continued support of our work.

Thank you for this opportunity to make this report to you.