



Allentown

435 Hamilton Street
Allentown, Pa. 18101

Minutes - Final

City Council

Wednesday, April 24, 2024

6:15 PM

Council Chambers

Special Committee

Roll Call: Chairperson Gerlach, Napoli and Zucal

Present: 7 - Cynthia Mota, Daryl Hendricks, Ed Zucal, Natalie Santos, Ce-Ce Gerlach, Candida Affa, and Santo Napoli

Agenda:

Chief Roca or designee - Explains Current and Future Plans of Community Intervention Program

Pinebrook Services - Discusses their work.

Explain in general how system would work - starting with calls into and dispatched from the County, role of Allentown Police, Pinebrook and the County

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated that she kind of what to hear from Chief Roca. She asked if Mr. Vogler coming back.

Chief Charles Roca stated yes, he is. He just had to feed the meter.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated that they will hear from the two of them and kind of see what they got in mind in terms of expanding our current CIS program and a more co-response model. If anyone on the committee first and afterwards anyone else of the dais, if you have any questions. She stated that she doesn't see anyone in the public. She stated feel free to ask.

Chief Charles Roca thanked Ms. Gerlach and stated that he wanted to thank Council for listening tonight on this very important topic. The Allentown Police Department strives in creating collaborative solutions to issues that they are seeing. He stated that he wanted to give a little history to understand the context of where the department is coming from. One of the things he did when he was a Captain was attended the Northwestern Police Staffing Command School at which time they had to pick an overarching topic and the topic of the study that he selected was establishing a mental health unit in the Allentown Police Department. From that point, through the promotions and one of the things that they are geared towards is embracing best practices and since 2014 their officers have undergone CIT Training, and Crisis Intervention Team Training which provides de-escalation skills and other resource allocation materials so they can provide service to the public to de-escalate and divert them from

going to jail and get them the help that they need for true mental health concern. It is important to point out that at times they don't receive a specific mental health call, but it comes across as maybe a noise complaint or a domestic abuse call where officers respond and they see that at the root of the matter, it may be a mental health concern because you might have a person that is a mental health consumer that might be off medication. In 2017 and 2018, they began the CIS Program with the Community Intervention Specialists. It actually began as a Mental Health Liaison Program and found that title is not appreciated by some of the consumers because they did not want to be labeled mental health. That title was changed to Community Intervention Specialist and the idea is that their CIT trained officers serve as a triage point for their department. They are going to the calls. They are interacting with the community. They are providing resources. He him is a CIT trained officer and in his history, he has responded to calls where they have utilized that skillset. The CIS position was created so that they can work with an outside agency which is Pinebrook Family Answers to provide that service for our community. That brings a person with a skillset and social work to provide resources and community stabilization for the community. They may come across a call for service that it is not quite a police call, but they will refer that call to the Community Intervention Specialist. They have not been able to in full disclosure to fully emphasize that program because they only had at most two CIS workers capable to do the work. Currently, it is what they have now and the city of Allentown is providing the funding for those two workers. How the concept was and what they supposed to be studied was to have one supervisor on the CIS Program and four workers. The idea is to have one of each worker for each of the platoons. As you know, you have four platoons. That worker can develop relationships with our officers in the platoon and also to work with the community out there no matter what the hour was and that can kind of go along because of the shortage of manpower on the CIS side, they made it so they worked kind of staggered shifts. Sometimes days, middle and sometimes that goes into nights. That type of thing so they can be a resource for our officers that are out there. A particular example that he can give them as far as calls is that the referral calls will come in from the officers to report in the Mark43 System. They have taglines that they can put in there. They can put CIS referral, mental health calls and those types of things. Identifies the different calls they come across, they can do that. He has here, prepared by one of the Crime Analyst, an Allentown Police Mental Health and Substance Abuse Referral data sheet that shows the number of calls and he will pass it to Mr. Hanlon so he can put it to Council. The initial program history of the CIS Program is something about building those relationships. He relayed to Council instances in the past where they were very productive to us and they would be able to connect with people. The current state of this is when 911 receives an emergency call, the procedure and the process is to dispatch

police officers. One of the things that he would like to accomplish in the co-response program to have the Champion CIT officer identify working with their CIS worker to address crisis calls, continue to collaborate with our hospital network, continue to collaborate with the Lehigh County Crisis and make sure that loop continues to proceed. He wanted to let you know that just recently now, there was a crisis call in the southside of the city where it was a suicidal male and our officers went there, contacted the subject, de-escalated that individual and that individual is going to get treatment right now for evaluation for the hospital. The CIT officers responded, and de-escalate, identify and then hand-off the CIS currently now. The CIS works diligently to provide community stabilization by a way of county serviced and community partnerships. The CIT officers notifies CIS of additional police incidents with the consumer there by raising the consumer priority level. They want to make sure that they cut down on people just calling 911 and sometimes that can be a mental health condition where the individual just wants attention. They had that in the past where they had individuals call into 911 and it wasn't really a police related emergency and they will refer that person to the CIS worker who will follow up through their own means or partnering with a ride-a-long. This is how they used to function. How he want it to function going forward, is for them to identify on their teams specific CIT officers to partner with our CIS workers and allow them the flexibility to respond to these calls. This is not a normal call for service. There is no end point. But, if they go through a normal noise complaint, they address it with a tenant or either a resident and say listen, we responded to this noise complaint and it was loud music. You are getting a Sweep Ticket, a DCR and his expectation is that this call is over. With someone in mental health crisis, it doesn't end on that one police contact, it continues for it to go forward and they want to build good relationships with the consumers, but also to be able to let them know that the police are a resource in this collaborative effort of our CIT police officer and our CIS worker. Having that partnership and enhancing would bring their service level to that next step. There are other organizations around Pennsylvania and throughout the country that have been successful with the co-responder program and they even been fortunate enough to go forth with a potential grant that will pay for some of this. He stated that they might be thinking how much does this cost. The city of Allentown currently pays for two CIS workers and typically each one earns about \$50,000. In the full gamete of what he talked about with a CIS supervisor and four CIS workers would come out to \$260,000 to \$300,000 with yearly increases for what they have contracted with Pinebrook Family Answers. In this instance, when they are making contact, arrests are rare for individuals that are true mental health consumers. The priority is to get them stabilized, to get them medicated and make sure they have the resources available because they want their officers to get back to solving crime and reducing violence, and taking guns off the street and removing illegal drugs and those purposes.

They are currently seeing an increase in unhoused and mental health consumers from out of the area. According to Retire Sergeant, there is much of a 30 percent increase based on what the shelters are reporting to them. The CIT Program is actively training officers each year to enhance the level of CIT service that they have and of course, it is a skill that needs to be utilized. If an officer is identify as being CIT trained, they will have the capability to connect with resources, talk to their CIS workers and be able to come up with a game plan to address situations. Another example that he can talk about is that they were receiving emails from a mental health consumer regarding various topics and one of the officers, Jacqui Murray, who is the Community Outreach Unit on the bike team partnered up with one of the CIS workers , Eli Flores and made a visit to this individual at the particular residence. It not only identified this situation, it provided resource referral. It also provided family support to the individuals that are out there. They are way past Covid and he wants to bring Covid into the situation. What Covid showed them was that the police officers and first responders and essential personnel were out there and at the time they did not have agency resources, crisis or others to support that mission. Now, that they are post Covid, they definitely have that and they are strengthening relationships and ties into this. The other aspect that he wants to bring to them here as they are discussing moving forward is how do they track this data. Part of that piece is exactly what they are doing right now with the data from the record management system through Mark43. They are transitioning through a new system for recording called NIBRS (National Incident-Based Reporting System) - upgraded version from the UCR. You are going to see more information that will be on the reports that is going to be reflected in the dashboards they are creating through the Esri vendor. Within that dashboard system, it is an ideal way to create a dashboard where they can share some information regarding their mental health efforts within the department so the community can see exactly what is going on. Obviously, it is not going to identify personal information at the end of individuals due to confidentiality, but it is something important that their community is aware of what is occurring. The Allentown Police Department has nothing to hide. They want to be as transparent as they can be to our community, because he thinks it is important because it creates by in and it creates people coming forward to report on information. Co-response work is something that is very near and dear to him. He has seen it be successful in San Antonio where there was a documentary called Crisis Cops where they would actually go out and interact with people in the crisis mode. What ties into this is manpower for the police department. They are focused on making their manpower that much better because his priority is making sure they staff patrol appropriately. That is key because they are the backbone of our organization. They need to make sure that they are able to answer the call when it is needed. What the co-response model would do, will allow to

return that officer back to the call of service and helping out our community through various means. That collaborative effort is continuous. What he said about the 911 Center, they have been trained to listen to potential mental health incidents, but it is rare that people will call in and specifically an MH issue. As he mentioned before, it is usually a noise complaint or a domestic that has mental health ties. When the officer and the CIS worker going to those types of calls. It is something that they can then refer to that CIS worker. If they happen to be in a ride-a-long with that officer, they can take immediate actions just as an officer can because a CIT officer or an officer in that matter can triage that response, contact Lehigh County Crisis, contact any support system, contact the EMS team to help transport that person to the hospital if they need to see a doctor and speak specifically. The main thing that they want to make sure is that this was done correctly and it fits what Allentown needs and the important part here is that it is communication, collaboration and they have willing partners in Pine Brook Family Answers for this purpose. For the officers, it is something that he sees where it is developing respect amongst the community because people feel more apt to talk to the police rather than, oh, we are here to arrest somebody. Although, this is part of our job under the Law Enforcement aspect. As police officers, they wear many hats and with having the support of an enhanced CIS worker partnering with our CIT officer and potentially being able to hopefully secure a grant that would pay for a lot of this through the PCCED that does not require a matching grant. They would be able to continue that service and work well into the future to establish something special and unique here in the city.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach thanked Chief Roca and stated that she knows that she and Council have questions. Since they are at 6:45, Mr. Vogler if you want to share anything and if anyone has questions just direct them to whoever you feel would be best answers and stated that she believes he is the executive director.

Mr. William Vogler stated that he is the CEO. He is the one that doesn't know as much as the people that actually do the work. If they could, they would be here. Eli has a death in the family, the director of the program is out of state on vacation. If they can come in the future and share their frontline stories, they would be glad to. They would like to be here. He stated that he does want to say that they have valued the relationship with the Allentown Police Department and proud of the work that they have done for over four plus years. It has been a long time and the CIS model has shown that they have been successful in their goal to prevent people from being arrested and incarcerated for having a mental illness. He stated that was the original goal and also reduce the repeat nuisance calls that the police officers and police department was getting from people that weren't in crisis, but needed some mental health support or case work after the

fact. He knows that people are interested in augmenting or supporting more of the co-response type of work that this talks about. Right now, they have two people that address the needs of the whole city. They are full. They don't have a spare minute in their day and they are working full bore. If they wanted to do more co-response like this and more ride-a-longs so that the CIS was there at the moment in time when both the police and our people are there to do more ride-a-longs. It really is an issue of people power. They need more people to be able to do that more. He knows that co-response model is optimal, but two people, two FTEs even if they were split up, but they are just two people. They simply can't do ride-a-longs seven days a week, 24 hours a day and be there at every call they are needed. It is really more of the after the fact referrals that they are doing and doing very successfully.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated that because she does have a number of questions, she is going to ask anyone else on the committee has questions before she dives into hers. She stated Mr. Santo, Mr. Zucal.

Mr. Santo Napoli stated that he has a quick one so that he understands. If a 911 call comes into the dispatch center and they can't figure out if it is a mental health issue stating your department responds to the call. Once they determine that it is a mental health, as long as one of the two CIS workers are on shift, you will get them to come.

Chief Charles Roca stated that any case that involved mental health, the officers can note on there through the event statistic that it is a mental health related for the CIS worker or if it requires that the person is in crisis or something of that nature, they will call Lehigh County Crisis as well to assist. They do have regular meetings with the hospitals, health networks, and also crisis to ensure that they are all working together.

Mr. William Vogler stated that it is important to distinguish between a co-response model and an alternative response model. What they have talked about months ago with 911 and all those things, that was really exploring the efficacy of an alternate response model where people that aren't police go out on mental health calls. That is not what they are talking about at this point. It is more of a co-responder thing. That is an issue of people power.

Mr. Santo Napoli stated understood. With only two of them, it is obvious that they can't be everywhere. It sounds like you are doing more post calls. Again, our officers are determining what it is and these folks are going in after the fact and working with these mental health consumers trying to resolve the issues. He wants to make sure that he understands that.

Chief Charles Roca stated that is correct. That is how it is functioning right now.

Mr. Santo Napoli stated due to the lack of people power.

Chief Charles Roca stated there are some ride-a-longs. He does want to underline and say that there are a lot more work to be done. He stated that he thinks they can enhance it with more manpower on the CIS end as well as making sure that they are making the right decisions as the city of Allentown.

Mr. Santo Napoli thanked Chief Roca.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated that she has a couple of questions. In terms of the evaluations aspect, what do you have in mind for that.

Chief Charles Roca stated that one of the aspects of this grant and they also talked with Cedar Crest College, the Center for Police Innovation and Community Engagement to take a look to see how they are doing with respect to a program that they are able to utilize the entire methodology. Like he said before at the start of this, they were never able to expand to the full program to be able to truly like see if it is effective for them. He will tell them anecdotally that this program is successful. They do follow up and they take initiatives to do that. To look at the data, it is going to look at other reports that they write and then from there, the Cedar Crest College group there will look at the outcomes to make sure what they are doing is appropriate.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated to Chief Roca that he doesn't have to answer this now, but he thinks it might be beneficial to the program and to Pine Brook and to the residents. There are organizations that this is what they do. They literally go in and evaluate and support co-response programs. Cedar Crest is a wonderful institution, but she is not sure if that is their specialty. It might be helpful. She knows one provides free technical assistance. They would literally do it for free. The Center for Policing Equity work on co-response programs and they help design them and they evaluate them as well. She stated that she doesn't know if they are contractually bound to use Cedar Crest, but if they are not, it might behoove the APD and Allentown to make sure that they can get even more grants by showing how successful they are because these organizations that actually do this for a living because this is all they do. This is their bread and butter. They know exactly what points to measure and how to measure them versus Cedar Crest's isn't the only thing that they do. She doesn't know if that would be an option or do they have to go with.

Chief Charles Roca stated that they can explore and can take a look. They do have a contractual relationship with Cedar Crest College on those things. They can always look at information. If it is a free service that can provide enhancement, it is a definite discussion topic that they can look into.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated yeah, that is great to hear. It seems like Cedar Crest and Council hasn't got the report lately, but the last one they got a couple of years ago, they were looking at other things in addition to CIS. It seems like they did a great job at looking at other things so maybe they can continue to evaluate those other aspects of the police department. Perhaps, they can have an expert come in and work on co-response. She stated that they might not be at this point to really get into the details. As she has spoken to other police chiefs who are doing co-response, the Police Chiefs from Lansdale and Bensalem here is Pennsylvania. There are different ways to dispatch the CIS worker. Sometimes, they have their own van, their own vehicle and will arrive separately. Sometimes they will work out of Pine Brook. But sometimes, what seems to work the best is when the workers are in the station, in APD, and they are right there with the Police Officers and then they are dispatched with them to the scene. She asked has any thought went into.

Mr. William Vogler stated that is what they do.

Chief Charles Roca stated that is exactly what is done in certain times, but because of the manpower issue, they couldn't do that all the time. It is just physical impossibility. He thinks if they grow into the program, they will those outcomes improve.

Mr. William Vogler stated that the CIS staff is not employed out of Pine Brook. They work in each issue.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated alright. They don't report in the morning to the Pine Brook Family Answers.

Chief Charles Roca stated that they do occupy offices in the Police Department and they also do have contact with the patrol officers which is the division that they will be working with throughout making contact with the people in our community.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated great. The next step would be just to figure out and maybe this will evolve over time if they will be doing a ride-a-long in the police car or they will have their own vehicle or combination of both. She stated that she guesses that would be at a future date.

Chief Charles Roca stated that he would like them to ride-a-long together. It is important to work as a collaborative team and they could potentially look at expanding that team. He knows that there are some co-response model which has a medical component to it. What better way to have someone provide medical assistance. That is what the call is. Truly, the collaborative approach in his mind is the best process from what he is seeing looking at programs that are working already.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated ok and stated as a point of information is currently at the state level. There is a committee that is formed to figure out what it would look like to connect the 988 number which is for mental health to the 911 system so that if someone were to call 911, they would be immediately dispatched to 988. If and when that would ever happen, she feels if they were going to have a co-response model, they would be in good standing to kind of adjust to that new system. With the contract, if this were to happen and when she read through the contract and listened for years about Pine Brook and what they are doing and what they are not doing and she is looking at the data from Cedar Crest, she was like um, but then when she met with Pine Brook, it seems as though what they are doing is not reflective in their contract. They are doing more of the co-response already then what is currently under contract. That would need to be updated.

Chief Charles Roca stated that they are always open to discussing contracts and looking at what the function is. He believes in the initial mental health liaison job description on what they are doing would be listed on there. That does exist and has for a while.

Mr. William Vogler stated with the program description and also a similar than what they use in a similar contract that they have with Lehigh County with the CSI model elsewhere outside of Allentown. If they need to tweak that program description, certainly to change and if the program does end up being a more explicitly co-response and more ride-a-longs and that kind of thing. He doesn't see any problems with updating that program description. They do those annually for a lot of their contracts. He doesn't think that would be a problem.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated that she was thinking that if someone were to apply, it is a whole different type of job to say hey, look you are going to show up to scenes that are crisis scenes with a police officer versus you are going to be doing other things. More of follow up and case work is what you mentioned. She stated that they may also attract a different type of applicant.

Chief Charles Roca stated that is something to consider to, anything that

they do moving forward has to go and be in line with what the District Attorney of Lehigh County would approve as well. As they are growing, they have county representation and have their input and feedback to the process.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated that she thinks that she has a lot more granular questions and will hold off on that. In the next couple of meetings, you may have already made contact with some of these folks. She stated that they will have folks, mostly Police Chiefs who are currently doing this kind of share what their experiences have been. She will save her Green Alert questions for then. You her, the most important thing is data and evaluation because without that it won't never grow. You have to prove it is working and again, will emphasize that she firmly believes having an organization and this is what they do. They evaluate co-response models and will help us as a city. She turned it over to Mr. Zucal.

Mr. Ed Zucal stated that he has one question, they mentioned about the grant and asked if there is an amount with that.

Chief Charles Roca stated yes, sir.

Mr. Ed Zucal stated he thinks it was in an email.

Assistant Chief James Gress stated that the number was \$250,000.

Mr. Ed Zucal stated that would only cover for another four people, roughly.

Assistant Chief James Gress stated then there will be an option for what he understands for PCCED to extend it.

Mr. Ed Zucal asked \$10,000.

Assistant Chief James Gress stated to extend the grant and to continue the funding as long as the program is successful.

Mr. Ed Zucal stated just common sense speaking, they would need a lot, a lot more if it would become a ride-a-long program. You probably need at least six to eight per shift.

Chief Charles Roca asked for what, CIS.

Mr. Ed Zucal stated the co-responder ride-a-long.

Chief Charles Roca stated that if it grows successfully, yes, they would have to revisit that and take a look at what the total pay is. Initially, to begin,

he would think that is something that would be good for them to begin at that starting number.

Mr. Ed Zucal stated five more.

Chief Charles Roca stated correct. The CIS supervisor and four workers want to develop that relationship within the teams.

Mr. Ed Zucal thanked Chief Roca.

Mr. Santo Napoli stated that it will give them one for every platoon, right. If that was the case.

Chief Charles Roca stated correct. It is important to have a supervisor there from the Pine Brook side to be able to be that link between APD and Pine Brook Family Answers. If there are any issues that come up, they can sit down and communicate them and work through them.

Assistant Chief James Gress stated that as they grow their numbers and increase the size of the department, this grant allows for overtime for back-fill. They do assign CIT officers to this new program and it does allow the overtime in the back-fill for other officers to fill those positions.

Ms. Cynthia Mota stated hopefully, they will be by union.

Chief Charles Roca stated that they definitely want that. That is important.

Ms. Cynthia Mota asked about bilingual. She stated that they want them to be bilingual.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach asked if there was anyone else.

Assistant Chief James Gress has one suggestion for Councilwoman Gerlach and stated that he is very good friends with the Police Chief in Frederick, Maryland. He was a retired Captain from the city of Pittsburgh. He introduced a co-responder model that's in service now for about a year. He stated that if Council would take a look at it. He has a lot of information data on the social media pages on how successful the program is and it is made up of a police officer who is CIT trained, a mental health professional, and a paramedic that is their unit. They monitor, they listen and work out of headquarters and respond to the calls with the officers as needed.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated that she knows Mr. Hanlon is reaching out to folks to get them scheduled for future meetings. Due to her own scheduling

conflict, they won't be able to meet in May. It looks like June will be the next meeting and at that meeting, they hope to hear from the Chief such as the Chief in Frederick, Maryland. They can get more of a tangible of what is co-response. She say that because clearly they had conversations in the past and some of them have been pretty intense and she doesn't want anyone thinking that it is one thing and it is really something else. She thinks the fact that the Chief of Police is saying that he wants to do this, should be a clear indicator of that, but just in case she thinks it would be great to have Police Chiefs who are actually doing this right now and come and share and maybe alleviate ones hesitancy or questions.

Mr. William Vogler asked when will that meeting be and asked if they are going to do this regularly.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated that this is going to be a regular standing meeting and it seems like it is going to break down to about one per month and the next one will be.

Mr. Michael Hanlon stated June 5th at 6:00 PM.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated June 5th, ok.

Mr. William Vogler stated that he can make sure to have some of his direct staff here.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated that would be great because she know when they met and Ms. Flores was sharing very detailed situations and scenarios in which she would respond with a police officer. She was doing co-response without it being official. She stated that was great insight to see what's actually happening. The only thing she will ask is and this is again why they need someone to come in here and help us figure this out is with data collection, making sure that they are collecting data in an accurate manner. Not saying that we are not, but she knows there was an issue where on paper it looks like most of the folks that are being served are Caucasian, but they are not. They are Latino. Things like that again is why it is good to have someone coming in who has done this before because they can help. Pine Brook shouldn't have to do this all on its own. APD shouldn't have to do this all on its own when there are organizations that can do it with us.

Mr. Santo Napoli stated to Chief Roca had mentioned the dashboard and knows that has been in the works. He asked if there will be a timeframe of when that is going to be released.

Chief Charles Roca stated that it should be within three to four months is

what he is told. What happened is the person from Esri had to go through CJIS Compliance Training and then they had to setup the link to make sure that the data works so that all the process on how to create these dashboards.

Mr. Santo Napoli stated ok. Thank you.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated great and stated that the last question she will have before she concludes is how many officers are CIT trained, approximately.

Chief Charles Roca stated approximately 150.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlachh stated ok. There is a good option of people.

Chief Charles Roca stated just so you are aware, CIT training takes place every year. It is a full week, 40 hour course for de-escalation, resource, referrals, and in addition to that the county also provides two day trainings, if interested.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated ok. Great, thank you so much and asked if any members of the public would like to speak. She stated that this will conclude this meeting and they will see them in June on the same topic.

[15-6820](#)

Community Health Models

Attachments: [Special Committee Resolution](#)
[Co-responder and or Cahoots discussions](#)

ADJOURNED: 6:51 PM