



# Parkersburg / Wood County Neighborhood Watch



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## Minutes of Regular Meeting November 9, 2023

President Cindy Ware was absent due to illness and Vice President Scot Heckert was again absent for unknown reasons. The meeting was called to order by IT Coordinator Rick Sawyer at 6:07 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

COPE Officer Lt. Wendy Cox was present representing the Parkersburg Police Department for Capt. Ricky Koher and Councilwoman Wendy Tuck was present representing Parkersburg City Council. The Wood County Sheriff's Office was not represented.

Our guest speaker for the evening was Emily Larkins from the Family Crisis Intervention Center who spoke to us about their programs and services and provided several handouts. Additional information is available on their website, and they can be contacted either through their 24-hour crisis hotline or their Facebook page. We had a lively discussion about assumed "human trafficking for labor" issues in Parkersburg. The specific issue presented was a house in South Hills in which as many as twelve or more young Vietnamese men and women are housed at any given time and that these presumed "victims" come and go unescorted, and there seems to be a total turnover of these "victims" approximately every six months.

Lt. Cox discussed the challenges that law enforcement faces in their dealing with trafficking and domestic violence issues. She explained that most people expect rapid solutions from law enforcement, but law enforcement is required to operate within the constraints of the law. She explained that they cannot prosecute "trafficking" unless the alleged victim is willing to talk to law enforcement, and that the presumed "victims" in this case are raised in a society in which they are taught from birth to distrust all public officials. She also explained the difference between what the law requires for misdemeanor arrests and felony arrests.

Ray VanNoy submitted an application for a new Watch Group on 36<sup>th</sup> Street from Avery Street to Emerson Avenue and provided contact information for his members. He asked about obtaining signage for his area and was advised that Rick Sawyer would contact Capt. Koher with his request.

Twelve members and two guests were present.

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 6:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dr. Rickard L. Sawyer".

Rick Sawyer  
IT Coordinator