

OUTLAW, from page 11

the chief not being here and traveling. When I'm not here, that's why I'm not here. It's for reasons like that. I certainly would be open.

Zuhl: *Downtown is well-represented with police and private security companies. But in the outskirts of the town, there aren't the foot patrols, there aren't the walking beats. There are lots of SUVs speeding down streets but not the actual community engagement that we understand is a part of this five-year plan that you want to develop. What is your plan to change that? Because it feels like a different kind of policing in the outer areas versus downtown.*

Outlaw: Strategic plan aside, that's just an issue, period. Deputy Chief Bob Day, he's responsible for day-to-day operations, meaning the operations side of what we do. He tasked some staff to do a study of how we deploy according to where the greater need for service is, according to calls for service and making sure that we have the right number of officers.

For example, if there are more calls downtown than in North, why do we have more officers assigned to North Precinct than we do downtown? Or if there are more calls out East Precinct, why do we have more officers assigned to downtown and less officers assigned out east?

We will be looking at how we shift and deploy our resources. Because it is about being smart about what we do with what we have.

Zuhl: *How often do police officers walk down the Springwater Corridor or the 205 corridor?*

Outlaw: I know they do it every now and again. But whether it's the corridor or anywhere, the answer is that it depends. Going back to the budget, when I was talking about demand and responding to calls for service. The other reason why I asked for additional bodies is to allow us to have more discretionary time during our shifts so an officer is not chasing the radio, meaning they're not going from call to call to call, because you still have me saying, "I want you to get out of your car and walk at some point throughout your shift."

I tell folks that I play a police officer now

on TV. I'm not a line-level officer anymore, but I was at one point. And I know that there has to be some feasibility discussion around that. Like, "Chief, that's great. We would love to get out of the car and walk and smile and hand-hold and just be able to have fellowship with folks outside of the regular enforcement actions. But I'm chasing the radio all day. If I do that, it's at the expense of something else."

When you have additional officers, it frees up time to allow them to get out of the car.

Zuhl: *Multiple mayors and police chiefs and a community oversight board have come and gone since the DOJ settlement around the interaction with and use of force on people with mental illness. How are you going to move the needle forward in a way that improves the lives of people with mental health issues and their interactions with the police?*

Outlaw: I want to be realistic and work within our lane.

Monday, we had a meeting with all of the partners that are involved in the settlement agreement. When I got here, I started convening these meetings to make sure we had dialogue amongst ourselves before we showed up in federal court and were hearing things from each other for the first time. The whole point of these agreements, in my opinion, is to have all of the involved parties working together. We don't have to work against each other because we're all working towards the same goal. When the Mental Health Alliance stood up, what they mentioned was their concern about having more drop-in centers and having peer-support specialists for those who are sitting on PCCEP, the Portland Committee on Community Engaged Policing.

We've made progress. The amount of force used against those who are mentally ill, the use of force to arrest ratio, the percentage are very small.

I think at this point, it's in our role, showing we sustain the efforts made and that we're not just doing this because the DOJ was here. A lot of the stuff for us is going to be trust building.

Zuhl: *What do officers tell you that they find challenging when responding to calls where mental health is the issue?*

Outlaw: Just getting folks the resources

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that they need in a timely manner.

Zuhl: *And the resources aren't there, or they can't connect them to the resources?*

Outlaw: Both. If somebody needs housing and they're spending the time calling the different places, and there's none available, that can be an issue. And then just having an understanding of what our role is. Officers are very passionate about the work that they do. But because we're on the front lines, we're the ones who get the criticism without the same amount of criticism – if there is any that needed to be given – to others that are part of the system, because we are just one part of the system.

You hear a lot, "Why are we getting picked on? Why are we getting pulled into the bushes for things we're not even responsible for?" A lot of it is around education awareness around really what our role is in the criminal justice system, and what we can and can't do.

Sheffield: *You said in the past that when it came to (Portland Mayor Ted) Wheeler, you didn't think that doing sweeps was an effective tool. Being a homeless camper myself, I see sweeps almost on a daily basis, and the recurring question I hear asked all the time is when homeless people are packing up their camps, they look at cops and say, "Where are we supposed to go?" And the cops response is "I don't know, just not here."*

I don't see that as an effective tool. If you're punishing someone for breaking a law, I understand that is your job, but it is also part of the job, too, to apply resources so that doesn't

happen again. It's just a cycle. There's no end to this. Would you agree with that? And if you do agree with that, I guess the follow-up question would be, take it to the mayor's office, take it to City Hall to sit there and be the voice of reason saying, "This ain't working. Why are we doing this?"

Outlaw: We cannot clear out folks solely because they're sleeping on the street.

It would be really helpful to have everybody at the table at once because the mayor shares my sentiment. He doesn't believe that the way to fix this is through just going up and doing sweeps.

Sheffield: *Publicly it didn't look like that a couple of months ago.*

Outlaw: No, it's not true. The sweeps, from my understanding, from what I'm told by the city, we're only called in to do the sweeps when it's to help further something the city is trying to do and we need that area cleared out.

It's a waste of our time. It's a waste of our resources to come in and continue to do things when we know it's going to pop up again.

I think what needs to happen is that it needs to extend beyond just Chief Outlaw and Mayor Wheeler. It has to be a conversation had by everybody, the entire City Council – all of the commissioners – so it's understood, the gravity of this issue.

He is the mayor who happens to be the police commissioner, and then I'm the police chief. So the bulk of it is directed towards us. But this really needs to be a collective discussion.

Zuhl: *What does the city need to do to create that roundtable where everyone gets together?*

Outlaw: I think we all need to have a clear understanding within the city what our role in this is – regardless of what it is. There are so many different stakeholders when it comes to this, and we all need to come around the table and just say, OK, here's the issue. And I actually think that's going to happen because a huge part of this upcoming budget is earmarked toward dealing with houseless issues. So, it's going to happen; it just has to happen. And it has to be collective.

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