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Dan Hoffman:

Hello and welcome to part two of The Rouss Review, the City Works portion of our show. With us here still sitting there is Amanda Behan.

Although her name tag says A.R. Behan. What's the R stand for?

Amanda Behan:

It's my maiden name, Ritter.

Dan Hoffman:

Ritter. Amanda Ritter Behan. I didn't [inaudible 00:00:21].

Amanda Behan:

That's right.

Dan Hoffman:

Do you have people just call you AR or-

Amanda Behan:

No.

Dan Hoffman:

Well, actually, we'll get into this in a second because I'm curious about police and social media and how they identify themselves. I'm a little curious about that.

Amy Simmons:

Yeah.

Dan Hoffman:

But for those of you who didn't listen to part one, this is new Police Chief, Amanda Behan. If you want to hear more about Amanda, go listen to part one. It was only like five, 10 minutes. It doesn't take much of your time. Go listen to that part. But Amanda Behan, Police Chief for the Winchester Police Department. It's first full day on the job. I'm always curious. Police officers identify, there's badge number.

Amanda Behan:

Yes.

Dan Hoffman:

There's their name.

Amanda Behan:

Yes.

Dan Hoffman:

What kind of protections do police officers use to protect their identity? It's not that you're trying to hide who you are.

Amanda Behan:

No.

Dan Hoffman:

You might be very careful about social media. Your name tag that we were just chatting about, you don't put your first name on it. Why?

Amanda Behan:

It's been a tradition and that's a interesting topic to talk about, but in the past, and of course because of the media, oftentimes, the full name does come out when an officer is involved in something; however, the officer will do as much as they can to protect themselves. It's not just about them, it's about their families. Often when they're off, they want to be off and they want to focus on their families and not have to worry about somebody that they arrested in any kind of retaliation or something like that. We typically do our reports with just the initials, the last name when we fill out criminal complaints to swear out a warrant. It will be just initials only. So that way, if it gets published in the media, unless that media source has the first name, they're only going to publish the initials.

Now, as far as social media, what you'll see is some folks are a lot more private. Officers are more private, so they will have different names that they use. They may use their first and middle name and the middle name will be their last name instead of using their full names. We don't have policies that regulate how they put themselves out on social media. Certainly, some parts of it, but not what name that they use.

Dan Hoffman:

Yeah, just good practice. Badge number, that's a sign based on when you join, right?

Amanda Behan:

Well, it's a little bit different. With the chief and the deputy chief and the captains, that's based on seniority of appointment in the position.

Dan Hoffman:

Oh, okay.

Amanda Behan:

But when it comes to the officers, it's not. It would be very difficult if we were constantly chasing seniority, so we just assign them a badge number when they come on.

Dan Hoffman:

Got it. Got it. Are you badge one now?

Amanda Behan:

I am.

Dan Hoffman:

Whoa.

Amanda Behan:

I know.

Amy Simmons:

So exciting.

Dan Hoffman:

That's cool.

Amanda Behan:

I know. I started as badge number 56.

Dan Hoffman:

Badge 56.

Amanda Behan:

Yes.

Amy Simmons:

Then you were two when you were deputy chief?

Amanda Behan:

Yes. And I was seven when I was a lieutenant. I can't remember what my captain badge was. Then I was a detective at one point and had badge 104.

Dan Hoffman:

Okay. That's odd, 104, because we don't have 104 officers.

Amanda Behan:

No. Our detectives start at unit number 100.

Dan Hoffman:

Oh, okay. Interesting. Is that common?

Amanda Behan:

Yeah, pretty common.

Dan Hoffman:

Interesting. So you can tell. If you get a ticket, we just write badge number on the ticket.

Amanda Behan:

It's the initials, the first two initials, last name, and the badge number. On a citation, but a warning, sometimes it will just be a unit number.

Dan Hoffman:

So you could get a sense for how long someone's been a police officer by their badge number to some degree.

Amanda Behan:

By a supervisor.

Dan Hoffman:

Okay.

Amanda Behan:

Then you know that they've been with the department for a while.

Dan Hoffman:

Got you. Okay. Another topic I wanted to hit today because it's something that's been around for a while, but I think there's a lot of misconceptions about it is body cameras.

Amanda Behan:

Yes.

Dan Hoffman:

Body cameras have become part of the cultural zeitgeist of... If you look back 10 years ago, they were this novelty that, oh, police officers are going to wear cameras and what does that mean. A lot of, I'd say controversy, some hesitancy from some corners, but now it's pretty standard.

Amanda Behan:

Yes.

Dan Hoffman:

I think pretty much any police, even our sheriffs across the street have them.

Amy Simmons:

And it's more welcomed now too.

Amanda Behan:

Absolutely. Our officers are so accepting and they absolutely love having them. What great evidence does the body-worn camera bring? It's incredible for their cases.

Dan Hoffman:

Which is wasn't the way it really started in some cases.

Amanda Behan:

No. A lot of resistance nationally. That's for the national issue.

Dan Hoffman:

Of course. As that changed over time, what was the driving factor, whether there's specific moments or incidents or did an officer have to have their own experience where a body camera helped in some way?

Amanda Behan:

I think for some of our more senior folks, that was the case where it helped them in court cases. Another one was when our number of complaints actually went down after we received body-worn cameras because we were actually sitting down with citizens and the complaint would say one thing and the body-worn camera would say another and we would offer to bring them in. Sometimes they decline the offer knowing. Then other times, because they're caught up in a moment, it was like a perception that actually wasn't real. I think a lot of our more senior folks realize the benefit that it could bring and I think for our younger officers, technology is just all they've known, so they love it.

Dan Hoffman:

Interesting. Now, the technology's also evolved a fair amount too right now. It used to be that most of the body cameras were manufactured by the same people that did Taser, right?

Amanda Behan:

Yes.

Dan Hoffman:

And now it's Axon. But is Axon still owned by Taser or is that-

Amanda Behan:

Yes, uh-huh.

Dan Hoffman:

Okay. So interesting. The origin of it's also a little interesting because Taser, that's actually the brand name, it's called a Taser and-

Amanda Behan:

Right. It is the brand.

Dan Hoffman:

Taser really started doing this as a risk mitigation tool to some extent. They started making these things. First off, they were already in an industry that sold to law enforcement, but their motivation, at least my understanding, is their motivation was, in essence, to avoid getting sued. Is that accurate?

Amanda Behan:

Yes.

Dan Hoffman:

Okay. Good. But the technology has evolved to the point where now, it's still that little thing that's worn on a police officer. You see it. It's gotten a little smaller. It's gotten a little more-

Amanda Behan:

It blends in a little bit more.

Dan Hoffman:

It blends a little bit more. But real quick, how does it work? It automatically turns on, they switch it on, they switch it off. What are the policies?

Amanda Behan:

Yeah. The officer has to turn it on and we have very strict policies about when it is to be turned on. There's no flexibility with that. The policies are very clear. They just turn it on by using the index finger, press a button, it comes on, and then at the end of the shift, they upload all the videos. They don't have a choice whether to pick and choose what videos get uploaded. They all get uploaded. They then have the requirement that they have to go in and identify what incident belongs to and what the classification, whether it's an assault and battery or a traffic stop. So it automatically gets uploaded. A great feature, what I love now, it's called evidence.com. That's where these body cameras, it's all owned by Axon. The videos go there, but we also have the ability now to build out cases on evidence.com. Our records personnel will take the incident report and they'll put it with the body-worn camera footage or any digital evidence that will go with it. Our commonwealth attorney who prosecutes our cases, they actually have access to evidence.com, so they automatically have access to the video immediately. When we have time to get those reports uploaded, they'll have access to that as well. It's such an incredible tool that's constantly evolving.

Dan Hoffman:

There's body cameras. There's other tech though that's constantly getting introduced or that we're testing out. I know not too long ago, I was over there and we were looking at the BolaWrap gun things.

Amanda Behan:

Yes.

Dan Hoffman:

We have a few of those.

Amanda Behan:

We do.

Dan Hoffman:

First off, explain what those are to people.

Amanda Behan:

The BolaWrap, and it's very incident-specific, so it's difficult because we don't have a lot of those. I think in major cities, they could be a lot more. They would be used a lot more. But basically, it deploys this, it reminds you the old school lasso if you would know.

Dan Hoffman:

Yeah, it does.

Amanda Behan:

Right? And you press the trigger and it just wraps the person up so that they can't move.

Dan Hoffman:

It's like something out of Batman's utility belt.

Amanda Behan:

Yeah. You got to see that. That was pretty cool.

Dan Hoffman:

Yeah. They fired it at me.

Amanda Behan:

Yeah. But I tell you, my favorite thing with technology right now that we are implementing in our emergency communications center is the Prepared 911. It actually gives dispatchers the ability to see the person who's calling 911 in their camera. So they have to get-

Dan Hoffman:

Huh?

Amanda Behan:

Yes.

Dan Hoffman:

On their cell phone?

Amanda Behan:

Yes. So this, we are the first agency-

Dan Hoffman:

Not random cam on their computer or something like spying.

Amanda Behan:

No. We are the first agency in Virginia and we've been blessed by the city attorney to move forward with this. So if someone is a victim, say of a robbery and they're hiding and they call 911, the dispatcher can ask them, "Can I have access to your cell phone?"

Dan Hoffman:

Wow.

Amanda Behan:

It'll send them a link and they can click accept and then the dispatchers will be able to see what is transpiring from the eyes of the victim.

Dan Hoffman:

That's very cool.

Amanda Behan:

Amazing, right? I'm just so excited. This is a free service for us. Costs us nothing.

Dan Hoffman:

Interesting. I want to see that in action at some point.

Amanda Behan:

Right. Yes.

Amy Simmons:

We have the text-to-911 too, which we had it for a while.

Dan Hoffman:

Yeah. That's cool.

Amanda Behan:

That's the one that I'm most excited about.

Dan Hoffman:

And that works with our existing CAD system?

Amanda Behan:

Yes.

Dan Hoffman:

Okay. Wow. Because CAD, that's our computer-aided dispatch system. We are probably going to be looking at upgrades to that in the near future and that's a big undertaking. The dispatch center is incredibly technology-driven.



Amanda Behan:

Yes. There's four monitors at each station.

Dan Hoffman:

Yes. Actually, we should do a podcast just about the emergency dispatch at some point.

Amy Simmons:

We did.

Dan Hoffman:

We did. Another one. No, but we didn't go. We should go there.

Amy Simmons:

We should go there. Well, we do have to do a video then because then they wouldn't be able to see all the cool tech.

Dan Hoffman:

That's true.

Amy Simmons:

But then we also usually don't show that.

Dan Hoffman:

Yeah. We got to be real careful about that. We'll figure it out.

Amanda Behan:

As a side note, we do have a meeting scheduled to see this Prepared 911, so I can make sure that you get included on that.

Dan Hoffman:

Yeah. Anything else coming up? Any other-

Amanda Behan:

Technology-wise, no.

Dan Hoffman:

Okay.

Amanda Behan:

I don't know. That's the big one.

Dan Hoffman:

Yeah, and then just the constant replacement of vehicles. We have constant issues with the computers that we have in the vehicles.

Amanda Behan:

Yes. Our e-ticket feature, that's really great for our officers because writing out a summons takes a lot of time, a lot of boxes to fill out. The officers will spend several minutes while the person's sitting there and writing out the summons, but the e-ticket allows our officers to scan driver's license and it automatically uploads the information and plus, they can enter the information through a keyboard versus actually handwriting it. So it's really awesome feature.

Dan Hoffman:

If you're outside of Virginia, you're probably very familiar with speed cameras. Speed cameras are not allowed in Virginia, but recently, that's changed a little bit, because now can't we put them in school zones?

Amanda Behan:

I don't know about that. I am not up to speed on that because I know that was a big no.

Dan Hoffman:

We're getting questioned. Residents have asked us a little bit about that.

Amanda Behan:

Yeah. About wanting them?

Dan Hoffman:

Yes.

Amanda Behan:

And I understand that. It is our number one complaint, but our officers are definitely out there hitting the streets and writing speeding tickets. A lot of that is just perception. That was eye-opening for me going through the Basic Academy. Actually, you had to hold a radar gun and your partner would have to guess the speed. We had to get proficient at it, but when we all first started, we thought people were traveling a lot faster than they actually were. So a lot of our complaints on speeding are actually just because of perception.

Dan Hoffman:

Yeah. Remember that folks because I was in a meeting just yesterday where folks were saying, "Oh, you got to do something about the speeding on this street. It's so bad. People are-

Amanda Behan:

They're going 55 miles an hour.

Dan Hoffman:

It's a 25-mile an hour zone. Then, we put units out there, not police units, but those little flashing stop signs or speed indicator signs.

Amanda Behan:

Speed signs, mm-hmm.

Dan Hoffman:

Yeah. You're driving by and it tells you how fast you're going. Those collect data. So we go back and we look at that data and we realize, "Well, the average speed's actually like 27 miles an hour or 30 miles an hour." If you're standing still and a car is passing you, you can't gauge how fast they're going. The police are specially trained to do that.

Amanda Behan:

Correct.

Dan Hoffman:

I'm not sure if this is an old urban legend, but isn't it true that to be a police officer, to pass some test, you've got to be able to identify how fast a car is going on site?

Amanda Behan:

Yes. That is a part of your initial basic radar certification. Your radar certification has to be kept up throughout your career in order to be able to write tickets related to speeding.

Amy Simmons:

How in the world do you figure that out? That seems impossible.

Amanda Behan:

Yeah.

Dan Hoffman:

Yeah. That's the question. How do you figure that out?

Amanda Behan:

I don't-

Dan Hoffman:

Is you just train your brain?

Amanda Behan:

It's been a lot of years since I went through that class, but-

Dan Hoffman:

Yeah. You're not really writing tickets anymore.

Amanda Behan:

... I remember that was very difficult. You had to get within so many miles per hour.

Dan Hoffman:

Oh, wow.

Amy Simmons:

Actually, just the more you look at it, the more you test your knowledge against the gun.

Dan Hoffman:

There you go.

Amanda Behan:

Yes.

Amy Simmons:

That's crazy.

Dan Hoffman:

Well, Amanda, thank you very much for coming in and chatting with us. I'm sure this will not be the last time that you come in.

Amanda Behan:

Happy to be here.

Dan Hoffman:

Congratulations again on being our new chief and yeah, there we go. All right, Amanda, thanks for coming in.

Amanda Behan:

Absolutely.