

I am in my second term on the ILEA Council and continue to learn and grow as your council representative.

Our last council meeting was August 1st, 2022 however above and beyond council meetings I have been asked to be a part of some sub-committees. I am on the curriculum committee. We will be working on creating consistency with curriculum across the state with in-service training and the police academies. I am also on the hiring committee. We will be working on possible updates and changes to the hiring process for law enforcement agencies. We are gathering data from other states and will be trying to find what's best for our testing procedures in Iowa.

We are also looking into possible updates or changes with the Standard and Associates Post-test. We are always looking for input to better the process so please feel free to email me with suggestions or ideas so I can take it to council and/or the committee.

The third committee I am on is the rules committee. We look into possible changes to the Iowa Administrative code Chapter 501 along with potential Iowa State Code changes that affect officers, deputies, and jailers in the State of Iowa. Other committee members and I have been working with ILEA staff and have made some positive changes. We have made some clarifications to the different roles of instructors, cleaned up some language, worked with the jailers on updating training requirements, aligned code to follow the new Back the Blue bill and many other smaller changes that were necessary. We meet as a committee and propose changes to the ILEA council. We then vote on these items at council meetings.

At our last meeting we had many requests for waivers. We had several requests to waive the mandatory 3 years of certified law enforcement experience to instruct/attend a specialty training course (Iowa Administrative Code Rule 501 –4.2 (1)(a). The council did approve these waivers and actually proposed changes to allow for an officer with 18 months experience to attend these schools and instruct with the condition, they will need to instruct with at least one other certified instructor until they reach their 3 years of LE certification.

We also approved a waiver for a young man who is not yet a citizen. He has been here about 20 years and has been raised in the US. His family is still going through the lengthy citizenship process and it has been postponed several times. Code currently states you must be a US citizen to attend the academy, however you do not need to be a US citizen to be a police officer. We granted him a waiver to attend the academy.

We have also seen some requests for waivers regarding moral turpitude. In most cases the violations have been 15 or more years ago and are seeking employment either as a reserve police officer or full-time peace officer. Due to the length of time, the hardship to the individual and organization, severity of crime and the fact that most of them have not had any other incidents we have granted these potential officers the waiver.

We have had many conversations with agencies big and small and it is becoming more difficult to find qualified candidates. Some agencies are struggling to get recruits to apply and if they do apply they may have had some minor issues that would prevent them from getting hired. We are seeing more requests for waivers at council meetings for these types of issues.

The Council approved some documents to be used for working copies. The documents assess the training needs across the state of Iowa for Academies and required training. With that being said Indian Hills Community College has applied to have a Level II Academy. They currently are approved to host Reserve Police Academies. Hawkeye Community College has applied to host a Level I Academy. They are currently approved to host a Level II Academy. Two members from ILEA and two members for the council will do a site visit and report back to council. They will also look at the needs assessment to determine if there is a need for more academies. Based on their findings it will then be determined if the requests should be approved through council.

ILEA has had some more personnel changes. Wes Breckenridge has resigned as Acting Director to take on a new job in the education field. Sherry Poole is a newer employee at ILEA and was hired to work on curriculum. She is currently serving as Acting Assistant Director. The Governor has not appointed a Director yet and they also will need to hire/appoint two assistant directors. They hope to have these positions filled soon.

ILEA is looking at doing several more outreach meetings in the next 6 months. They are trying to determine locations. I would advise anyone to attend these meetings and provide feedback. These are very informative, and they have gathered lots of good feedback from attendees. Sherry Poole has been putting out a monthly newsletter regarding ILEA updates, training, academies and personnel. If you don't receive the newsletter reach out to sherry.poole@iowa.gov so you can get put on her distribution list.

On a side note, ILEA staff mentioned they have had numerous issues with the food vendors for police recruits at ILEA. They are trying to address this issue and working to get a new vendor. There have been many complaints regarding portions and quality.

The council meetings are public and for the past two years are available via Zoom. The closed session is not public but a lot of discussion is had during open session if anyone would like to provide comments or just listen in. The next scheduled meeting is October 6th at 0900. If there are any future agenda items you would like me to bring up please do not hesitate to reach out to me. My email is m.henderson@cedar-rapids.org.

Thank you again for this opportunity to serve ISPA and the law enforcement community in the state.

Officer Melissa Henderson
Cedar Rapids Police Department