

**ECCO ANNUAL MEETING**  
**October 21, 2021**  
**New Hope Methodist Church**

President Paul Johnson called meeting to order

5:30 – Dinner served

6:15 – Chief of Police Teresa Ewins presentation/Q&A from audience

**Highlights**

#1 question she is asked – why did she move from SF to Lincoln, NE? Answer: Why not?

- The community loves the police department – all seems very aligned
- 7 weeks on the job
- She sees high quality in LPD/City government

LPD – being reviewed in every angle, from recruitment to hiring process, academy, investigation approach – and all-around policing in 2021

- Need to update – to a place where they represent the community – and what we need to do as an organization
- Car break-ins – murders, etc. are on the increase – the City is growing at a 1.5% annual rate – issues will increase w/growth (currently 300k population)
- Omaha – hiring away our staff
  - ✓ Gang members – pressure in Omaha – these issues are coming our way – we need everything in place, before issues become bigger
  - ✓ Investigative teams – working with Federal partners
- Gangs – has worked these her entire career – started in the Mission District of San Francisco
- Goal – a feeling of safety so all can be comfortable walking around
  - ✓ Mayde McGuire is a great captain – putting together data/questions to make things safer
  - ✓ Car break-ins are hitting different parts of the City – do not leave anything in your car – and lock it! Opportunists are “looking for gold” – and if they find it in your neighborhood, they stay there, and continuously look for it. We all need to talk, address, plan, and neighbors need to look out for neighbors.

**Questions**

**Q – Where did you grow up, and why did you go into law enforcement?**

A – SoCal – Santa Monica/Malibu – ’65 – ’75 – you would walk to the beach. It is now overrun. Also NoCal – East Bay area, until she was 18 – her Dad still lives there. When she was young, a cop came to school (she wasn’t good at academics), and she decided to become a cop to help people.

**Q – What do you think is behind the nationwide spike in murders?**

A – It doesn’t help when there are no consequences / ramifications for actions. Guns are too available – cops are part of that problem – most likely, there are guns in the house, and in cars. Guns must be secured – we become part of the problem, when we don’t secure our weapons. Also, most young people today do not know how to effectively resolve conflicts. Instead of the old-school, “We’ll settle it at the tree,” all too often, arguments are inappropriately escalated, and weapons are involved. The “disrespect” on social media prompts people to bring a knife or gun to a fight – it’s become an “I’m

going to kill you approach to resolving relatively minor conflicts. Gangs disrespect each other on social media, then go find the person for retribution. There are not enough ramifications when juveniles do this. Incarceration is not the answer. Few young people are being taught how to be a good student/employee/person. They don't know "how to be young" – there is no in-between. Example, with the George Floyd situation, law enforcement has stepped back, and said, "We cannot fix everything – that's not what law enforcement is – too much has been put on police's shoulder to the point they are not properly supported to deal with these complicated circumstances.

**Q – Is there some discussion about increasing the number of LPD officers? Could that help with the other issues?**

A – Yes, we need more officers. Lincoln has put a lot of things into place – bringing about data, so that people can understand what goes on day-to-day. For instance LPD does not shoot at moving vehicles; they do not use carotid restraints. Our officers are so valuable, because they are generalists – can do the investigation themselves. This makes them targets for other departments to "poach". Our 2-10 year officers, who understand exactly what they need to do, are very valuable. We are trying to shorten the recruitment timeframe – for instance, this timeline is too long in San Francisco. She herself worked 3 jobs + an internship, while waiting to get accepted into law enforcement, and served w/the U. S. Marshals at first. We may have 31 new people in the academy this year – so hard to get people to come into it right now. Many younger generations (Gen Z, Millennials) want more "quality of life" and are not willing to miss games, Christmas, other holidays – this generational change also makes it harder to hire people into a job where a great deal of personal sacrifice is part of the job.

**Q – What competitive advantages does Lincoln have?**

A – Quality of life is a big draw – that is why she relocated. In the Bay Area, many people are paying \$24k annual private school tuition for K-12; house prices are soaring; etc. Lincoln sells itself – there is a building interest. Compensation/benefits are key as well – we have to do all we can, to be competitive.

**Q – What are the possibilities of getting more money to attract people to LPD?**

A – Contract will be renegotiated in January – it is clear that we must be competitive to attract – and retain – the best candidates/employees. Pension and medical benefits are key. Studies show that police do not live as long as others (dangerous job, cancer, mental health concerns). Right now, there is no medical, when they retire – including for your family. If you are unable to work and have no medical, this is very worrisome – a bit of security would be a big help. Frankly right now, Omaha is offering more money and better benefits – we must focus on being more competitive in the coming year.

**Q – How many officers do we need?**

A – 368 is the estimated number – right now, we are operating at 40 less than that.

**Q – What about training?**

A – There needs to be a focus on CPUs (skill sets) – continuing education process – not just "once and done". Diversity training, riot training, etc. For example, that is not just something you learn once, and never go over it again. For instance, if there is a planned protest, going over use of force protocols, hand signals (when you cannot hear) – generally being professional and on the same page. We need to continually invent and reinvent ourselves, for instance as regards resources, training, technology, as the world evolves. All situations are different – like a game – no two games are the same – yet you still have a plan; and then the training and resources to adapt as needed. Creative, inventive open minds are a help!

**Q – Do you have an opinion on legalizing pot?**

A – I do have a point of view about reducing prison populations. San Francisco/California legalized it long ago, so she has come from an area where this has already occurred. There really are two subjects in her opinion – legalizing the drug, and incarceration. We hardly ever arrested people for marijuana use – it simply would go nowhere. Her personal feeling is that everyone has a decision to make with regard to both drinking and marijuana – they must regulate themselves. Some people can, and some people can't. For instance, her Mom had a brain tumor, and she begged her Mom to use medical marijuana in order to be more comfortable, and ease her pain – people should have that option. Her Mom chose not to be “altered” in any way – she wanted to be in control; it likely would have made her last several years more comfortable, but she made her choice. Right now, because it is not regulated, there are those who are selling marijuana with very high THC levels – mixing it with hallucinogenics. That's not the idea and it is problematic. Driving while under the influence of any drug or alcohol is a problem. She feels no one should drink – or smoke – and drive. Coming from working the Tenderloin district of SF – the amount of violence involved is the same as any other drug, as regards marijuana. It kills families. People selling weed could do more – and are even offered jobs – but they choose to deal drugs, and families are being ruined. Should we fill our prisons? There has to be a look at why they are selling it, and working to get people off this path. When it seems there are no opportunities, and younger people, particularly in poverty are not being trained for better jobs – they see the “easy money”. We need to change that trajectory.

**Q – What is your dog's name – and have you tried out the dog parks?**

A – Cody is a Shepherd – and the dog parks are wonderful! It is amazing what has been created, and should last a long time.

**Q – Are you familiar with the Mo-Pac Trail that runs through ECCO? She deferred the question to Captain Mayde McGuire**

A – (from Capt. McGuire). A lot of the trails/parks didn't have a lot of LPD presence. Horses and dirt bikes have been her (Capt. McGuire's) job. There are some situations where people have been accosted on the trails. A police presence helps – and they are looking at electric dirt bikes – Harley Davidsons. This should be a help. The downtown team has a bike unit. There are two officers on mountain bikes at night who can ride the trails. A difficulty is that people don't know exactly where they are on the trail, when they call in with a problem – we want to be able to get to them quickly. Some people get lost for instance, in Wilderness Park. They are incorporating w/dispatch to pinpoint signs along the way – mile markers. The City is working to get new signage up. The Chief of Police complained to the Mayor – and Parks & Recreation is working on it, starting w/Wilderness Park.

**Q – You said something earlier – unsolicited suggestion – about soccer – can you tell us more?**

A – I played women's soccer team at college level – why not a professional women's soccer team in Lincoln? She is interacting in connection w/UNL to get younger women in Lincoln more involved, starting neighborhood programs – helping to engage “children at risk”. Like any sport, soccer is a great bridge – she wants to empower captains to have their own robust community engagement plans. Soccer is just one idea.

**Q – We read that there are a lot of stressors on police officers when dealing with mental health situations. Will they start working with the mental health dept. or social workers, when you see escalation occur?**

A – LPD has been doing this for a very long time – in fact, there is one person who has handled this for years. They continuously track people who rise to this level, where they need to pay attention (potential for violence or hurting themselves). Dispatch has been handling this – and the current trend is to have

the psychologists in 9-1-1 centers, instead of dispatching an officer. Put the psych expert on the phone (we have one with a Masters – 2 undergrads). This saves resources for other emergency dispatching, providing resources at that level. When officers do go – the training in place right now – crisis intervention training/time and distance (no rushing in) – not approaching until I can talk you down a bit – are part of the continuous training. What works? We are working with clinicians to determine that. We don't know when we go to a scene, if it is a mental health issue – some are getting hurt now – not necessarily successful. She wants LPD to be good partners with the team that is there to help. Safety is the most important thing – it can work – but need to move away from the idea that we are there to be the “heavy hand” – we do a better job than we get credit for.

**Q – It is unfortunate that the advocacy for building more social services got intertwined with “defunding” police – need to do it all.**

A – She agrees – but we also are responsible for what has happened in history. What was our part in history? We have to face that fact, and so does everyone else. Law enforcement was the heavy hand for someone – we were used to being the “the enforcer” – we must more professional today. For example, with a stolen car situation, instead of the former protocol of rushing in and engaging in a punching match, we have to use a different approach of subduing/de-escalating the situation. The use of force is ugly! We have to “own” what we have done in our history, and answer for it. Bridging the gap – will continue to evolve. The importance of law enforcement is still there.

- For example, in old times, parents would come up to the police with their children and say, “If you get into trouble or are ‘bad’, the police will deal with you.” Instead of making police the “bad guys” or someone to fear, we want to be the one they come up to, to say hello. This is a transition. We actually have people call us, because their child won't go to bed!

**Q – How do you think policing will change in Lincoln as a result of BLM (Black Lives Matter)?**

A – We are working toward becoming more diverse as a force. For example, when I worked in the Tenderloin, it was very diverse – we needed to mirror the diversity in the community in order to become effective. The ability for the organization to be fair, based on race, because it is happening internally as well, is critically important. We must have an ongoing conversation with regard to race in Lincoln – about everyone being at the table. We need to continue to celebrate diversity. I have been well-supported in this regard. I was reading the history of Lincoln, and was amazed to see that in the late 1890's, there were two Black police officers in Lincoln – I asked for research about this. We need to understand our history as a City, and are researching this. There should be zero tolerance for biased behavior – we did many reforms in SF regarding both implicit and explicit bias – biased individuals will no longer work for LPD representing this uniform.

- This can be a hard question, because things evolve. I am getting to know and understand Lincoln. When I come back – ask me that question again!!!

**Q – A comment from the group – Since you love our trails, and are researching some diversity points, just letting you know that our first female Mayor (Helen Boosalis), made sure that the railroads left the land for the trails, when they pulled out tracks.**

A – Additional comments from Chief Ewins. She has to attend another meeting, so could not have dinner with us – and mentioned “Cheat Fridays” – where she eats pizza – next time, she will sit down and have a meal with us. She believes in being a good human being and holding people accountable. LPD cannot solve problems without collaboration from the community. We have to have drive and purpose to find long-term solutions to historical problems – not just slapping on Band-Aids. She tends to get a lot of

people involved – anyone that can help. We have a small number of officers – they cannot be everywhere – the community must be involved.

**Q – You mentioned we currently have 368 officer positions – and 40 open positions – is that enough for City of Lincoln?**

A – I would like to add 100 positions – we are just kind of surviving right now. There is a great deal of overtime for extracurricular situations. There is more violence right now – people are “agitated”, for instance, due to the COVID situation. The LPD officers can feel it. “I don’t want to wear a mask,” vs. “I don’t want to made sick by those who don’t wear masks,”.

### **Questions for Capt. Mayde McGuire**

**Q – Cars going up and down O and Vine Streets are very loud!**

A – In October, we began concentrating completely on O Street – trying to identify the same people with the same defective, out-of-market mufflers. They are working with DMV to do vehicle inspections. With regard to tickets, these individuals a making a choice, and need to pay for those decisions. It is not fair to the citizens who live near these areas, with regard to their quality of life. Just writing tickets is not the answer – they just go to a different parking lot/area. NSP (NE State Patrol) has “fixit” tickets – and this can become a warrant, if not complied with. Trying to collaborate w/NSP with these tickets and/or fines, to compel people to change. There is some overlap now as well, with the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> shift (11 PM “crossover”), where the officers are concentrating completely on O Street, to try to resolve this issue. They take pictures while they are in unmarked cars – the individual gets the ticket the next day – the evidence is being collected, so it is extra work and overtime devoted to this problem. They would like to work on something else – it is using a great deal of resources, that could be concentrated elsewhere.

**Q – What about using radar on 40<sup>th</sup> or 42<sup>nd</sup> and Apple Streets?**

A – We are working on getting a grant to get a speed trailer. The current one is very large, and cannot easily be placed in the neighborhood. This can also become a “whack a mole” issue, trying to catch speeders. There are a lot of streets, yet only 6 officers in the NE quadrant. We have purchased a new building for the future NE station, at 5201 R Street (near Fresh Thyme parking lot). This is now a “hang-out” for the O Street “cruisers”. They had an officer read off license numbers, call the registered owners to come to the station, and issued “no trespassing” tickets.

**Q – What area does the station serve on 27<sup>th</sup> & Holdrege?**

A – This is the Center Team station, at 1501 North 27<sup>th</sup>. It serves the area from 27<sup>th</sup> north and south to O, including downtown. In 2001, this station was put in to clean up the area. It doesn’t necessarily serve ECCO – the current ECCO-serving station is in Uni Place, by Walgreens (49<sup>th</sup> & Huntington).

**Q – Who will be serving for a while, when you are on leave?**

A – Capt. Max Hubka will take over – Capt. McGuire is taking family leave – her wife is pregnant, and the new baby should arrive in the next few weeks.

### **Business Meeting**

Introduction of Board members

President’s Report

- Recognition of and thanks to neighborhood volunteers who have helped with projects:
  - ✓ Newsletter – Rebecca Carr, Mary Belka, Newsletter volunteers
  - ✓ Website – Danielle Shea, Donnette Thayer

- ✓ Annual meeting drinks – Tom Madsen
- ✓ Board members
- Overview of past year's projects & issues
  - ✓ Spring Clean Up – Tom Madsen, coordinator
    - 720 lbs metal recycled, 2 tires
    - 400 lbs Goodwill Challenge items collected
    - 750 lbs Document shredding
  - ✓ 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade – Paul Johnson & Mary Belka, coordinators
    - Robert Bienhoff – Safety cones & vests
    - Valentino's, Ayres & Ayres – Business sponsors/contributors
    - Roger Hochstetler, Judy & Kevin Welch, Jim King, Gale Warrant, Lisa Warren, Lynne Nevin + Bennie Shobe (Council member) – Volunteers
- August NWU Lend-A-Hand neighborhood Projects & MoPac Trail litter pick up – Eric Hunt & Paul Johnson, coordinators
- Yard of the Month – new signs & postings – Teri Oreda-Hubka
- ECCO on Facebook

#### Treasurer's Report

- Annual Budget, including annual dues @ \$25

#### Election of Board Members

- Board positions up for re-election/election – slate presented
  - ✓ Robert Bienhoff
  - ✓ Eric Hunt
  - ✓ Teri Oreda-Hubka
  - ✓ Vicki Rokeby (new member – replacing Sally Ruggia-Haden)
  - ✓ Janelle Lamb (new member – replacing Doug Gibbs)

**Motion by Richard Sutton to accept and vote for the slate as presented. Seconded. Motion carried unanimously.**

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by M. Belka, Secretary

**Next Board meeting – Thursday November 11 @ New Hope Methodist Church @ 6:30 PM**