

(The following is not a verbatim transcript of comments or discussion that occurred during the meeting, but rather a summarization intended for general informational purposes. All motions and votes are the official records).

TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMISSION

A meeting of the Traffic Safety Commission was held on Monday, March 16, 2015 in the Council Chambers, City Hall, Cranston, Rhode Island.

CALL MEETING TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order at 6:40 P.M. by the Chair.

Present: Council Vice-President Richard D. Santamaria, Jr., Chair
Jeffrey Barone, Director of Constituent and Government Affairs
Inspector W. Andrew DeCosta, Police Department
Fred Raisner
Tom Perotta
Bert Carabitses
Jonathan Keith
Bernadetta Petrone
David Schiapo

Absent: Mia Patriarca
Christopher Edward Buonanno
Albert Melikian

Also Present: Council President John E. Lanni, Jr.
Rosalba Zanni, Assistant City Clerk/Clerk of Committees

Chair recognized Council President Lanni in the audience.

PUBLIC HEARING/NEW BUSINESS:

- **Presentation by RI Traffic Tribunal Chief Magistrate William R. Guglietta**
- **Question and Answer Forum**

Chair introduced The Honorable William Guglietta, Chief Magistrate of Rhode Island Traffic Tribunal.

Judge Guglietta thanked Council President Lanni and Council Vice-President Santamaria for inviting him to this meeting. He stated that he wanted to attend this meeting because he is a resident of this City and wanted to make sure he gave his input to try to make the City safer.

Judge Guglietta presented a packet for the Committee and stated that Traffic Tribunal has jurisdiction over motor vehicle offenses throughout the State. Over the last five years, they have averaged 150,000 cases per year. Traffic Tribunal shares a number of motor vehicle offenses on certain offenses with the Cranston Municipal Court. As to speeding offenses, there are three different Statutes the Police use to bring the cases before the Court. Main violations fall under Section 31-14-2 of the Statute. The City's Traffic Commission handles the designation of speeds for the roads. The fines for speeding are as follows: \$95 with corresponding penalties, depending upon the person's motor vehicle record and amount of speed the person travels over the limit. The \$95 is up to ten miles over the speed limit. Eleven miles and above over the speed limit, the fine is \$205. Each mile over the speed limit would be in increment of \$10. There were 33 homicides in the State last year and 65 deaths on the roads in 2014. Over the last five years, we have averaged 500 injuries in our State as a result to auto accidents.

Mr. Raisner asked Judge Guglietta if he has any statistics on how many accidents are due to texting or distractions. Judge Guglietta stated that National Statistics of Traffic Safety is putting that data together so he does not have those statistics this evening. He will obtain that information for the Commission once it is available.

Judge Guglietta referred to the handout and stated the following: Traffic Tribunal had 52,000 speeding violations Statewide in 2014; 36% of the tickets issued were for speeding in 2014.

Judge Guglietta addressed the revenue for 2014 and stated the following:

- o 679 cases under jurisdiction of Traffic Tribunal
- o 49 were dismissed
- o 183 were dismissed under the good driving record
- o 17 were dismissed by Police
- o 139 plead guilty
- o 128 plead guilty absentia
- o 130 prepaid by mail
- o 33 dispositions that were not identified

Council President Lanni asked what percentage of the violations were for Municipal Court and what percentage Traffic Tribunal and questioned why the percentage of the violations go to Traffic Tribunal rather than Municipal Court. Inspector DeCosta stated that from what he hears from other Officers, they feel that there are a lot of dismissals and the Municipal Court Judges seem to dismiss a lot of the cases, most due to the people using their good driving record.

Judge Guglietta stated that the distinctions between Traffic Tribunal and Municipal Courts are Traffic Tribunal has certain statutory jurisdiction that Municipal Courts don't.

Mr. Perotta asked who decides where a ticket goes. Judge Guglietta stated that statutorily, speeding violations of eleven miles or over the speed limit would go to Traffic Tribunal. Juvenile items under the age of eighteen, would go to Traffic Tribunal. He asked that the Commission members keep in mind that Traffic Tribunal can hear everything, Municipal Courts are limited. Judge Guglietta also explained the breakdown of revenues from violations paid.

Chair asked if violations are more for speeding in a school zone. Judge Guglietta stated that the Court has discretion to double the fines for violations for speeding in a school or construction zone.

Judge Guglietta stated the following things that the Court does to try to keep our roads safe:

- Send people to driving school
- Statutes have been changed for habitual violators
- Ability to impose fines
- Ability to revoke licenses

He also stated that in 2014, 911 tickets were issued for texting while driving and 52,000 tickets were issued for speeding. Speeding the biggest problem, not texting.

Judge Guglietta stated the following that is being done by the Court to address speeding with juveniles who receive violations and changing their habits on the roads:

- Community service
- Programs set up
- Continue the case for a number of months for review
- Driver's retraining with CCRI program

Mr. Carabitses asked Judge Guglietta his opinion of increasing the driving age from sixteen to eighteen. Judge Guglietta stated that in his opinion, the more experience you have the better driver you are going to be. On a Statewide basis, we need to put in a curriculum on speeding and driving. Speeding is a big issue and he applauds Council President Lanni and Council Vice-President Santamaria for bringing this issue to the table because safety on the roads is important. He also stated that he works with all of the Cities and Towns and he knows of no other City or Town that is discussing this issue like Cranston is.

Chair asked Inspector DeCosta to explain the CARE Program for the members of the Commission who were not present at the last meeting. He also stated that he is looking at implementing this Program again and he asked Inspector DeCosta if he thinks this Program would work if it was funded for again.

Judge Guglietta stated that he can't tell the Commission how important it is to have the Officer on the street enforcing the laws. This Program will help in behavior modification. Other Cities and Towns have the camera program and this is disastrous for behavior modification. He supports the CARE Program.

Judge Guglietta stated that Senator Reed announced today that the State will be receiving funds for traffic safety improvements. This may be an opportunity for additional grants for the City.

Mr. Barone asked Inspector DeCosta if he finds that most of the violators are from the areas where they receive the violation. Inspector DeCosta stated that the presentation made by Judge Guglietta was excellent and informative, but if we are going to fix the speeding problem in the City, we have to come up with a way to do it. The CARE Program is a great deterrent to address this issue. Traffic calming devices is also a great tool.

Chair stated that he is a member of the Finance Committee and he is willing to make an amendment during the Budget process reinstating the CARE Program. He asked Council President Lanni if he is in favor of this, since he also is a member of the Finance Committee. Council President Lanni stated that he is in favor as long as it does not raise taxes.

Mr. Carabitses stated that Atwood Ave. and Scituate Ave. are State roads. He asked if we could look at asking for State Police presence there so Cranston does not have to have the expense. Inspector DeCosta stated that the detail pays for itself, it is actually a profit for the City. He also stated that there is a federal fund speed grant that we use.

Mr. Perotta asked how the CARE Program was eliminated, if it was phased out and was it because of Overtime. Inspector DeCosta stated that he does not know.

Chair stated that the Colonel wholeheartedly stated to him that he would support reinstating this program. Inspector DeCosta stated that Jane Anne in Municipal Court does have the statistics of when this program was in effect, if the Committee would like that information, it can be provided.

Chair stated that this Commission will not be meeting during the month of April due to the Budget hearings. The next meeting will be held on Monday, May 18th at 6:30 p.m. and for that meeting, he would like the Council's Grant Writer, Kenneth Filarski, to attend that meeting to speak on possible grants.

The meeting adjourned at 8:10 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,



Rosalba Zanni
Assistant City Clerk/Clerk of Committees