

POLICE BOARD MEMBERS' PRESENT:

Mayor Ross Siemens, Chair
Gordon Holloway, Vice-Chair
Paula Olmstead
Amrik Narang
Amar Rai
Shannon Charney

SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM & STAFF PRESENT:

Chief Constable Colin Watson
Deputy Chief Constable Jason Burrows – Administration
Deputy Chief Constable Dan Culbertson – Operations
Director Bea Nicolato – Finance & Budget Branch
Paul Walker, Communications

REGRETS: Mandy Padda

Paul Walker, Communications

GUEST(S): Aird Flavelle*

MINUTE RECORDER:

Sangeeta Hussain

The meeting was called to order at 8.30am

1. Adoption of Agenda

It was moved by S. Charney and seconded by G. Hollway that the Agenda be **approved**, the motion was **adopted**.

2. Presentations - None

3. Consent Agenda

Prior to consideration of the Consent Agenda, the Chair invited Board members to request clarification on any items.

Service or Policy Complaints Policy (CW)

Provided clarification for the record regarding the Service or Policy Complaints Policy included in the Consent Agenda. The Chief advised that the policy has been finalized and implemented, that opportunities for public feedback had been promoted through social media platforms, and that the policy is publicly accessible on the Police Board section of the website. The Chief further noted that the policy brings the organization into full compliance with legislative requirements and that any future enhancements or amendments may be brought forward to the Board as required.

Vacancies Report

A Board member requested clarification regarding the vacancies report, noting that both sworn and civilian vacancy rates were reported at approximately eight percent (8%), and inquired whether this level is considered high or low relative to benchmarks. The member was advised that the vacancy rate is considered excellent and further noted that approximately half of the positions reflected in the vacancy rate are currently occupied by members active in the workplace, resulting in strong overall staffing levels.

No further questions or requests for clarification were raised.

It was moved by A. Rai and seconded A. Narang that the consent agenda be **approved**, the motion was **adopted**.

4. Board Correspondence

No updates to report.

5. BCAPB Report

No Updates to report

6. Chief's Report

6.1 Extortion Update (DC)

It was reported that there have been no extortion incidents for nearly three months, with no reported incidents in March or April. The most recent extortion-related file occurred in mid-February. All Abbotsford extortion incidents reported this year (10 total) occurred in early January, with no shots fired.

From a regional perspective, the Lower Mainland is experiencing a slight downward trend in extortion activity overall, while Abbotsford has experienced a significant and sustained decline. By comparison, a neighboring jurisdiction has reported 87 extortion-related files year-to-date, including 15 shots fired, compared to 10 files and zero shots fired in Abbotsford.

An inter-agency meeting was held in Surrey (Green Timbers) with police leadership and Community Advisory Group members to review extortion trends and discuss coordinated strategies moving forward. It was noted that Surrey currently has extortion-related charges pending, which is viewed as a positive development for regional public safety.

Investigators have observed that modus operandi now varies significantly across incidents, making investigations more complex. Unlike earlier periods in 2025 and early 2026, where activity appeared more coordinated and organized, current trends suggest the presence of copycat actors, motivated by perceived opportunities for financial gain.

While Abbotsford and the Lower Mainland have seen improvements, it was noted that Calgary, Edmonton, and Peel Region have experienced increases in extortion-related incidents and violence. These jurisdictions are responding by re-establishing or expanding task forces, following earlier reductions in response capacity.

Several factors contributing to Abbotsford Police Department's success were outlined, including:

- Early intelligence-led intervention and proactive investigative strategies.
- A multi-pronged enforcement approach, including high-profile arrests.
- Strategic public communications undertaken for investigative and deterrent purposes.
- A unified departmental response with cross-unit deployment.
- Strong community engagement and targeted outreach efforts.
- Coordinated media strategy to increase public awareness.
- Substantial provincial government support, including funding for overtime and equipment.
- Effective leadership and oversight, with senior leaders actively engaged in the response.

During the multi-jurisdictional meeting, Abbotsford's approach was specifically highlighted by partner agencies as a model of success. It was emphasized that, while progress to date is significant and commendable, continued vigilance is required, as extortion activity has not been fully eliminated and displacement effects are evident in other jurisdictions.

The Board Chair acknowledged the update and expressed appreciation for the ongoing work and collaborative efforts undertaken to address extortion activity.

6.2 Fifa Update (DC)

It was reported that 17 members are currently set for deployment as part of an Integrated Tactical Group, with additional members assigned to an Integrated Motorcycle Unit responsible for escort duties. Overall, Abbotsford Police maintain a limited operational footprint within the broader FIFA security framework.

For operational readiness, discretionary leave restrictions are in effect during FIFA game days, consistent with measures implemented in the previous year. This ensures adequate staffing levels to respond to potential incidents within Abbotsford or in support of neighboring jurisdictions.

The Department is currently rolling out public order training for all members, delivered through a partner police agency. A total of four mandatory training sessions will be conducted over the coming weeks. The training focuses on crowd dynamics, public order principles, engagement with event organizers, and crowd management psychology, and does not include tactical or enforcement-based instruction.

At this time, no requests have been received for escort services within the City of Abbotsford, and there are no additional operational requests pending. While increased activity is anticipated at the airport, no specific operational requirements have been identified to date.

No further updates were reported.

6.3 LMD District – De Integration of Ridge Meadows RCMP Detachment (CW)

Ridge Meadows RCMP detachment has been restructured into two independent detachments, specifically Pitt Meadows and Maple Ridge. This development was highlighted as notable within current discussions around regionalization, reflecting a trend toward smaller, localized policing structures in some areas.

6.4 Strategic Planning Update (CW)

Department's strategic planning process is nearing completion. Administration anticipates seeking final Board approval of the Strategic Framework at either the May Board meeting, or no later than June. A community check-in event is currently being planned for mid-May as part of continued engagement. The Department's target is to launch the new Strategic Framework on or around July 1, with accompanying internal planning, performance tracking, and reporting mechanisms currently under development. The framework has been informed by community survey feedback, legislative and regulatory obligations, and Board input.

6.5 Community/Partner Meetings (CW)

- a. Chief Vacation
Had been on leave for last two weeks.

- b. Enhanced Traffic Enforcement Program
The Board received an update on ongoing involvement in the Provincial Enhanced Traffic Enforcement Program. The Department continues to participate at the steering committee level, with a focus on reviewing current approaches and identifying opportunities for innovation and improvement. This work includes consideration of enhanced enforcement strategies and their applicability to Abbotsford's traffic safety priorities.

- c. BC Hotel Association in Nanaimo: Chief Watson had been invited as the speaker and contributed to a panel discussion focused on downtown safety with particular emphasis on hotels, accommodation providers, and urban core environments. The session was reported as well-received and provided an opportunity to engage with sector stakeholders on shared public safety concerns.

- d. Annual Prayer Breakfast: an established local event recognizing first responders. Attendance was noted as a positive opportunity for community connection and recognition of public service.

- e. E-Comm 911 – Dispatcher Appreciation Week: Chief and Sergeant Paul Walker attended the dispatch centre to recognize call takers and dispatchers for their ongoing support and critical behind the scenes contributions to police operations. The importance of inter-agency collaboration and appreciation of dispatch services was emphasized.

- f. BBQ with Staff at HQ: the event was well attended and recognized as a positive staff engagement initiative supporting morale, cohesion, and internal connection.

6.6 Track and Trace Drug Analysis Project

An overview was provided on the Department's intent to participate in the Province's drug "track and trace" pilot program, coordinated through a university research laboratory. Participation is planned for a future phase, following the Department's upcoming facility move, to ensure operational capacity is not strained during relocation.

6.7 Community-Based Camera Registry Program

The Board also received an update on the camera registry program, which is being rolled out to the community. The voluntary program allows residents and businesses to register privately-owned CCTV systems for investigative awareness purposes. The registry does not provide police with direct access to cameras but supports more efficient investigative canvassing by identifying available footage. The program was identified as a valuable investigative support tool and will be further promoted in the coming weeks.

In response to questions, additional clarification was provided regarding:

- The voluntary nature of participation by residents and businesses.
- Privacy legislation and limits on police access to privately owned CCTV systems.

- The investigative value of registered cameras in reducing time spent on door-to-door video canvassing; and
- Operational challenges related to accessing footage, including technical barriers and time requirements.

It was noted that the program is being gradually promoted within the community and is intended to enhance investigative efficiency and support future charge recommendations.

6.8 Onboarding six new recruits (JW)

Reported six new recruits are scheduled to be onboard on May 7. While vacancy rates remain a challenge across policing jurisdictions nationally, Abbotsford Police Department continues to closely monitor effective in-house strength rather than relying solely on vacancy percentages.

Planning for the September recruitment class is currently under review. Although funding was initially budgeted for an additional six members, current staffing levels are at or near authorized strength, which may limit the Department's ability to proceed with the full planned intake. A final determination is pending further review.

6.9 Re-hiring of Returning Members.

Two former members who departed approximately three years ago have returned to the Abbotsford Police Department:

- One member, who had left to pursue a career opportunity with the RCMP, has since returned and has been rehired.
- A second member, with more than 20 years of prior service, who left for a role in civilian management outside the organization, has also returned and been rehired.

Both reappointments were highlighted as positive outcomes for the Department, contributing experienced personnel back into operational capacity.

7. Standing Board Committee Reports

- Finance Committee** (G. Holloway)
No updates to report.
- Governance & Policy Committee** (A. Narang)
No updates to report.
- Human Resources Committee** (S. Charney)
No reports to update.

8. Other Business

Questions from a Public Guest: A question was raised regarding the format and frequency of operational updates provided to the Board, including the use of verbal updates versus written reports and presentations.

The public guest was advised that updates are delivered using a variety of formats depending on timeliness and complexity. Verbal updates are often provided to ensure the Board and the public receive the most current information, while written reports and formal presentations are scheduled

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Abbotsford Police Board

Wednesday, 29 April 2026 at 8:30 AM

AbbyPD HQ (3rd Floor Boardroom), 2838 Justice Way, Abbotsford, BC, and Video Conference*

where appropriate. It was noted that additional presentations are planned for upcoming meetings and that reporting formats continue to be reviewed in light of strategic planning activities and operational transitions.

There being no other business, the meeting proceeded to adjournment.

Upon motion duly made and carried, the meeting was adjourned at 9.02 am.

"Original Signed"

Chair – Ross Siemens

"Original Signed"

Minute Recorder – Sangeeta Hussain