

# Blue Ribbon Commission Meeting Minutes

**Date:** March 11, 2025

**Time:** 10:00 a.m.

**Location:** Erie County Services Center Chambers, 2900 Columbus Avenue, Sandusky

## Welcoming Remarks – Co-Chairman Mike Parker

The meeting was called to order by Co-Chairman Mike Parker. Roll was taken, confirming the presence of commission members and audience members. Mr. Forster is excused due to illness.

Mr. Parker welcomed all participants and provided an overview of the agenda, emphasizing the significance of today's discussion on brainstorming ways to improve law enforcement services.

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## Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes that were distributed electronically was made by Mr. Tucker and seconded by Ms. Crescimano. The motion carried unanimously.

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## Purpose of the Meeting

**Mr. Mike Parker** (Blue Ribbon Commission) stated that the hope of this meeting is to find ways to work together to improve services and save taxpayer dollars. He explained a meeting was recently held with the following in attendance: SubCommittee Members Mr. Parker, Mr. Forster, and Kevin Cannon, Chief Oliver (Sandusky), Chief Bartus (Kelleys Island), Chief Musser (Perkins Township and Chief Meister (Village of Milan), Sheriff Sigsworth (Erie County). A series of questions were discussed at this meeting, which gave great insight as to how the law enforcement services are already working together.

Police Chiefs in attendance: Chief Jared Oliver, City of Sandusky; Sheriff Paul Sigsworth, Erie County; and Chief Musser, Perkins Township.

Sheriff Sigsworth appreciates the Blue Ribbon Commission for allowing him and the other Chief's to be a part of this process. He explained that each entity has individual responsibilities, but they also have collective responsibilities with each other that help the community. Through consolidation and working together, law enforcement has worked together cohesively over the years.

**Police – (Mr. Forster and Mr. Parker) (March 11<sup>th</sup>)**

## Review

- **Number of officers per department, full and part-time.**
  - Full staff largely means available budgeted, all could use additional officers
    - Especially during peak seasonal events where officers are already largely shared
  - Sandusky – 53 budgeted but 48 actual with 5 full time with CP
  - Perkins – 24 FT, 2 PT
  - Sheriff – 98 FT including Admin, Dispatch and Staff, 21 PT
  - Kelley’s Island – 2 FT, 8 PT
  - Milan – 4 Budgeted with 3 full time and 10 total on staff
- **Opportunities to share personnel and responsibilities**
  - Mutual Aid exists with ability to back each other up
    - Including assisting with Fire Department
    - Readily share department resources and knowledge based on departmental skills
  - Perkins/Erie County Sheriff’s Office share some personnel
  - Officers work readily across jurisdictional borders on transfers and medical runs so not to trouble local office with increased responsibility/hindrance
    - “Keep police on the road”
  - **FLOCK** – Stationary camera system that coordinates regional responses between police departments and significantly cuts down on police man hours for investigations
    - Signals officers of license plates with active warrants, and departments can coordinate with local police to apprehend suspects
    - Sandusky Chief previously applied for grant through OCJS – Violent Crime Reduction Grant. Didn’t receive grant, but if applied as a multiple agency, believes it would have been granted
    - <https://www.flocksafety.com/>
    - <https://www.police1.com/tech-pulse/study-validates-impact-of-flock-safetys-lpr-technology-on-crime-clearance-rates>
  - All entities on same **Records Management System** that allows departments to better coordinate together
  - Officers have increased first aid measures carried on-person for incidents to better react to calls in fields
  - Northern Border Initiative – Marine Patrol Boat at Sheriff Office and can be assisted with other agencies in conjunction with Border Patrol
    - Received Grant due to regionalized grant process through collaborative process of area departments

- Local departments interested in purchasing vehicle barricades for all jurisdictions to use at various festivals and activities.
  - Working to get countywide grant from all first responders to have access
  - These grants, through coordination and partnership, improves grant chances
  - Cost per barricade is between \$60,000 and \$80,000 and would like to order between two and four barricades.
- SRO's (School Resource Officers) invaluable to local police/school
  - Ability to coordinate juvenile reports with schools
  - Develop relationships with students as a positive resource
- **Maintenance of equipment, how much and by who per department**
  - Erie County Sheriff vehicles are maintained by County Garage
- **Eminent replacements, estimated costs, per department.**
  - Challenge in coordination of Grants for equipment beneficial to be shared with all in region.
  - Part-time grant writer, but individual departments benefit from economy of scale by signing onto grants with additional departments
- **Facility/Technology improvements?**
  - Staff Lead on grants for the group of first responders
  - Storage of digital evidence and access to it by legal teams has to be preserved
    - Terabyte's of information from digital footprints
    - Can future expenses of large data storage be able to coordinate costs with local data center? Perkins in early conversation on this
  - Police have some storage locally but Axon owns the market nationwide and future costs can impacted
- **Jail services satisfactory? Budget manageable? Who contributes to the budget, and how much?**
  - All arrests tend to come to Erie County Sheriff's Office, and budget is supported by County Commissioners, per ORC
- **Centralized dispatch is the model for cost savings via centralization of processes and personnel, are there other opportunities like this?**
  - Centralized Dispatch also a centralized intelligence model for quick communication between departments
  - Police know their strengths as a department and aim to keep guys out on the road to serve the local community
  - One challenge has been mental health calls, where Police Officers may not be the best respondents to the situation
    - Considerations for a 24/7 mental health response team who could best respond to mental health needs in real time and allow police to stay on road where their professional strengths are

- Ottawa, Sandusky, Seneca, Wyandot, Huron, have five-county response team comprised of peer supporters.
  - <https://connectionsrecovery.org/services/mcrt/>
- Sheriff noted that an estimate of 80% of individuals in jail have underlying mental/substance abuse issues. A response team could be called and handle the individual before they are sent to jail.

**Ms. Lisa Crescimano** (Blue Ribbon Commission) stated that the ADAMHS Board trains peer supporters in mental health and she and **Mr. Tom Tucker** (Blue Ribbon Commission) will mention this at next week's ADAMHS Board meeting.

- **Can smaller villages sustain their own department? Review costs, hiring ability, turnover of personnel, retirements.**
  - Policing challenges are largely localized and individual based on municipality, but senior officers may move laterally to township and villages for change of pace
  - Chief Oliver noted that the Sandusky Police Department is restrained by rules/regulations of their charter in their eligibility list that makes for slow hiring and processing times that townships and villages are not hindered by.
  - Nationally and locally, less interest in Police and Fire services, as seen by Chief's in the number of citizens who sign up to take the civil service test (7,500 compared to 7 now)
- **Mutual Training opportunities such as EHOVE and Sandusky Police Academy**
  - Advanced in local training based on group effort and community focus to share training as a resource
    - Tailored to needs of local community
  - Departments will coordinate with Federal, State and local agencies, including fire departments, for training opportunities as they become available
  - Also coordinate with local schools on walkthroughs
- **Activities planned or in progress to improve efficiency**
  - Four Suggestions by Police Chiefs in improving local department efficiencies:
    - Support Sandusky Charter to keep eligibility list open consistent with other departments
    - Establishment of a 24/7 Mental Health Response Team of trained professionals (peer supporters)
    - Pursue a full time grant writer for emergency medical services to better coordinate grants based on economy of scale of departments and equipment coordination
    - Invest in growing number of FLOCK cameras county-wide to free up policing man hours for increased regional collaboration
  - Departments were also interested in concept of larger insurance groups where fiscally responsible

Mr. Krabill inquired about the cooperation of Vermilion. Chief Oliver stated that Vermilion is 100% cooperative in all aspects of mutual aid and the records management program coordination of records.

Mr. Parker thanked those in attendance and thanked the Police Chiefs for educating the Commission. It is good for the public, as well, to hear about the initiatives that Police Departments in Erie County participate in.

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Krabill and seconded by Mr. Tucker. The motion carried unanimously.