

**Subject:** FW: Report to City Council from the NA Active Assailant Conference

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**Sent:** Thursday, May 2, 2019 3:16 PM  
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**Subject:** Report to City Council from the NA Active Assailant Conference

(Mark: please forward to city council.)

Mayor and City Council:

The North American Active Assailant Conference was held here in Troy last week, and included a pre-conference opportunity on Wednesday for local elected and appointed leaders to participate. Thank you to Chief Nastasi for sharing with us the opportunity to do so, and for all of the great work he and his team did to help the conference be a success. Fortunately, my schedule allowed me to participate and I would like to share highlights of the learnings with you all.

The full-day session on Wednesday geared to elected and appointed officials provided a behind-the-scenes perspective from three presenters debriefing events as follows: the retired Police Chief from San Bernardino, California (two active assailant incidents; one was at a workplace and was found to terrorists, one was an elementary school shooting between a husband and his estranged wife); the retired City Manager from Aurora, Colorado (the 2012 movie theater); and the retired Public Information Officer from Lakeland, Colorado (Columbine High School).

At the end of the Wednesday session, the Director of the Berkley Public Safety Department Matt Koehn invited me to come by the rest of the conference on Thursday and Friday, including for an award presentation from OakTac for our Retired Troy Police Chief Gary Mayer. When presenting the award, Koehn credited Mayer's leadership for growing OakTac from a six-member agency to its now 40-member level. Following that presentation, the Coral Springs, Florida first responders -- approximately ten police, fire, EMS as well as the head of the trauma hospital Emergency Room -- debriefed the active shooter event at the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School.

The presentations from all four incidents were candid and forthright. Following are my key takeaways/learnings for us as elected officials to consider and be aware of:

- Should such an event occur here, we obviously need to stay out of the way of our police/fire/first responder leadership to allow them to do their jobs. The staging of incident command is complex and critical. Elected officials arriving on-scene become an additional, unnecessary challenge that can inhibit the work of the first responders.
- As an incident unfolds, the conveyance of information and updates must remain in the control of our police department; they are the best and most credible option for providing real-time information. To that end, we should point all media/residents to those communications. Anything else is likely to be second- or third-hand information and is at risk of being inaccurate. We are fortunate our PD has a solid social media presence here in Troy and that is managed so skillfully; this was an important piece of the effective communication in San Bernardino, for example.

- There can be an inter-jurisdictional challenge that arises between city, county, and federal agencies and/or between city/school administrations, depending upon several factors. There will be a need to immediately recognize how best to stay in our lane while locking arms to serve the public.
- A united front for clear, accurate communication to the media and thereby our community is critical; speaking roles must be defined, and law enforcement leadership, (this might be multi-agency depending on the incident and where it occurs) would serve that role. Essentially, a "face of the incident" will need to be defined with the goal to be sure nothing is said or done to prevent justice. From city administration/council the mayor would also be involved. The rest of us should stay out of the media, and focus on the city's resilience and recovery. This includes supporting and assisting with organized vigils and beginning what will be a formidable and long-term healing process.
- To repeat: it is critical we know our place. Elected officials unnecessarily came into the command post at one of the incidents: "They meant well, but were in the way, and I can't believe I didn't anticipate the need to have a place for them," said one law enforcement official. He went on to note that there is an important supportive role for elected officials and it is important to proactively plan so they can effectively fulfill it. The Aurora City Manager said he once had a dismissive attitude about table top exercises for emergency preparedness; when the theater shooting happened there, he was thankful for having sat through such exercises. He now recommends them, and even encouraged the idea of doing them for elected officials. Related to this, Coral Springs has a PowerPoint presentation it provides to elected officials and is willing to share.
- The value of a strong, mutually supportive relationship between police and fire was mentioned several times. This along with the ability to effectively and clearly communicate -- and the full technical capacity to do so -- was emphasized several times.
- An important mantra to embrace: victims first; people first. In Aurora, for example, every victim's family was assigned a Public Information Officer and a victim's advocate. Aurora's city manager followed the lead of the victims and their families to navigate the path toward healing, and they recommend that approach. One of many challenges that arises for a city staff is the management of donations and makeshift memorials.
- Employee care -- the "after-action" services -- are challenging and critical. As leaders, we must stand ready to support, encourage, and require counseling. As important as it is to meet the challenges for communicating with the "outside world," it is important to proactively meet the needs of the "internal." This includes those that were in a first responder role, as well as those not there; family members of our employees will have needs, as well.
- Coral Springs discussed the value of a Clinician Response Team for mental awareness and resiliency. They already had this in place, having done a Clinician Awareness Program to establish a pre-vetted group of counselors already familiarized with the required nuanced understanding for working with first responders. They were grateful this happened to already be in place and recommend it. It is an important ongoing resource.
- The importance of a department policy that vests be worn at all times was emphasized. Big time.

Those are the highlights of my notes. Separate from the presentations, I should share the appreciation expressed to me for our Troy Police Department and its role in the conference, as well as its value to OakTac. This insight reinforced for me that our continued support as a City Council is important to the safety and well being of our community as well as the region.

I appreciated the opportunity for this learning, as difficult as the topic is to take in and digest. It affirmed a number of things, including the importance of proactive efforts so that we can prevent the need for reaction in the first place. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

Thanks,

Ellen

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