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## **SSHD Board Meeting**

June 8th, 2022

10:00am

SSHD Office & Zoom

Board Members Present: Rick Millan, Ken Silver, Monica Monique,

SSHD Staff: Mike Harris, Dana Feinberg, Sarah Cowell

Attendees: Council Member Mark Squilla, Lt. Michael Long, Bill Funk, John Foy, Chris McNichol, Francesca Rivetti, Benjamin Gillespie, Christina Kallas-Saritsoglou, Sheryl Linton Jones, Adam Shapiro, Heather Downes, Gilberto Arends, Allie Gerber, Edward Garcia, Elena Brennan, Sherylle Linton Jones, Moshe (Valente), Nicole (South Street Art Mart), Nick (Copabanana), Allison

## **AGENDA**

**1. Board Chair's Report:** Rick Millan states that the SSHD's goal is to keep the community safe. He wants to avoid placing blame and rather forge ahead with positive ways to "get things going straight." Mike Harris apologizes to those attending on Zoom, who were unable to hear the first few minutes of the meeting due to technical limitations.

**2. Public Safety Update:** Lt. Michael Long provides an update on the shooting and the steps taken since the incident. City officials have been holding meetings about the incident since it occurred. He recaps police activity on the night in question. Saturday night, the first shooting occurred at 4th and Bainbridge. Officers heard gunshots 25 minutes before the shooting on South Street. They found 13 shell casings and two live rounds. Officers on bicycles and on foot gathered to survey the area. While searching the poorly lit area for victims, the officers heard more gunshots. A large crowd fled the area, some of whom had been shot. Officers continued surveying for evidence and sent victims to the hospital. Officers found that fatal injuries had occurred on the 200 block. Lt. Long asks for anyone who has further video evidence to forward it to the police's homicide department. There have been some arrests, but evidence is still being investigated. The commissioner will be meeting with City officials at George W Nebinger Public School at Carpenter and 6th. Police staff are working diligently to address policy and staffing choices that may provide more safety following the incident.

Mike recaps the news that has been made public. Two suspects have been arrested. Surveillance footage has been made public, and the investigation continues. Lt. Long suggests anyone with information call (215) 686-TIPS to help the police. Lt. Long acknowledges there is a nationwide crisis of gun violence and thanks the business community for their help providing video evidence. Mike thanks the officers for their work that night.

Mike first got indications of the incident around 11:00 p.m. that night and heard from the police commissioner around 12:30 a.m. In the three days between the incident and this meeting, Mike has been in constant contact with other City officials and law enforcement. The day before this meeting, the mayor and other City officials came to South Street. The current mission is to prevent violence in upcoming weekend situations and beyond.

SSHD has a list of requests for the City, working on broader issues involving all Philadelphia business groups. SSHD already had plans to be included in a national conversation about gun violence in nightlife districts. Mike encourages City officials as high as possible to join the call to make the nightlife zone safe, enforcing city codes and laws to enhance quality of life issues such as ATVs, illegal sales, and others as soon as possible. The City will also help the district provide de-escalation outreach workers in the area on weekends. At this time, decisions are still being made about how to progress. Mike was on the national news as the lead story in Chicago. Millions of people come to the district, and though this is a setback, improvements will be made in supporting the business community.

Mike asks for comments and suggestions from those present. Spoonie, owner of O'Neals Pub, asks about the security box used on Saturday night to prohibit traffic and whether it is planned to be used again. Spoonie wants notice of its use in order to plan accordingly, since it hurts business. The SSHD will pass along information as quickly and clearly as possible, but it is also up to the police department. Spoonie suggests enhancing street lighting and a voucher system for pedestrians to enter a zone to prevent loitering and force people to spend an admission fee at local businesses.

Council Member Mark Squilla enters and addresses the crowd. His main focus is to address the violence and reduce the redirection of blame on City officials. He wants to shift from reactive policing to preventive policing. He acknowledges that people have rights, but that laws must be enforced as well. There should be clear communication of what law enforcement are responsible for. He believes this is due to retaliation against police for enacting codes of conduct, that the problem of escalating violence is caused by police having to think about potential repercussions for not obeying the law themselves. City officials are responsible for ending lawless behavior. He will be meeting with the police commissioner tonight to attempt to solve the problem. He says that people buy guns in order to protect themselves because they don't feel safe. If the police made them feel protected, they would not have so many guns. Businesses decided to close on the night of the incident because they felt it was not safe to remain open. The answer is not to close the street more often, but to make the businesses feel safe enough to remain open. Residents are also worried about safety.

An attendee asks the council member about what ATVs have to do with the incident. Squilla says that such lawless behavior enables more frequent violence in an uncontrolled environment. Reacting to a crime itself is not as effective for public safety as preventing the situation which led to the crime. One may not stop two individuals from fighting with one

another, but one can make pedestrians feel safe, increasing foot traffic and an environment where a fight is less likely to occur. The mentality of allowing unlawful behavior to occur increases the likelihood of serious crime, so the police must more strictly enforce the laws and codes that are currently in place.

An attendee asks Squilla what measures were taken after the prior shooting that happened on Memorial Day at 4th and South. More police officers were put on the street. More police is not the answer. Pervasive lawlessness in Philadelphia must be combated by instilling fear of repercussions to those who may commit crimes.

Moshe, owner of Valente, says he saw on TV that the City wants to close South Street. He sees no problem during the day, but only at night when there are ATVs and motorcycles and a different category of people coming to the district. He suggests enacting a fine for noise and a ban on vehicles at night. Squilla claims that he said this already. Moshe says that talk is not a solution. Squilla claims that Moshe is repeating everything that Squilla already said. Moshe claims that Squilla spoke on television about wanting to close South Street. Squilla says he said, "If we cannot make that street safe, we have to close it." Now, he says the answer is not closing the street, that this is a citywide issue. It's illegal to ride ATVs in Philadelphia, so the law must be enforced. Moshe asks, "So, what happened?" Squilla says this is why we're having this meeting. Moshe says someone is not doing their job.

Monica Thompson says that parking authorities will also need to be involved to stop partying in parked cars and enacting fines for ATV drivers. Squilla adds speed bumps and suggests the City must have a multi-faceted approach. An attendee notes that speed bumps do not present a deterrent for ATVs and dirt bikes and Police Commissioner Danielle Outlaw maintains a policy that does not allow police to engage with drivers of those vehicles, preventing enforcement of their usage restriction. Mike summarizes the argument by saying that if laws are in place, they must be enforced or changed to reflect reality.

Nicole of South Street Art Mart says that closing the street at night will only hurt businesses which do most business during later hours. "South Street is a living, breathing thing," and referring to ATV usage as lawlessness is more complicated than Squilla makes it seem. Squilla says people come to South Street for fun, and once people are not having fun and become scared, it's a problem. People have their rights, but once crime occurs, it's a problem. South Street should return to being an entertainment district. Mike acknowledges the difference between the daytime and nighttime economies of South Street and that SSHD's responsibility is to balance the issues of each to unify the district. Nicole asks what lawless behavior Squilla is addressing. Squilla has seen footage of people dancing and having fun while impeding traffic. He says these incidents give crowds a sense that lawless behavior is okay.

Squilla lists forms of lawless behavior: improper vehicle usage such as ATVs and dirt bikes, "boom cars" with loud radios, people blocking traffic with dance. Mike mentions a shocking video of 20 people blocking a police van from driving down the street two weekends ago. Squilla interjects, "It's not okay." Nicole responds that she was not saying it was okay, but was simply asking for clarification. Crowd dispersal is a public safety matter when it blocks emergency vehicles. Squilla says problems cannot be solved if society accepts that. Mike also mentions the curfew that is in effect. Squilla says that breaking the curfew results in the person being taken to a curfew center to be picked up by a parent. These things can be done now, but

are not. If people don't like the laws, they should be removed. But, if people do, then the laws must be enforced.

Nick of Copabana asks the age that the curfew involves, which is 18. Before the shootings, he saw Copabana inundated with hundreds of underage people running around, not being customers of any local business. He doesn't know where they came from and likens the event to prior flash mobs that have happened in the area. His outdoor tables were trampled, and they lost customers. He suggests authorities monitor social media activity. The curfew is midnight on weekends, but has been modified. For 13-16, it's 9:00 p.m. Squilla wonders if these issues will be enforced. He says the "activity centers for youth" can also be visited voluntarily by underage citizens.

Allie Gerber of Gerber Tax asks for more respect between participants in these question and answer sessions. She works late and sees police officers disengaged with the community, playing on their phones instead. Squilla claims this is the exact message he has given. He wants to make sure everyone is on the same page, from City officials to officers on the street. He apologizes if he appeared disrespectful. He respects everyone's opinion and thinks it's great that people disagree.

Edward Garcia, co-owner of Queen & Rook Game Cafe, wrote an op-ed in Sunday's paper about the incident. His business is open late, and he is interested in pro-active enforcement where police positively engage with the community. When the police only interact negatively, they appear as punishing agents. People may be deterred from committing crimes because they had these positive interactions with police officers. Squilla mentions a community policing proposal he supports to build bonds between the police and communities. Mike also mentions nightlife district policing, which requires a specific approach involving de-escalation, large crowd management, and alcohol. Squilla adds that training is a big part of informing officers of what they can and cannot do. Elena Brennan of Bus Stop Boutique asks about the possibility of gun detectors in the district. Squilla admits it's difficult to enforce publicly, but that owners of properties could do something like that. Monica mentions that citizens have the right to visit the district without being searched.

Bill Funk, owner of Body Graphics Tattoo and other properties, says he has never seen so much bad behavior in the district in his 28 years in the area. He believes this unprecedented gun and ATV usage must be met with an "unprecedented response," temporarily blocking the streets on the weekends and at night. There are summer holidays and special events, and a curfew will not likely actually be enforced. He wants to stop wheelies and gun violence. Crowds have always come and gone, and there are no loitering laws anymore. He remembers a previous police leader, Lieutenant Walker, who did not tolerate people gathering on the sidewalks. Funk believes loitering festers conflict and bad behavior like marijuana usage. He saw a group of young people chase a taxi with no police enforcement. Francesca Rivetti of Follicle Studio says closing the district on weekends will only push more to happen on other nights. Squilla hopes conclusions can be made before the upcoming weekend. Spoonie denounces talk without action and encourages decisions being made.

Sherylle Linton Jones, resident and City employee, is desperate for solutions to gun violence. She heard the gunshots that night and wonders whether any stakeholder meetings will include young people. She worries that young people are being stereotyped as all being part of the "murder and mayhem" and are not having their voices heard. Squilla says he will make an

effort to include young people at the meeting that night at Nebinger School. Monica mentions the importance of young people in the district, that they may not necessarily be customers, but come to the area to enjoy a night out.

Kali Morgan of Passional Boutique asks what funds are being allocated toward conflict resolution and suggests that simply increasing police presence and force will not solve issues. She references a physical altercation that took place at 4th and Bainbridge. She mentions the need for youth-oriented activities. Squilla mentions \$50 million the city has allocated for youth conflict resolution. Sarah Cowell hints at upcoming unannounced programs involving safe events for youth that SSHD is working on. Shannon, a local resident, says that ATV users just want to show off their vehicles. If respect is shown to their drivers, they may also respect other citizens. Squilla mentions that the City has thought of planning a place for these vehicles to be used and displayed in a legal manner.

Mike opens up the floor to questions from Zoom attendees. An attendee associated with Repo Records mentions cops on bicycles having developed a relationship with the business in the past, but have not been seen recently. Heather Downes asks to see the list of requests from SSHD that was submitted to the mayor and commissioner. Mike will work on making that available, but he has mentioned all of the topics at this meeting. Heather asks that it be emailed to her. Chris McNichol asks what the format of this night's meeting will be. Christina Kallas-Saritsoglou asks whether there will be a Zoom option for attendance. Francesca Rivet asks if that meeting will be recorded.

Squilla thanks all for attending. Mike reiterates the details of the night's meeting and mentions flyers for the event are available in the room. The health department will be offering mental health resources for business owners and residents. An attendee from the Department of Behavioral Health speaks about having been at Theatre of Living Arts on the night of the incident and apologizes for the incident and what has been going on in the district. She is providing contact information for trauma response. She wishes that program did not need to exist, but it provides structured assistance in the form of group sessions for those affected by the shooting to address its impact. Mike asks for attendees to sign up for clear communication through SSHD newsletters. Ken Silver says attendance at this meeting is 10 times as much as normal, and encourages attendees to come more regularly to SSHD board meetings. The BID runs the area and wants to hear the voices of community members. Mike points attendees to SouthStreet.com for the event calendar. Sarah, marketing manager, is also a survivor of gun violence and has compiled a list of mental health and violence counseling services in the area, which is also available on the website and as a handout in the room. The meeting casually adjourns.

**3. Adjournment:** Meeting adjourns.