

Public Safety Questions

Overall Plans for the Police Department

My overall plans for the police department mirror the six pillars of 21st Century Policing. If we explore the first pillar, it speaks to Building trust and legitimacy. It is vital that our officers work every day to build relationships in a positive manner if they are responding to a call for service or involved in an interaction within our community. This is accomplished through being what I call a professional police officer and begins with the manner an officer wears their uniform and interacts with the public. Further, I am advocating for increased collaborations with our community. There are many citizens, groups, organizations that want to partner with police and improve the quality of life in the community.

The second pillar speaks to policy and oversight. I am determined to improve our policies by being inclusive of members of our department to have input in the process. In this way there can be buy-in into the implementation and training of the policy. In my capacity as AC of Operations and now interim chief, I have been working on addressing some changes in policies and creating accountability and oversight. An example of this is the creation of a Vice Unit policy to outline parameters and functions within that unit.

The third pillar is technology and social media. I am working on leveraging technology that is available for law enforcement such as Shot Spotter and FUSUS. These two technology programs are part of my overall strategy to curtail crime, homicides, and shootings. I will speak to what those technologies entail in a further question. With relation to social media, I am an advocate for use of social media in the police department to inform our community and enhance the transparency. It also gives us the ability to highlight our officers. We have many hard-working professional men and women that I want the community to get to know and trust.

Pillar four is community policing and crime reduction. I sincerely believe that people in the community want a safe community and one of the components is engaging our citizens through relationship building. I want to grow these relationships through being engaged with our community not just at everyday calls for service but also in community events and highlighting these partnerships. This will result in breaking down barriers which will have a net effect of people cooperating with investigations or providing vital information that leads to crime resolution. My focus on building community policing involves our community outreach unit along with our patrol element. I am ensuring that this is looked at through out partnership with Cedar Crest College. I want to send out a survey to our community and see how we as a department can improve and be responsive to the needs of the community.

Pillar five speaks to training and education. It is vital and one of my priorities to establish a succession plan and invest in the development of our officers. Allentown is my passion and there are many hard-working officers that would make great formal leaders within the department. I am looking to have officers attend leadership trainings and improve/increase the decision-making process skill set. These officers would be trained and ready to step into the next role within the police department. I would also like to increase the amount and type of trainings that are held at the Allentown Police Academy to give opportunities to our officers.

Pillar six speaks to officer wellness and safety. Our officers are our future and I want to be able to ensure that our officers have the equipment and technology that they need for their safety. I also want to make

sure that our police academy is maintained to provide an area where our officers can work out in the weight room or go for a run in the parkway.

What assurances can you give us that you stay in this position for at least an intermediate period? Will you be prepared to move into the city?

The assurance that I can give is that I stepped into this role and have assumed the responsibilities of the position. I do not plan on retiring any time soon and have been a committed employee to the City of Allentown.

I have had conversations with my family, and they will support a move into the city.

What types of reporting and updates do you plan to give to the Public Safety Committee?

I have been providing updates on recent incidents as I can, but I do want to improve this by speaking with our crime analysts and creating a report for the public safety committee to review about overall statistics in the city that I would be able to release.

What plans do you have to deal with morale and the perception of fairness in the department regarding recent disciplinary situations?

I inherited situations that I stepped up to handle in a consistently fair process. I have consulted with human resources as well as with my leadership team in these situations to fully consider the information and take the most appropriate actions.

I am currently taking steps to address concerns that were relayed to me and meeting with several officers to ensure that we do not marginalize any officer but empower and uplift. I am also engaging in specific mandatory department training to ensure that will have positive growth and connections internally within the department that will strive to raise morale.

The conversations with the officers will not be a one-time event but will occur on a regular basis. This leads into the inclusion on policy review, evaluation, and implementation. Morale and perception of fairness is not new to APD. I have heard it said that the consistent thing about APD is that is inconsistent in reference to leadership. I am here to change that narrative and be able to empower my APD family to take this journey with me and bring our department to the next level.

What is your strategy to curtail crime, homicides, and shootings?

I have implemented my plan which includes a three-prong approach. First and foremost, is our patrol element who are tasked with calls for service throughout their respective shifts. In enhancing this process, we have partnered with the PA State Police for joint patrols that will address criminal activity to include quality of life crimes. This partnership is important as it develops relationships with our police officers and state troopers. The relationship pays dividends in sharing information as well as showing a

unified approach. We are also conducting specialized patrols which recently has been effective in taking guns off the street and making arrests of individuals that have been providing information reference crimes. The patrol officers continue to partner with our Community Intervention Specialists as well as our Certified Recovery Specialists to address incidents involving mental health / drug addiction / homelessness.

Within our investigative units I am instituting an investigative collaborative initiative that will include working with our Crime Analyst as well as County, State, and Federal partners in identifying the individuals involved in the violence and working on cases specifically to reduce the activity associated with crimes of violence. Our investigative units to include Vice, CID, and Traffic Unit will work collaboratively on this initiative to ensure continuity across the approach. Both Shot Spotter (gunshot detection technology) and FUSUS are programs that would greatly assist the Allentown Police Department in solving crime and improving the quality of life.

With relation to our community outreach approach, we will continue to work with our community partners to build bridges and impact the community in a positive way through events, conversations, social media posts. Additionally, we will continue to take part in the trauma informed care follow up after a violent incident of this nature. Where we go back into the neighborhoods where the incidents occur and work with our CIS worker to provide resources to the community. I had the good fortune to meet a young man today who I spoke to at length regarding his life growing up in Allentown.

What are your plans for using cameras in the future?

Cameras are an integral investigative tool in modern law enforcement. Investing funds to ensure our camera system is up to date is important to ensure that we have the ability to utilize the system to full effectiveness. I plan to use the cameras to address crime and quality of life issues by giving our officer and detectives additional capabilities to monitor and/or investigate activity.

Further, I would want to explore obtaining FUSUS technology which would increase the camera network throughout the city by collaborating with residents, businesses, hospitals to effectively gain additional and improved operational intelligence. I had the opportunity to review this program and it is phenomenal. It has the ability to also tie into the Shot Spotter program that I would like to bring to Allentown on a pilot program basis to expand our public safety capability.