

**Vermilion City Council**  
**HEALTH & SAFETY COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Of September 15, 2025**

**In Attendance:** Vermilion City Council: John Gabriel, Council President; Gary Howell, Council at Large; Pat West, Ward One; Greg Drew, Ward Two; Drew Werley, Ward Three; Jeff Lucas, Ward Four; Melanie Wood, Clerk of Council; Dannin Strittmather, Assistant Clerk of Council. Absent: Brian Holmes, Ward Five.

**Administration:** Jim Forthofer, Mayor; Amy Hendricks, Finance Director; Tony Valerius, Service Director; Chris Howard; City Engineer; Chris Hartung, Police Chief; Bill Brown, Fire Chief;

Call to Order: Drew Werley, Vice Chairman, RESOLVED THAT this Health & Safety Committee comprised of the committee of the whole does now come to order.

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**TOPIC ONE: Fire Chief's Report**

Chief Brown presented his report to the Vermilion City Council as follows:

***Fire Chief's Report – September 2025***

***Monthly Incidents***

1. 32 calls for service in August.
2. 251 calls for the year, 28% increase from 2024. With 29% of the calls EMS related.

EMS	72
Lift Assist	21
MVA	27
Natural Gas	23
Structure Fire	17
CO Alarm/Incident	15
Alarms	28
Other	51

***Personnel***

1. Throughout the last three weeks, six potential new hires were interviewed by myself and other members of the Command Staff. With today being their first official day on the books, pending physical, drug screen and background check; we welcome five new members:
2.
  - a. Jacob Michalak
  - b. Braxton Martinez
  - c. Jessica Thomas
  - d. Beau Benesh
  - e. Caleb German

Both Jacob and Braxton are currently enrolled in Tri-C's firefighter academy. Of the five new hires, four of them are recent high school grads! Our average age went from 41 to 37.

3. Lieutenant Mike Frisky, who works full time as a dispatcher with VPD, is enrolled in a Certified Fire Safety Inspectors class through BGSU and will become our 8<sup>th</sup> inspector in the department.

***Training***

1. We are gearing up for a Firefighter 2 class for 7-9 of our members. We will be doing the class through the Lorain County Fire Chief's Association but conducting the class at Vermilion.

## *New Ladder Truck*

- Currently, we are accepting bids for the new truck. We are expecting four manufacturers to submit a bid, and we've asked them to supply those by August 31.
- After we receive them, the committee will select the best two bids and meet further with those manufacturers to make the final selection.
- The committee narrowed the choices down to Sutphen, based in Columbus and Pierce from Appleton, Wisconsin. This week we will meet with the Pierce rep and go through the specifications. Next week we will sit down with Sutphen to do the same.
- The committee would like to make a recommendation for purchase no later than October 1.

## Miscellaneous

1. We currently have four "engines", with ISO requiring three. There was a plan to eliminate Engine 84 which is twenty-four years old. However, after a routine inspection of Engine 81, which is nineteen years old, the plan to eliminate Engine 84 has taken a turn. Engine 81 failed its inspection last week due to severely rusted frame rails. We are currently looking at options to either repair or sell the truck. We have a slim hope that the frame rails that are rusted are possibly still under warranty.
2. The Ohio Fire Chief's Association has begun its feasibility study regarding EMS operations in the city. Members of the study group will be on-site October 8 to talk with me and others as needed.
3. Currently, I am putting together a great deal of data that will be used in the study ranging from response times, training, standard operating guidelines, and types of calls we respond to. Additionally, there will be data that we need to get from Lifecare in terms of their billing and response. Again, I want to make it clear that this feasibility study is not due to any issues with our EMS provider, nor will the findings be binding in any way. Simply, this study is being used as a tool for planning for the future. A future that may still have the city contracting with a third party for its EMS coverage.
4. Monday, October 6, will be our annual open house at the Douglas Street station. The station's doors will be open from 6pm-8pm, with displays, hot dogs, and other fire safety demonstrations.

J. Lucas asked once a choice is selected for the fire truck, what is the average time to get the truck. Chief Brown answered Sutphen is about 22-24 months out and Pierce is 3-4 years. The United States Senate just had a meeting with fire truck manufacturers because there have been some issues with a group that has obtained many fire truck manufacturers, and they are allegedly holding parts and things like that hostage, so the Senate met with them to talk it out. Fire trucks used to be around 18 months and now if you get anything before two years, you are lucky. G. Howell asked why there was such a big difference between the two manufacturers – if they are built differently. Chief Brown answered they are built differently in some ways, especially the ladder components themselves but Pierce is the busiest manufacturer and Sutphen is a little more local, so their reach isn't nationwide. J. Gabriel asked if the potential purchase from Pierce would help with the warranty situation on the other vehicle. Chief Brown said he would hope, going through the book for the truck, it talks about a limited lifetime warranty on the frame rails, and it goes into other things. The bottom line is Pierce is going to have to look at the truck and tell them yes or no.

**TOPIC TWO: Police Chief's Report**

Chief Hartung reported the active shooter training has been rescheduled to October 21 or October 22 from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at Sailorway Middle School. If anyone from council would like to come they are welcome.

Wednesday, September 24, 2025, at 6:15 p.m. will be the blue mass at Saint Mary's Church. It is a fantastic function, he and Bill were there last year, and he recommends it if anyone would like to come it is a really excellent thing they do for them.

He requested legislation discussion for the next administrative assistant for the Chief of Police be placed on the October Legislative Committee Meeting to outline the benefits and salary range. The written portion of the chief's test is the 29<sup>th</sup> of this month and the oral board is the following Monday on October 6<sup>th</sup>. Crystal retires at the end of the year so they are running out of time and need to know what the benefits will be so they can get the position filled. Once they select a person, they will need council to move the legislation forward.

Congratulations to dispatcher Katie Lulovics who gave birth to a son, and they are both doing good.

J. Lucas asked with respect to the testing dates, when does he forecast the results. Chief Hartung said it will be when the Civil Service Commission comes together to certify the results. They will score the written exam and then they will score the oral board and will compile the list and put the seniority and efficiency points in and then the Civil Service Commission will certify the list and then they will have an answer. It really comes down to the time Civil Service gets it to the time Civil Service can get together and certify the results. He is hoping it is sooner rather than later, but it just depends on their schedules.

**TOPIC THREE: Flock Safety Camera Presentation**

Chief Hartung said this has always been a hope and desire for Sergeant Holmes to have and he has definitely used this to some great effect. He then turned the presentation over to Sergeant Holmes.

Sergeant Holmes said he was here a month ago and the topic of the Flock cameras came up and at that time there were conversations about a presentation to council. He introduced Kyle Downs from Flock Safety and Sergeant Griffin from Amherst Police Department who has a very similar demographic in crime statistics and size of the city and department. They are currently using Flock so he can answer any questions regarding day-to-day usage and he presented council with a document that has a brief summary of some of the Flock use with the city.

Kyle Downs with Flock Safety began his presentation stating they have had some success already because their cameras are all on a network of 5,000 communities strong and growing. They started in 2017 and got into the Ohio market in 2021, and they work with 430 agencies across Ohio with 7,500 cameras that are already active in the state. They have done a lot of work on their development and since 2017 they did a study on what their technology has been able to do for the impact of crime across the nation. The company has been growing, and they have over 1,000 employees and are continuing to develop each year.

The camera they are talking about specifically for the City of Vermilion is the license plate reading camera which is called the Falcon, and it is not the typical bullet camera. A lot of times these will be stationed on the road, and you will drive past and not even know what it is. It doesn't stick out; it is designed that way. What is great is that it is a solar powered camera so there is no structure needed, and you can put them pretty much anywhere. He and Sergeant Holmes have worked on a deployment plan with some of the locations for the city's main thoroughfares where they can continue to gather as much evidence for the police department as possible. Seven out of ten crimes usually have a vehicle attached to them and so if you are able to give an investigator or detective some type of license plate to go off of. At that point in time, they are able to do their job and it will help them solve the case. They have done this for armed robbery, missing people, residential

burglary, you name it no crime is too big or too small for Flock in terms of the protection their license plate readers will give them.

The cameras are not facial recognition, they do not capture speed, they do not have any personal identifying information other than the back of the vehicle. As the car drives past the camera, they are taking an image of the back of that vehicle and based on the AI machine learning they have built with their camera system, the camera is able to pick up different points of details from the data to be able to determine if it is a red Chevy Silverado 1500 for example. The way they started is that their CEO was having issues with packages being stolen from his front porch. He had a ring camera, and it would show the vehicle, but it didn't have a license plate attributed to it. The vehicle fingerprinting is really helpful because what the police are then able to do – say the vehicle of interest is a black pickup truck. They can then go into the system and search for a black pickup truck, and it will show all the license plates that are attributed to a black pickup truck in the area. It is important because there might be 10,000-15,000 images and now just doing that one filter will drop it down to 75 cars and then from there they might be able to enter an identifying bumper sticker so it would then drop it down to five images. Now they have five real vehicles they can attribute to what they are looking at and then run the tags through their own system outside of Flock. They can't go in and type a person's name and pull up a car. It just shows license plates. They are attached to the NCIC list, the NCMPC list which is the amber alert system, and they have the ability to create different alerts based off of local crime. If there is a vehicle that does something in Vermilion, they will be able to put the vehicle on the list and all the cameras on the network would look for that specific license plate when they drive by and then would alert the vehicle of interest and where it was located.

Flock as the provider handles all of the installation, all the servicing, troubleshooting, and technical support. There is one subscription fee paid on an annual basis which takes care of all the cameras and all the software. He gave all the numbers to Sergeant Holmes. What it is designed to do is make it easy as possible for the law enforcement agencies to continue operating and do what they do best and let Flock take care of anything that happens with the cameras.

There are 430 law enforcement agencies who use Flock in Ohio. Vermilion is in the northern part of the state and there are cameras in Toledo and Cleveland with a lot of travel going on to and from and a lot of crime that happens during that, so they work with Cleveland and Toledo. They also work with Akron. Locally to Vermilion, they work with Lorain, Huron, Sandusky, Amherst, Norwalk, Oberlin, and Avon Lake. All the surrounding communities have the system, and Vermilion does not have it. Criminals know exactly what the cameras look like so when they are going to do nefarious activities a lot of the times they are looking at locations they can get away with that by not having the cameras, the city is on an island. What they are hoping to do is get the city plugged into the network and have the cameras on the main thoroughfares so they can collect as much investigative evidence so the investigators can do what they need to do.

An example of Flock camera use was a 7-year-old boy who was hurt in an Akron hit and run. They basically ran the vehicle description through Flock, and they were able to determine the tag they were looking for which was quickly identified and then they were able to track it to the resident's house. When they went to the resident's house at that point in time the owner admitted to the crime and that was solved. If anything happens at any of the retail locations, a theft comes in and they have vehicle description as well they can run that through the system and the detective can do a "hot list" or a "BOLO" so once something did happen, they take the hit, even if it is two cities over it could hit as well. A recent incident went all the way up to Detroit and they initiated the traffic stop and arrested the driver. No matter the crime they can handle it and a lot of times there is not a lot of evidence to go off of so they give the police department and investigators enough of the actual evidence and you will see a safer community with crime rates going down and the community will thrive.

J. Lucas said with respect to how it obtains the images, what is the frequency by which it can snap photos so if you have two cars that are in very close proximity, do you get them both? K. Downs answered it is a dual lens camera so it will take pictures in two lanes and if they are both traveling it will snap the images at the same

time. They also have a long-range camera that can handle three lanes. They are motion sensed and once it picks up the motion it takes about nine images in the one picture and then from there derives the best curated image of the back of the vehicle.

J. Gabriel said he noticed there was no third party – is it off limits to anyone outside law enforcement? K. Downs said the way the system operates is that each individual officer will have their own login through their police department. Once an officer runs a search, they have to have a reason to run a search. They have to enter the type of case they are working on and then a case number is attributed to it, and both of those pieces of data have to be input to be able to run the search. That leaves an audit trail for the administrator to see the searches each officer does and the reasons and cases they are attributed to. They don't share their data, and they do not own it, the city would own their own data they are basically facilitating the software, the application and the camera system and then all the data is theirs to do what they want to with it. The data stays on the system for 30 days and the reason for that is as a live investigation there is not really a need to have any more than 30 days of data on that system at one time. If they needed it for a case that is dragging out further at that point in time they can download it to the city servers but Flock would delete it at that point in time. They are trying to get as much information for the people that are visiting your city so that everyone knows the people who came in and in what vehicle at what time so if there is an occurrence at that point in time, they can say they know the person was here based on the image taken.

P. West asked if the information was available just to the person at the desk, or how would they get a hold of the information – is it on their computers? K. Downs said anyone who has a log-in to the system would be able to pull it up on their laptop and see the application and run the searches if you are granted that permission. P. West asked if you could do as many searches as you want, or is there a certain number before you are charged. K. Downs answered there are roles or departments that may not need a level of application where they can create alerts, it may just be that they can do searches. You can make permissions based off of roles within the account. If he wants someone to be able to access the entire system that is the super admin user, detectives may be able to do searches and set up alerts and a patrolman may just be able to do searches. It depends on the permissions and role needed in the software.

G. Drew said to expand on the President's question and to make sure they are all on the same page – if we get 10 cameras, all the images belong to the city. In order for any other law enforcement agency to see the pictures, the administrator of Flock which would probably be the Sergeant would have to share that with select law enforcement agencies. Vermilion Police Department will have the sole discretion to share that information with the entities it chooses to share it with, not Flock. K. Downs said that is correct. We are all familiar with Facebook and just like you get a friend request and you can accept or deny it the same thing in the application another department might want to access your cameras and at that point in time they can send a request and the admin would be able to either approve that or deny it based on whatever reasons they have. Flock will not manage that; it will be on the Police Department all they are doing is facilitating the technology and the equipment.

J. Lucas asked what the backup plan is – do they have separate locations for the drives or servers? K. Downs said everything is stored on the cloud, they use the government version of AWS, and everything is stored there. They do not store anything locally and they have different certifications and insurance they have gone through to make sure they have everything protected.

G. Drew asked if he was familiar with the reports for when Flock gets audited and asked him to expand. K. Downs explained there are different penetrations they will do, and they will run tests on how easy it would be to breach your information. They have to have a certain standard of it, and they go through that on a yearly basis and so they have a completely separate department of Flock to make sure they have everything accurate at that point to continue operation.

Russ Owens of 5161 Portage Drive said they talked about the neighboring cities, what about the counties? Does Lorain County and Erie County have the same kind of program? K. Downs said he just worked with Sandusky

County and they had 30 cameras installed last month and the way they operate is all the cameras are on the same network and the reason that is important is because crime doesn't just stay inside the city so if someone goes from here to Sandusky County and the sergeant put in an alert, Sandusky County would now get that alert along with you all because they operate on the same network. R. Owens said his question is if Lorain County is part of this program and it has cameras, are there certain roads where it would be duplicitous where we would have cameras and they would have cameras. K. Downs said they have taken a look at all their cameras in the area of the city, and they have gone through a mapping which they can share. What they usually look at is a deployment plan of the county or the city depending on the agency they are working with and what they do is pull up the google image of the city and then they have different identified pins of the existing locations they already have a camera on and from there they are working with the department on what the most traveled roads are. Typically, they look at a perimeter approach and if they have a camera on every road that comes into Vermilion, now they have every car that is going to come into the city. They do their due diligence to make sure cameras are not duplicated. R. Owens asked if the State Highway Patrol has this type of system. K. Downs said they are working on a deal with the Ohio State Patrol. They don't have it right now, they have access to it but they don't have their own cameras because basically there is a little bit of a nuance with an interstate DOT permit verse a DOT permit outside of the interstate, so they are working through some of those things. R. Owens asked how the county determines where the Flock cameras go. K. Downs answered you can do a number of things such as the most traveled roads where you will get the most images of license plates so they have the largest amount of data to be able to search on or if there are specific pockets where you have a lot of crime – you might put a camera over there to capture people who might be a part of the cases you might have. R. Owens said before implementing, they check with the county to see where their cameras are. K. Downs answered absolutely, Erie County is getting ready to add five cameras their deployment and based on that, they looked at the existing coverage and some of the other cities in Erie County and then at that point in time they determined there were still a couple different thoroughfares they needed to cover to make sure there was visibility where they needed it. R. Owens asked how the cost is derived – what is the formula? K. Downs answered there is a software application, the hardware itself, since they are maintaining it they do the technical support and then the development side of it and they update the cameras every so often as well which is all built into the subscription which is \$3,000 per camera on an annual basis. R. Owens asked if it was that cost regardless if it was mining data from that particular camera or not. K. Downs answered yes, to make sure it is online it is \$3,000 annually.

Homer Taft said he originally planned to express his original reservations after all the speakers on the subject, but it is probably fair to talk about it while the Flock representative is here. He has no doubt that Flock has proven very useful and it is certainly appropriate and legal to observe what goes on in public spaces and it is certainly appropriate to use it to solve serious crimes. But folks, big brother is watching, and the systems not only can be but have been abused. He would encourage every member of council to go to the American Civil Liberties Union – an organization which he is not always entirely in sympathy, but they have some very informative information about license plate cameras, camera observation, and Flock Safety in particular. Let us understand that Flock safety is a private company. That is good and that is bad. It is good because they are able to be nimble and innovate and do a lot of things. It is bad because the data is owned not by you, but by them. There have been reports by American Civil Liberties Union that Flock safety being an international company shares some of that data internationally including some nations that might not be so entirely friendly to us. We have to be very concerned about this can be appropriately locked down and bluntly to look at the other side of it. Systems like this have been used to find out where your husband or your girlfriend or whatever has been this week. It has also been reported by ACLU that they keep the data forever. If they keep it for only 30 days, that is right, but a lot of cities will put it under contract they can only keep it for seven and then it has to be destroyed because if this information gets into the wrong hands even once can cause significant problems. He wrote down a couple of quotes that the Flock Safety representative said. He said, “no crime is too big or too small”. Really? Someone speeding down the road – a lot of people don't like speed cameras or red-light cameras now but if someone is speeding down the road and we are going to do a nation-wide search for them – is that the appropriate thing for us to be doing? They said there is no ID of persons yet, what happened? If you look at Sergeant Holmes report on page 3, it mentions the event that two individuals were observed in a Flock camera and one of them was observed to have glasses on and that helped them identify the 16-year old involved

and there is a copy of the picture in there from the Flock camera that was used for personal identification purposes in that particular instance in this city. This is something they need to go really slow on and if they get into it have experts and lockdowns to make sure it will not and more importantly cannot be abused. He would hope they take this over a long time with a deep breath and really dig into it.

K. Downs said he appreciated what was mentioned today. He reiterated that Flock does not own the data, and they have no interest in the data itself. What they want to be able to do is provide detecting sensors that will give the data to be able to do the pertinent investigations that are needed at the public safety level. The idea of Flock to take all the license plate reads and sell them to someone else – their idea is they want to be able to sell cameras across the nation, so everyone is working together and collaborating with police and protect and solve as much as possible. One of the things he mentioned before the meeting started is they just had their 1,050th case of someone that was missing being able to be brought home based on the fact that they had Flock technology deployed in their city. He thinks there is a lot of good that comes from what they do. They have checkpoints and barriers within the application like the audit reports. Each person who does any search would have the information on what was searched. If he was always going into the records and searching for a red truck that was his ex-girlfriends, there would be behavior patterns they would be able to mitigate. He thinks it happens very rarely but at the end of the day, it can happen, so it is a valid statement. There are so many cameras in Ohio and different successes that have happened. What they are all trying to accomplish is that if there is something that does happen, we as a community have all the necessary tools to make sure the outcome is best as possible.

Sergeant Griffin from Amherst Police Department stated he oversees the detective bureau and has for the past five years. Scott reached out a couple weeks ago to ask him to speak about Flock and he said absolutely because they have seen it be a huge success in their city. Looking at Vermilion and Amherst, they are close in size, and he thinks Vermilion's population is around 11,000 and Amherst is around 14,000. They partnered with Flock in 2023, and they have a little over two years utilizing the software. He has seen Flock be a success and help reduce the investigative times and waits. The city of Amherst currently has 12 cameras and as they have discussed they have been chosen to where they go. Amherst borders Lorain and Lorain has 52 cameras. When they installed them, they looked at the City of Lorain to see where their cameras are and tie into some of their cameras to catch vehicles coming and going. They also partner with Lowes, which has a private company that has cameras throughout the state they are able to tie into at the shopping plaza. Some of their cameras are solar and some are direct and if you don't have infrastructure in a location where you want to install them you can go the solar route. In Amherst Police Department they have different roles and permissions assigned to each user, but in general they have 592 different networks they are able to tie into if they are investigating someone across the state. They have a 30-day look back window. As was mentioned, 75%-85% of the time, a vehicle is used in the majority of crimes to transport the individuals to or from the crime scenes. If you find the vehicle, you find your suspects and so the first step is finding the vehicle a lot of times. Time spent canvassing for video has diminished – yes security cameras are awesome and reaching out to the community if they have a crime and the citizens sharing their video with them. A lot of time they say if you give us something, a glimpse, or a blurry photo just something to work with it and they can run with it. This is the same thing but better. They can take a security video and notice it is a dark 4-door sedan and if they have a Flock camera exiting that neighborhood or down the road, they can go right to that Flock camera and tie it in even quicker. With the Flock camera you will also get vehicle identifiers such as bumper stickers, damage, plates, anything that will stick out and help them find the vehicles. They have had success with major crimes, shooting incidents, robberies, attempted robberies, and recently had success with some pursuits they had to terminate due to reckless operation of the operator.

Recently they had a motorcycle take off on one of their officers and he wasn't able to get the plate, or close enough to get characteristics. On Flock camera, they were able to see what the gentleman was wearing, the bike plate, bookbag, and tattoos were all able to be seen on the camera to tie in who the suspect was they were looking for. Minor day to day uses could be hit-skip accidents, retail thefts, missing persons including elderly people or juveniles. They can also set alerts proactive alerts or a "Hot List" and can enter the vehicle plate and if the person has a warrant when it hits your Flock camera you will be notified. They are seeing the notifications

take less than 10 seconds so as soon as that vehicle passes a camera the dispatchers and officers on duty are getting a notification that the vehicle is in their city and is associated with a certain crime or individual. It is no secret that the City of Vermilion and Amherst share a border with the City of Lorain with a higher crime index and it is no secret that criminals will travel to commit crimes. They are able to work with other agencies and connect a lot of crimes. Last year, a North Carolina Sheriff's Office reached out to them to say they had a known sex offender who was recently there hanging around city pools and city gyms and would approach juvenile females. A detective ran him on Flock, and he was hitting in the City of Amherst, and they pushed it out and the next day Elyria Police Department where the gentleman approached a 14-year-old girl and the vehicle matched the description, and they were able to take him into custody shortly after. It shows that without that little bit of information from North Carolina they probably would have never known who this individual was but with Flock they were able to put the pieces together.

Cameras can also be used for traffic analytics if you are counting cars or traffic on the road in a given timeframe, it can be looked up if the Street Department or Mayor is interested in that.

Organizational audits have been touched on and the way they have it set up is their officers need a reason and a case number to do a search. With that audit you can do end-of-the-year reports or quarterly reports, and the information would be at the chief's fingertips. When they originally released it, they partnered with Flock, and they have a transparency portal and media releases they can help with to let the community know what the cameras are being used for.

Some questions they had regarding who the information is available to – they have five roles assigned. They have administrators, investigators, supervisors, patrol, and dispatch. They have it set up, so their admin, investigators, and supervisors are able to enter “hot list” vehicles and their patrol and dispatchers are able to receive the alerts and do searches.

J. Lucas said with respect to the analytics he spoke about the data entry where reasons for access free flow or a drop-down menu with specific reasons? Sergeant Griffin answered that each organization can create it. They have their set, so the individual enters the criteria and then the case number signed to it. You can also have free flow if you want.

J. Gabriel asked their retention period. Sergeant Griffin answered 30 days on the cloud if it turns to a case, it follows their retention schedule as far as evidence for a case.

K. Downs said the transparency portal can be displayed on the website but they will work with the police department to have a LPR policy and what that does is each one of the agencies who use it outlines how it will be used and then from there it can be displayed online and also can see how the police department is using the technology.

Sergeant Holmes said he would answer any questions as well and they will have a policy that will be regulated and there will be administrators and safeguards against it. He has checked with other agencies around. State Route 60 in Erie County already has a camera between Route 2 and Sailorway Drive northbound so there is no reason for them to put a camera on Route 60 so they can move that camera to Sailorway to cover the school complex. There has been a lot of thought to that, and they have concentrated on the arteries along with the Route 6 corridor and the entrances to the city such as Vermilion Road, Sunnyside Road, West River Road. The annual cost would be \$30,000 for 10 cameras and the initial installation cost is \$6,000 so it would be \$36,000 for the first year to have the cameras installed. Flock does all the maintenance and upgrades. If three years from now and a new camera comes out it is included. K. Downs said updates can be done IOS and can be updated while on the field and if for some reason they have developed new technology and they want to add them to the cameras they can replace those and install the new camera at that point.

G. Drew said he would like to add that it would be a great opportunity to reach out to the school board and see if they are willing to join them to add an additional couple of cameras to benefit them to piggyback off of ours.

Maybe they will buy 14 and make an agreement with them to reimburse the costs. Most school districts have Flocks on their property, and we have an officer there with an amazing security system so this would just be in addition and he can't imagine them saying no. Let them know what the school says when he comes back with his proposal.

S. Holmes said the Pizza Hut robbery is included in the packet and the small photo is the surveillance camera photo of the back of the vehicle he got from Drug Mart, which is all he had to go on for the plate because you can't read it. The side view of the suspect's vehicle is from the same camera system. With the assistance of other detectives around them he ran the vehicle through the system which gave him eight different vehicles in the area which matched that description at that time of the robbery. In the small picture you can see the small decal in the back of the window which is how they came to the suspect's vehicle. They then tracked the vehicle from Vermilion to Cleveland all the way down to Georgia through Flock Cameras. He spent two days in Georgia and on his way back to Toledo where he was from, Knoxville, Tennessee was alerted they were looking for that vehicle for an armed robbery and that is how he was taken into custody. He had the gun that he used in the robbery when they arrested him in Knoxville. He is now being charged federally for the armed robbery of our Pizza Hut. It is going to be a huge benefit.

P. West asked who owns the copyright of the information that is obtained. K. Downs answered Vermilion will, Flock does not own the data, they simply store it for the city and then delete it after 30 days. What they do with that information and that data is up to the city because they own the data. Sergeant Holmes said it is a 21-century tool just like drones became a tool. P. West said the information they get they can keep. Sergeant Holmes said, for example, Flock deleted the photos from the Pizza Hut robbery 30 days after the robbery, and the car is no longer in the system. He downloaded the photo from the system because he had an armed robbery case prior to the 30 days. It is in his hard drive now for his case investigation and the same thing with the shooting on Brownhelm Station Road. They use it for small cases as well such as a dog that was abandoned in one of the neighborhoods and they were charged with abandonment. This will alert them to stolen vehicles entering or leaving the city and being able to track them as well.

Chief Hartung said the retention would be outlined in their records retention schedule and once everything is put in place, they would make a determination how long they want to keep data. In this day and age with youtubers and public records, the shorter the better is usually preferred. Once they have it determined, they will have it approved through the records commission and then it would be submitted to the Ohio Historical Society to approve the retention schedule.

D. Werley said he had just received the packet before the meeting, so he browsed through it really quickly. They ran a free trial with Flock back in 2023, why wasn't that pursued? Chief Hartung answered they looked into Flock in the beginning, and they came in and did the presentation. At that time, obviously there are tremendous investigative benefits but something the thing that is hard about being Chief is you have to be the bubble popper when taking a look at these things. At that time the quote they had represented 10% of his operating budget he uses to run the police department yearly. He has been through the era of cutting costs to the bone, so he is always forecasting risk for how he is going to budget for the next three to five years. At the time he was given the quote for it, he didn't think it was economically feasible based on the budget he had, so he never presented it to council.

Mayor Forthofer said the administration would like to prepare an ordinance or legislation summarizing what has been presented tonight for council's consideration so they will proceed with working something up unless there is some objection to that.

#### **TOPIC FOUR:        VPD Station Construction Update**

Mayor Forthofer said the under-construction Vermilion Police Department is on Douglas Street which is out of the way for most people which accounts for why he gets so many questions on how the police station is coming. He wanted to take a few minutes to summarize where they are with the construction of the Vermilion

Police Station. He wants to address why it is taking so long which is a question he asks frequently. He was used to the construction of the Vermilion Fire Station, which is a beautiful building and a great use to the Fire Department but in actuality it is a big garage with some offices and a conference room inside. The Police Station he found is something different. Almost every component of it is regulated by somebody. Everything from the dispatch to the evidence room to the weapons storage to holding to the interview rooms. It is not quite as easy as constructing a garage, it takes a lot more detail. Add to that the timing where they were supposed to start putting in footers when it rained for about four months in a row which put them behind also. Now it is up and going and if you take an opportunity to drive down Douglas Street, you will see the walls are up and he asked the Service Director and the City Engineer to detail where they actually were on the construction.

T. Valerius said regarding the building, currently all the exterior walls are up, and all the floors are poured. The underground electric and plumbing are completed. Carpenters will be on site Wednesday to install the sill boards on top of the walls and then the trusses are scheduled to be delivered early next week, and installation will begin shortly thereafter. Once the trusses are up, they were told it is go time and they will be like ants inside with the different installations. Mayor Forthofer said it is his understanding that once it is enclosed it will start rolling pretty fast. At this point, he checked with the Finance Director today and they have no indication they are anywhere but on budget with the \$4.6 million authorized by council. It may be delayed but is proceeding close to as planned.

D. Werley said he thinks it was about two months ago he had asked specifically in regard to what he put in the paper that soon they will have a 6,000 square foot police station and he had asked if the number was accurate and he still has not received a response. Mayor Forthofer said it is accurate, he checked before and checked after publishing it, but they are about 6,000, maybe a little under. D. Werley said just under is what he has found, and he said they are on budget with the \$4.6 million so his question is why he told council immediately before they voted on that project that they would be getting a 7,500 square foot building at \$4.6 million. Mayor Forthofer said he would be glad to clear up the councilman's confusion. D. Werley said he is not confused; that is what he said. Mayor Forthofer said it is proposed a building be a certain way for instance the Fire Department was given an authorization for \$4 million and it was supposed to have a three-story training feature outside with several outbuildings and a fully equipped gym but the responsibility of the administration is to manage the project to fit within the budget approved by council and that is what they have done and why it has gone from 7,500 to 6,000 and still within budget and still be a functional station. D. Werley said he has been digging through thousands of pages the last month or so he was given, and he never saw once where there were any design plans at 7,500 square feet, not even within 1,000 square foot of that, it was never designed that way. For some reason they started building a 10,000 square foot building at some point in time but then there were never 7,500. His issue is it would have passed regardless; he is making a big deal about this because he feels like the mayor mislead them, and he says he's confused. They were told immediately before they voted that \$4.6 million is where the bid came in and they are going to get a 7,500 square foot building and then he quoted what Councilman Holmes said and he wishes he was here – for other reasons but “Just like Holmes said we are done with our wants, we are down to just our needs. If we go any smaller than this, we might as well not move forward with the project” and that is when he was selling them on a 7,500 square foot building during the presentation. He is not sure how the mayor can say he is confused as to why they are getting a sub 6,000 square foot police station now.

Mayor Forthofer said what his confusion may be and then what the responsibility of the administration is. Similar to where you want to build a house and want a jacuzzi in every room and want to build it for a certain amount of money. In the course of implementing it you find out that you can't have a jacuzzi in every room, you have to throw some things out in order to fit the budget that you have and that is what the administration's responsibility is. He asked the City Engineer to explain the 7,500 square foot building. C. Howard said what happened is when they did the RFQs for the design services, the city hired a criteria architect to come up with a budget and size. The 7,500 was in the RFQ when they sent out the qualifications to the firm – it was the baseline assuming it would be \$4 million. When they ran the numbers based on what the city wanted and, in

that criteria, the cost was closer to \$5.6 million so they had to pair the building down to work within the city's budget. The starting point was 7,5000 square feet.

D. Werley said that made sense to him, he understood all that. To use the house analogy, say he is married, and he is talking to his wife about building a 3,000 square foot house and it is going to be \$400,000 and they get with the contractor to design, and they are going to build it. They sign on the dotted line that they are going to spend \$400,000 and it goes out to bid, now it is \$460,000. That's fine they can eat the \$60,000 but they are told it is going to be a 3,000 square foot building and then halfway getting built, it is only a 2,400 square foot building now and that is what he has an issue with. He understands things get paired down, but the mayor came right before this body and told them – and he talks about the duty of the administration, he thinks it is his duty to give honest truthful facts. He knew full well that it was never going to be a 7,500 square foot building before he told council to vote on this because just four months prior he came to the Planning Commission and told them it was going to be 6,000 square foot so his question is why did he tell council they were going to get a 7,500 square foot building if it was only going to be 6,000 square foot?

Mayor Forthofer answered because as the City Engineer described that is what they originally planned and hoped to do, however the reality came to it had to be less due to additional costs and things like that. He doesn't know why this is so confusing. It is a typical administrative job to make something fit within the budget given to them by council. D. Werley said his issue is he should have presented that to them before they voted and told them they had to pair things down and it will be sub 6,000 square feet for \$4.6 million – not that it is going to be 7,5000 square foot and if we go any smaller than this we might as well not do it. Just to find out months down the road it's not even 6,000 square feet. That is the issue, is that he wasn't up front and truthful in telling council right before the legislative body voted to spend \$4.6 million dollars, he believes the mayor willfully mislead them as to what they were getting.

Mayor Forthofer said his opinion will be duly considered. D. Werley said thank you, he thinks it is still an issue, and he is sad no one else cares about it. It blows his mind. They would have approved it anyways.

Mayor Forthofer said it is possible the other members of council have more experience in this than he does so they understand. D. Werley said experience getting lied to? You told them right before they voted they would be getting a 7,500 square foot building for \$4.6 million knowing full well the plans they were operating under were over a year old before he presented them to council. He had just presented them to the Planning Commission before saying that it was going to be 6,000 square feet so he knew full well that it was never going to be 7,500 square feet, there were never designs made at 7,500 square foot it was never ever going to happen.

Mayor Forthofer said he is somewhat distorting this in the process of how it goes. The plan is to present a plan and ask for the money to pursue the plan. If the plan varies it is their responsibility to adjust it to fit within the budget given to them. He doesn't understand where he comes up with the fact this was lying any more than telling your constituents if you are elected you will give money to the pool or something like that. That might be a better example of lying. D. Werley said the reason why he says it is a lie and he gets plans change is because immediately before they accepted a bid which means they are going to move forward with the project, and he said they were going to build a building at a certain size for a certain amount of money and come to find out it is not even close to what he said it was going to be size wise. So, all those plans changed over a year before he presented it before them to vote for. The last set of architectural designs were from over a year before they accepted that bid, so it is not like these things change, he knew full well it was not going to be that. Mayor Forthofer said if you follow the City Engineer's comment, they could not have gone out to get the bids without the permission from council and the bids that went out were 7,500 square feet which is what they were hoping to do. D. Werley said he had just got the bid packet and they were not 7,500 square feet, he just looked at them today and they were not even close. C. Howard replied those were the design services. That was the RFQ that went out for the design services that said 7,500. D. Werley said sure, but not the bid packet like he just said. C. Howard said it was 5,862 and D. Werley agreed.

Mayor Forthofer said he believes he is trying to distort this for some reason. D. Werley said he just said what was said was wrong and he is still trying to twist it. Mayor Forthofer said apparently, he is not going to let this go. D. Werley said he said he was going to stop but he kept lying. Mayor Forthofer said those who understand this situation know what the process is. D. Werley said then they must be okay with being lied to.

D. Werley adjourned the meeting after no further discussion came before the committee.

*Next Meeting:* October 20, 2025 @ 6:00 p.m. located at the Vermilion Municipal Complex, 687 Decatur Street, Vermilion, Ohio.

*Transcribed by: Melanie Wood, Assistant Clerk of Council (September 16, 2025)*