



MINUTES

June 4, 2025

7:00 p.m.

Albany Fire Department, Ralston Room

Approved: 08/06/2025

Call to Order

Chair Cynthia Greene called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

Roll Call

Members present: Cynthia Greene; Kevin Kreitman; Erik Rau; Katie Pleis; Sheree Speaks-Mahi

Members absent: Nick Fowler, Erik Anderson, Bessie Johnson

Staff present: Captain Jerry Drum (in for Chief Marcia Harnden);
Deputy Chief Kevin Vining (in for Fire Chief Chris LaBelle);
Kate Hennessy, Administrative Assistant

Others present: Brahm Wheeler, Abraham Wheeler

The April 2, 2025, minutes were approved.

Staff Updates:

Police Update – Captain Jerry Drum

Police has hired three dispatchers and one new police officer, as well as four planned overhires to address upcoming retirements and vacancies. They are working on getting more dispatchers, but there is a nationwide shortage of them. Personal crime rates are down from last year, property crime rates are up a little, and drug arrests are going up. Drum reported officers are very motivated to address drug crimes in the community since the repeal of Measure 110. He attributed the lower personal crime rate to increased police presence and interactions, and suggested that the increase in property crimes may be because businesses are reporting shoplifting crimes, but choosing not to prosecute them. Greene asked for the definition of the term "larceny".

There is concern about the overdose rate (the city is currently at seven overdose deaths), but at the rate it is trending, there will be more this year than ever before. Despite the fact there is a lot of Narcan on the streets, it doesn't work on the different kinds of Fentanyl coming into the country. Rau asked about drug court, and Drum responded that it hasn't gone away; the DA's office is picking up more cases, and a lot more people are choosing drug court as an option. Drum said that to get one person clean is significant; the trickle-down effect it has on families and others affected is amazing. A. Wheeler asked for clarification on the overdose statistics which Drum supplied.

Fire Update – Deputy Chief Kevin Vining

Fire will likely end the (fiscal) year with a record call volume, up around 400 calls in June. The department is averaging about 33 calls a day now, which is up one to two calls a day from the previous year.

Fire just finished installation of the new G2 digital tap-out system (the incident alerting system within the stations). They are optimistic that this will improve response times by 20-30 seconds, enabling the dispatcher to digitally dispatch units while remaining on the phone with the caller to continue providing CPR instructions or similar guidance. Vining is excited to watch that trend over the next year and see how well that works.

Fire has also hired three new lateral employees who just completed academy and have now gone on the line. That leaves them with four vacancies, which they have extended four conditional job offers to fill. They hope to have those four join two other dual-role personnel for an academy that will begin August 1, 2025. Greene asked Vining to clarify the definition of “dual-role” and “single-role” for those present.

There has been a small increase in natural cover fires in more remote areas of the parks. That has prompted Fire to add firefighting capabilities to the Polaris Ranger (a side-by-side utility vehicle) to allow greater access into remote areas where a fire engine or brush truck cannot go. The equipment should arrive any day, and the installation will be quick, so it will be ready to go for the summer. This will be a huge advantage for the department in keeping with the State’s mission of keeping fires small and providing a quick response. Pleis asked about likely causes of those fires and potential preventative measures. Vining responded that they are looking at who owns those properties and developing plans for maintenance of those properties.

After serving over 20 years as a Battalion Chief, Ryan Bond is retiring at the end of the month, and Joe Brier will take over his position. Vining was pleased by the passage of the public safety levy by such a large percentage.

Kreitman asked about whether the increase in call volume might be related to Lebanon cutting back on their services. Vining said that, despite ebbs and flows, reports show mutual aid to Lebanon stayed pretty consistent over the last year.

Rau asked whether or not federal funding issues have affected any of the grants the department applies for and relies on. Vining stated that the department is still receiving funding under those grants.

Business from the Commission

Pleis asked Drum to clarify what he meant in his comments about policing. Pleis addressed the commission about education for members of the public and the idea of working on a strategic plan for the commission (maybe with the help of the Deputy City Manager), especially with regard to the charter, mission, and goals of the commission, which she read aloud. She also asked for any guidance on additional education that new commission members can get to help them in their roles. She suggested that it would be good for new members to have a book or some training in the history and background of the commission. Kreitman explained a brief history of the commission.

Drum asked whether anyone in the commission would be available to go to the City Council meeting Wednesday, June 11, to speak in favor of a raise in the city services fee. Kreitman explained further how

budgeting affects city services and public safety. When Pleis mentioned that she didn't understand the budgeting, Vining suggested the City's online tool for budget transparency on the city website. Speaks-Mahi asked for clarification on the name of the budget transparency tool.

The alert tones went off, giving an impromptu demonstration of the new alerting system. Commission members were able to determine that 30 to 40 seconds were saved in the dispatching action. Kreitman explained that dispatchers are also required to have some medical training to provide critical guidance to callers, which is one of the difficulties faced in training a dispatcher.

Pleis moved that the commission contact the City Manager and/or Deputy City Manager to come and discuss what a strategic plan would look like for the commission. Rau seconded the motion, and all commission members present voted in favor of the motion. Pleis volunteered to send the necessary email invitations.

Next Meeting Date

The next regularly scheduled meeting is on August 6, 2025, at the Albany Police Department.

Adjournment

Hearing no further business, Chair Greene adjourned the meeting at 7:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Reviewed by,

Kate Hennessy
Administrative Assistant I

Reviewer's Name
Reviewer's Title

**Documents discussed at the meeting that are not in the agenda packet are archived in the record. The documents are available by emailing cityclerk@cityofalbany.net.*