



MEMORANDUM

To: Patty Long
Office of the President

From: Anthony D. Matos, Chief of Police
James Madison University Police Department

Re: Public Safety Committee

File: School Year 2023-2024

Date: May 13, 2024

BACKGROUND

The James Madison University Public Safety Committee meets annually and when needed to discuss public safety concerns and needs of the University community. The JMU Public Safety meeting held its meeting on February 2, 2024.

FINDINGS

The JMU Public Safety Committee met to discuss several updates from the previous school year, and begin discussions for the next school year. On-Campus Bike Racks and personal mobility found a greater place within our institution. Parking Division's Alternative Transportation Unit placed multiple bike racks across campus to facilitate ease of securing for students, faculty, and staff. The unit also created a system to help remove bicycles which users secured in unauthorized areas. This help to increase bicycle use across campus and helped JMU earn a Silver Award from the League of American Bicyclists.

The management of Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) on-campus was turned over to a third-party management company. Facilities Maintenance hired the company to take over the responsibility for up-keep and maintenance of all AEDs on-campus, except the public safety team's mobile units. This will allow the AEDs to undergo proper testing and ensure up-to-date equipment, such as batteries and external pads. The AEDs are located within buildings which the building coordinator has deemed necessary and each building remains responsible for coordination with the vendor to ensure their AEDs remain included on the maintenance rotations.

Bird Scooters and electric skateboards continue to be utilized at high rates across the campus. As this remains a good option for people accessing the JMU campus, more care and due regard must be utilized by riders. The campus continues to look at options for charging stations for these devices, as their batteries have been shown to be unstable and not ideal for storage inside dorm rooms. While not discussed in our February meeting, JMU suffered a high amount of personal mobility device thefts during a one-week timeframe in April. JMU PD continues to suggest a more robust way of securing these devices.

JMU PD worked closely with JMU IT to ensure we were capturing all of the “phishing” scams across campus. We continue to educate the community of these incidents and pushed out a campus-wide email, concerning internet and telephone fraud cases. These cases became reported at a high rate towards the end of the spring semester. Phishing, internet crimes, and general fraud scams continue to rise throughout the country and the JMU Community remains no different. JMU PD maintains a list of resources and contacts for use by community members if they become victimized by online or telephone scammers.

Many members of the 2024 Public Safety Committee noted a concerning trend of not wearing light clothing for walking at night. With post-pandemic traffic continuing to rise, JMU PD stated they would monitor these incidents and work with the City of Harrisonburg to determine if the community needed an education campaign to highlight pedestrian safety.

The committee members briefly discussed the appearance of the high alcohol use among JMU students. While this discussion created some dialogue, Chief Matos reminded the group of the on-going Presidential Committee on Alcohol Safety, currently finishing the second year of its charter. More information will be forthcoming from the Alcohol Safety Committee as it wraps-up a two-year dialogue on alcohol use and many of its surveys conducted with various stakeholders and community groups.

While not discussed in the Public Safety Meeting, JMU PD continues to employ a grant-funded therapist who acts as a co-responder for the university community. This co-responder remains the only position in a collegiate setting who responds to mental health crisis after midnight. JMU PD works to ensure the co-responder remains available to assist our community when other traditional means of crisis intervention may not be available. This also helps the JMU PD respond with more access to licensed and trained therapists to work through mental health crisis.

CONCLUSION

The JMU Public Safety Committee met to discuss a variety of issues concerning public safety in and around the JMU Campus. The campus, overall, remains extremely safe for a large rural university, surrounded by a small sized rural city. JMU PD continues to grow and develop cooperation with the City of Harrisonburg Police Department, the Sheriff of Rockingham County, and the Superintendent of the Virginia State Police. The Parking Division continues to work to improve the accessibility of persons on and throughout the JMU Campus and we work to improve the safety surrounding personal mobility devices. Finally, we looked to solidify medical health across campus by ensuring quick and reliable access to Automated External Defibrillators.

JMU remains a safe and inviting campus and we work hard to improve safety through personal mobility, health and medicine, and personal safety across the entire community. While world events cast concern for many, JMU PD and JMU as a community work to ensure all of our members feel welcomed and safe. JMU cannot control world events, however we do have policies in place which allows our community to remain safe and feel secure while on our campus and we remain committed to this safety for all the members of our community.