



MINUTES
SPECIAL COMMISSION FOR SAFE COMMUNITIES - REGULAR SESSION
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 2023, 12:00 PM

The Special Commission for Safe Communities convened in regular session at 12:00 PM, November 28, 2023. called the meeting to order.

Roll Call

Attendee Name	Title	Status
Timothy Harris	Commissioner	Present
Scott Denton	Commissioner	Present
Elizabeth German	Commissioner	Present
Aron Klein	Commissioner	Present
Cathy Lust	Commissioner	Present
Kaitlyn Selman	Commissioner	Present
Jay Shannon	Commissioner	Present

Public Comment

Individuals wishing to provide emailed public comment must email comments to publiccomment@cityblm.org at least 15 minutes before the start of the meeting. Individuals wishing to speak in-person may register at cityblm.org/register at least 5 minutes before the start of the meeting.

One In-Person received, no emailed: No emailed public comment was received.

Molly Ward provided public comment.

Regular Agenda

The following item was presented:

Item 4.A. Consideration and Action on Approving a Chairperson for the Special Commission for Safe Communities.

Commissioner Denton made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Shannon, to approve the item as presented. Motion to approve Commissioner Scott Denton as Chairperson for the Special Commission for Safe Communities directed the clerk to call roll:

AYES: Shannon; Selman; Lust; Klein; German; Denton;
Harris **Motion carried.**

The following item was presented:

Item 4.B. Review of current gun violence in Central Illinois A/Chief Veerman presented a review on gun violence:

- Year to date, Bloomington has had 30 shooting, not including accidental discharges/suicides.
- There have been a combined 46 shootings year to date in Bloomington and Normal.
- This was lower than 2022, which had 57 shootings.
- Bloomington/Normal averages 42.6 shootings a year over the last 5 years.
- Of shooting recorded in Bloomington/Normal this year, 76% involve African American males as perpetrators, a decrease from 2014-2015 where 95% of the perpetrators were African American males.
- In 2022, the average age of the suspect/arrestee (when known) was 23.3 years old. In 2022, the average age of the victim (when known) was 18.6 years old.
- Historically, shootings have been driven by gang disputes, but this has changed in the past two years.
 - Commissioner Harris inquired about the types of gangs in the area. A/Chief Veerman responded that most of the gangs we have locally are hybrid gangs with loose ties to the more traditional gangs. Members of hybrid gangs will quickly change allegiances from one gang to another, making it hard to track them.
- Shootings are now more predicated by spontaneous altercations where one or more parties are armed at the point of conflict. This is true for both adult and juvenile shooting incidents.
- Accessibility and illegal possession of firearms is not as prevalent as most think. Over the past two years, in Bloomington/Normal, just over 40% of the shootings were done with guns that have been passed from party to party (i.e., same gun).
- In the past three months, we have seized three ghost guns, which is a decline. Locally,
- we have had several shootings where the suspect(s) used fully automatic handguns.
 - This is a result of Glock handguns being illegally equipped with an auto sear or switch, that renders the firearm fully automatic.
 - Switches are purchased on the street like any other illegal commodity.
 - Commissioner Denton asked how prevalent these are. A/Chief Veerman responded that he believes they are relatively easy to obtain through a black market or the internet.
- Residential Burglaries followed by vehicle burglaries remain the most prevalent manners of obtaining an illegally possessed firearm.
- To keep a regional perspective, Bloomington's current number of shootings are one half to one quarter of the current totals for surrounding cities (Decatur, Peoria, Champaign, and Springfield).
- Bloomington PD is launching NIBIN in our crime lab. NIBIN is the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network.
 - National Program supported by the ATF
 - Local terminal used to evaluate ballistic evidence (fired/recovered rounds) and identify shooters and connect guns to multiple crime scenes.
 - This program will greatly increase the speed of matches when compared to our current process where we have to ship evidence off for examinations and wait long periods for results.

New Business

- Commissioner Sherman asked if we communicate with the surrounding agencies regarding shootings and gang activity. A/Chief Veerman responded that we have our own intel analysts that regularly communicate back and forth. Technology has helped greatly with this.
- Commissioner Lust asked what the law is regarding secure storage with the residential and vehicular burglaries and how those are being obtained. A/Chief Veerman responded that he believed the only requirements are to be in possession of a FOID card and ensure it is in a compartment. A/Chief Veerman said he would provide the law during the next meeting.
- Commissioner Sherman asked for the local statistics regarding accidental discharges and suicides. A/Chief Veerman advised he did not know how accurate the accidental discharge statistics would be if they are available due to the reliance on self reporting. A/Chief Veerman advised he would look into the statistics for gun related suicides.
- A/Chief Veerman asked the commissioners what other information they were interested in.
- Commissioner Selman asked whether information was available regarding where the shooting were taking place in relation to where the victim and suspect live. Commissioner Denton asked to see a map of shooting locations.
- Commissioner Sherman asked for information on domestic violence as it relates to gun violence.
- Commissioner Lust reiterate that she would like to see the information on gun deaths related to suicides
- Commissioner Harris inquired if there is anyone at the police department that is responsible for community outreach and wanted to know if anyone reaches out on social media when there is evidence of gun violence. A/Chief Veerman advised it is not always possible or practical for the police to contact individuals who may be engaging in criminal activity through social media because it could force those individuals to stop using social media which would hamper future investigations or attempts to intervene. A/Chief Veerman also advised; Sgt. Nowers is the primary individual responsible for community outreach and he has 3 officers assigned to him in the neighborhood focus team that assist. The remaining members of the department also participate in community engagement events.
- Commissioner Denton asked if Sgt. Nowers could come and speak. A/Chief Veerman advised he would love to come speak.
- Commissioner Shannon asked if there was any data on whether the victims or perpetrators had other family members that were victims or perpetrators in our community. A/Chief Veerman advised he did not believe the information was available but that he would ask. He advised there may be other research out there in regard to this. A/Chief Veerman advised it is not information that the police regularly would ask, or people would willingly provide.
- Commissioner Shannon indicated that he is involved in a school outreach program and has seen that a lot of the same people that experienced problems are now grown up with families who have similar issues. He wondered if there were patterns or indicators that would allow them to be targeted as families needing support.
- Commissioner Selman stated that she was from the Louisville area where there is a lot of gun violence. She stated there were several organizations doing violence intervention outside of the criminal justice system. Commissioner Selman wondered if there were similar organizations we could talk to. Commissioner Selman also advised focus groups could be used to learn about family connections or lack of resources.
- Commissioner Denton advised the Public Defenders Office may have information we can obtain.

Commissioner Sherman asked if the age of our victims and perpetrators was similar to the surrounding areas such as Peoria, Champaign, and Springfield. A/Chief Veerman advised he believes they are.

- Commissioner Denton asked for more information on the gun buyback event. A/Chief Veerman advised 217 guns were bought back during the event and that 312 safes were given out during that event. Commissioner Sherman asked how many of the guns were obtained illegally. A/Chief Veerman advised that only limited information was solicited because the Police Department did not want that to be a barrier for people turning in firearms. However, all the weapons were checked to see if they were stolen so they could be returned to their owners if necessary.

Commission Member Comments

There was a brief discussion about Open Meetings Act and how to share information.

Commissioner Sherman also spoke about identifying additional commissioners for the vacancies who may be younger.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 12:40pm

Commissioner Klein made a motion, seconded by Commissioner German, to adjourn the meeting.

Motion to Adjourn.

directed the clerk to call roll:

AYES: Shannon; Selman; Lust; Klein; German; Denton; Harris **Motion carried.**

The Meeting Adjourned at

CITY OF BLOOMINGTON

Scott Denton

Scott Denton (Jan 16, 2024 23:23 CST)

Scott Denton, Chair



Aaron Veerman, Staff Liaison