

## **Farmington Hills Citizens Police Academy**

*By Marc Wilkins*

Several weeks ago I was invited to apply to attend the updated Farmington Hills Citizens Police Academy. My position with the Citizen Police Advisory Committee was the reason given for my invitation. Once I accepted the invitation, I was required to fill out an application and a form granting them permission to perform a background check on me. A few weeks after the paperwork was complete, I received an email containing the details of this unique experience.

It was explained to me that the program came about as a way to educate the citizens of Farmington Hills on how their Police department functioned. We (City Council and School board members were also invited to attend) were to be the first to experience the new format class.

The academy was conducted over a 9 week period at the Police Department. Each session was held for 3 hours. The academy would present to us information with regards to the policies and procedures of the Farmington Hills Police Department. The program consisted of classroom lectures, live demonstrations, scenario-based learning and interactive class participation. It provided me with a comprehensive overview of the Police department's duties, responsibilities and operational policies.

In the first session Chief King explained to us how the Police Department was an Accredited Agency through the Michigan Association of Chiefs of Police. It was stressed that it is very important to be accredited. Accreditation means that the Police department has gone through a lengthy process of review of its policies and procedures with Police Chiefs and Lawyers to verify that it functions within State law. It is also a great accomplishment to become recertified. The reaccreditation of the department is a very difficult process. To achieve recertification means that each policy that was promised for certification now has examples of how that policy was executed in practice with real world examples. REF: <https://www.michiganpolicechiefs.org/>

As the evening proceeded we were shown the number of Police Officers, Patrol cars, and Supervisors per shift active each day. As part of this explanation we saw how the City is broken down into sectors.

We reviewed the Crime statistics for the years spanning 2011 through 2021 in this session. We were provided with a Powerpoint presentation that broke down the number of Residential Burglaries, Larceny from auto, auto theft, traffic crashes, Group A crimes (property and violent crimes), Homicides, Commercial Burglaries and armed robberies that occurred in the City.

We were made aware of the community outreach programs that the Police conduct. The Safe transaction zone was discussed. In the parking lot of the Police department, a zone was defined that the Police had a camera view of. From there the Public was encouraged to perform transactions like those from eBay or Craglist and would be under the watchful eye of the Police. Police Cruisers now have sensory bags in them. These bags have tools for first responders that could help potentially diffuse a stressful situation with someone who is on the Autism spectrum.

Other outreach programs discussed were a drug takeback program as well as Narcan training.

Another topic we covered in the session was Fairness in Policing, FIP. A good deal of time was spent in the session on FIP. This topic went through a lot of examples defining terms like reasonable doubt, probable cause, reasonable suspicion, and what the Police need to have in each of these situations in order to arrest a person.

Next up we visited the 911 call center. During the tour we were informed on how the center is staffed and the type of equipment that they use. We were also provided the statistics of the calls for service that they receive. We were informed on what happens in the communication center from the time a call comes in, to how the information is relayed to the 1st responders in the city. We received a presentation on what to expect when you call 911. Finally they covered misconceptions & misuse of the 911 emergency technology.

The final part of the first session was Officer wellness. The instructors reviewed with us the process that occurs after a very stressful event occurs on a patrol. These events can be a shooting, or a death of a person during an officer's watch. The instructor went over with us on how these events can result in PTSD. They also reviewed with us the effects on a person and what are the signs to look for after one of these events happens. It was a very informative evening.

In session two the organization of traffic patrol response was covered. We were instructed on traffic stop procedures and the reason behind different types of vehicle stops. We also went over the criminal investigation by a patrol officer and how they work to develop probable cause vs reasonable suspicion. At this session we also were instructed on the methods of investigation, caseload per detective and how high profile case reviews are done.

The third evening of the Academy we were treated to a tour and overview of the Farmington Hills 47th District Court system. Judge's Marla Parker and James Brady took us on a tour of the court house. They also explained to us in an overview how the court system works in Farmington Hills. The Judges also explained the different courts, policies and procedures they have in place to determine guilt and dispense punishment of the people brought before them. In some cases the Court system seeks to not punish but to try and bring resources to people to help them address the issues that brought them in front of the court in the first place.

Session 4 was an overview of evidence technician training, and the collection and case review of property used or involved in a crime.

In session five we were introduced to Dozer and Officer Yudt, of the K9 unit. The history of K9 units in the United States was covered. In addition to the history we were informed of how those functions and objectives of the K9 unit have changed overtime. The conversation then turned to how Dozer, and to a certain extent all dogs used in Police work, are purchased, then trained and what happens to the dog at the end of its service.

Also in session five the SWAT aspect of Policing was covered. How SWAT Officers are selected, and how they are ranked within the unit based on their performance was discussed. While Farmington Hills itself doesn't have a dedicated SWAT team, the Oakland County Sheriff's Department would be on scene in case Farmington Hills had an active shooter situation. The Farmington Hills Police department encourages its officers to strive to make the Oakland County Sheriff's team. It is a position of high honor and responsibility to make the Oakland County team. Acronyms like ALICE (active shooter identification) and OAKTAC (active shooter instructor) were defined and explained in detail.

In the last four sessions topics were covered such as Traffic Division, Drone Unit and Police cameras, training for resistance and violence and finally Intermediate weapons instruction and pistol live fire.

In summary I came away impressed with the professionalism of the Officers and Staff at the Police department. I was able to see that the amount of training, education and care for the men and women of our Police force was instrumental to that Professionalism. I was also happy to see how my tax dollars were being well spent at the Police Department. I encourage every resident to take the academy. I think after you take the academy you will be as proud of the Professionalism of our Police Department as me.

