



Columbus City Attorney **Richard C. Pfeiffer, Jr.**

eNewsletter

Volume 5, Issue 2

June 2015



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A Word from City Attorney Pfeiffer

While it is hard to believe we are nearing the mid-point of 2015 already, our office has remained busy in the courtrooms, boardrooms, and community rooms since our last [e-newsletter](#).

In this issue you will be able to learn about how our office is helping implement a program that will make Franklin County the first in Ohio to begin using a new protocol designed to help predict and prevent intimate partner homicide.

Another article provides information on the annual liquor permit objection process and how our office works with a variety of investigative agencies and the public to gather sufficient legal evidence against problem establishments.

You'll also be a click away from joining me on a virtual tour of the Cleveland Avenue corridor in the latest installment of our 'Moseying' neighborhood documentary video series. One of the great things about our city is the synergy we get from the constant influx of new residents—whether they be young professionals, empty-nesters, students, immigrant groups, or families relocating here—so it's important on these moseys to touch upon the past, present, and future of Columbus' many distinctive neighborhoods for residents both new and old to enjoy.

Continuing with the multi-media theme, our office also recently launched season four of the television program "Fugitive Files" co-produced with [C-TV](#) and hosted by our chief of staff, Bill Hedrick. We also joined the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's national "Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over" campaign with [our first-ever public service announcement](#) released in March, with future PSAs planned.

Finally, I would like to thank the [Northland Community Council](#) and their president, Emmanuel Remy, for honoring Assistant City Attorney Bill Sperlazza at their annual dinner last month. You'll be able to read more about Mr. Sperlazza in the "Meet the Staff" profile on [page eight](#).



Assistant City Attorney Bill Sperlazza (left) receiving an award from NCC president Emmanuel Remy. (Photo courtesy of Dave Paul.)

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City Attorney Launches Season Two of ‘Moseying’ Video Series

Weaving in and out of side streets and back alleys. Recounting the histories behind decaying buildings and trying to preserve faded memories. Searching for residents willing to share their opinions. Doling out commentary and observations, with an occasional civics lesson thrown in. All delivered in an unscripted, inimitable style.

City Attorney Pfeiffer once again has embarked on a mosey and invited a camera crew along for the ride.

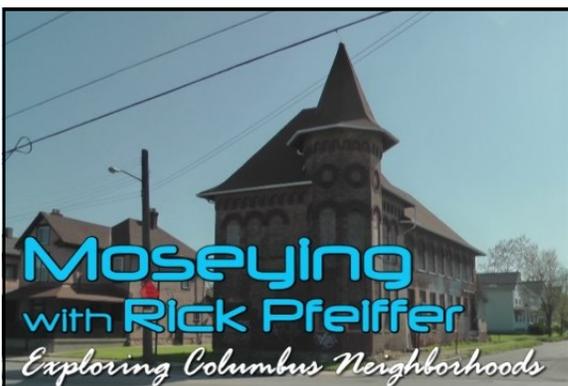
The latest installment of the [“Moseying with Rick Pfeiffer: Exploring Columbus Neighborhoods”](#) video series welcomes viewers to go on a virtual tour of Milo-Grogan, South Linden, North Linden, and points in between along Cleveland Avenue from the downtown Discovery District to Morse Road.

The new episode highlights several important landmarks along Cleveland Avenue, including the Columbus College of Art and Design, Columbus State, Abbott Labs, Fort Hayes, the Milo School, the former Timken site, Four Corners, St. Stephen’s Community House, and Linden McKinley High School.

Also featured are the distinctive neighborhoods that flank both sides of Cleveland Avenue, as well as a community activist who welcomed City Attorney Pfeiffer into his urban arts center and café for a lively discussion about neighborhood issues.

It was the type of frank conversation that City Attorney Pfeiffer seeks out as the head of an office that routinely works with residents to address neighborhood blight and public nuisances.

While several more episodes are being planned, don’t fret if your neighborhood hasn’t been featured yet. City Attorney Pfeiffer may show up *without* the camera crew, as he regularly moseys to keep in touch with what is happening at the grassroots level of our city.



Click on the above scene to watch the premiere episode of season two of City Attorney Pfeiffer’s neighborhood documentary series.

“I’d be doing these moseys whether I was City Attorney or not. People probably think it’s slightly less strange for a public official to be driving around alleys and jumping out of a car to talk to them than if it were a private citizen trying to do it.”

**Columbus City Attorney
Richard C. Pfeiffer, Jr.**

The Cleveland Avenue mosey may be viewed [online](#). DVD copies are available upon request.



Future episodes currently are being planned.

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Trying to Predict and Prevent Intimate Partner Homicide

Earlier this year, the City Attorney's Domestic Violence and Stalking Unit, led by director Anne Murray, began coordinating a multi-pronged intervention program involving police and domestic violence service providers to help predict and prevent intimate partner homicide. The new protocol, known as the Lethality Assessment Program, or LAP, translates clinical research on lethality predictors into practical tools that help first responders better address dangerous and potentially lethal incidents of domestic violence with the help of the DV service providers.

Originally designed by the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence, the LAP consists of an 11 question field screening tool called the "Lethality Screen" that helps field practitioners more clearly assess a victim's risk of intimate partner homicide. The screen is adapted from Dr. Jacqueline Campbell's Danger Assessment, a screening instrument used by clinicians and counselors to assess a victim's risk of being killed by an intimate partner (Campbell, 1986).

Under the program, police officers responding to an intimate partner/domestic situation will initiate the Lethality Screen if at least one of four specific conditions exist. If the victim's situation is determined to be High Danger, the responding officer will contact CHOICES (our designated local domestic violence service provider) and a hotline advocate will work with the victim in the presence of the officer to determine immediate safety planning measures and to schedule services, if desired.

Joining the City Attorney's Office in the program are the Columbus Police Division, Franklin County Sheriff's Office, Bexley PD, Blendon Township, Clinton Township, Dublin PD, Franklin Township, Gahanna PD, Grandview PD, Grove City PD, Groveport, Hilliard PD, Mifflin Township, Minerva Park, Perry Township, Sharon Township, Upper Arlington PD, Valleyview PD, Westerville PD, CHOICES, the Center for Family Safety and Healing, and the Franklin County Office of Homeland Security and Justice Programs.



Eighty-five participants from 31 different police jurisdictions and social service agencies attended the first LAP training session in late January.

Other local agencies that were represented in LAP training sessions include BRAVO (Buckeye Region Anti-Violence Organization), DWAVE (Deaf World Against Violence Everywhere), SARNCO (the Sexual Assault Response Network of Central Ohio), the Ethiopian Tewahedo Social Services (ETSS), the Ohio Hispanic Coalition, the Ohio Domestic Violence Network, and the Franklin County Prosecutor's office.

After months of preparation and training, the program officially began June 1, 2015.



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Objecting to Liquor Permit Renewal Applications

The City of Columbus filed 26 objections to liquor permit renewal requests last year, more than at any other time in recent memory, and the public played a big role in these efforts.

The [Ohio Division of Liquor Control](#) requires all liquor permit holders in the state to apply for a renewal of their license to sell alcohol every year. State law also allows the legislative authority of a municipality—in the case of Columbus, it is City Council—to object to the renewal application no later than thirty days prior to the expiration of the permit “by a resolution specifying the reasons for objecting to the renewal and requesting a hearing” [[ORC 4303.271](#)]. Such a resolution must be accompanied by a statement from the chief legal officer stipulating that “the objection is based upon substantial legal grounds” as outlined in Section [4303.292\(A\)\(2\)](#) of the Ohio Revised Code.

For the City of Columbus, the process starts with a large evidence gathering program and that is where the public can be helpful. Assistant City Attorney Bill Sperlazza heads up the City Attorney’s efforts and has broadened the sources of evidence and input into deciding which establishments ultimately are targeted for the formal objections voted on by City Council.

The team that Mr. Sperlazza works with includes the Columbus Police Division’s Vice and Property Crime units, the Ohio Investigative Unit from the Ohio Department of Public Safety, the Franklin County Sheriff’s Office, the Ohio Department of Taxation, the Ohio Department of Health’s WIC Program, city code enforcement, building inspectors, city health officials, and the Columbus Fire Division.

Mr. Sperlazza and the team focuses on bars, convenience stores, etc. that have a history or pattern of underage alcohol sales, violence, drug transactions (including sales of synthetic drugs such as “bath salts”), buying and selling stolen goods, and EBT (electronic benefit transfer or food assistance benefit) fraud. Community complaints and tips about establishments with these types of activities can go straight to Mr. Sperlazza at 614.645.7479 or wasperlazza@columbus.gov.

Once the evidence is collected and weighed, recommendations are made for City Council to formally object. A hearing for each objection is then scheduled with the Ohio Division of Liquor Control. The City has the burden to prove at these hearings that the evidence submitted is sufficient enough for the Superintendent of the Division of Liquor Control to sustain the objection.

If the objection is sustained the permit holder has 30 days to file an appeal and also may request a stay, allowing them to continue operating while the appeal is pending. At this juncture, however, the City of Columbus must relinquish jurisdiction to the Ohio Attorney General’s Office, which must defend the Division of Liquor Control’s decision to sustain the objection. It is also the Attorney General’s decision whether or not to object to the permit holder’s request for a stay.

For more information, visit the Ohio Division of Liquor Control’s [website](#).

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Rick's Rollers reunited once again to support the [Columbus Bar Foundation's](#) annual Rock N Bowl charity event, benefitting the [Center for Family Safety and Healing](#) at [Nationwide Children's Hospital](#).

Pictured: (back row) Jarrod Skinner and Robert Tobias; (middle row) Lara Baker-Morrish, Allison Lippman and Annie Murray; (front row) Kieren Bode, Sam Baker and Deana Overking.



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Congratulations to Vanessa Perkins, one of our Domestic Violence Legal Assistants, on receiving the 2015 Special Courage Model of Justice Award from the [Justice League of Ohio](#).

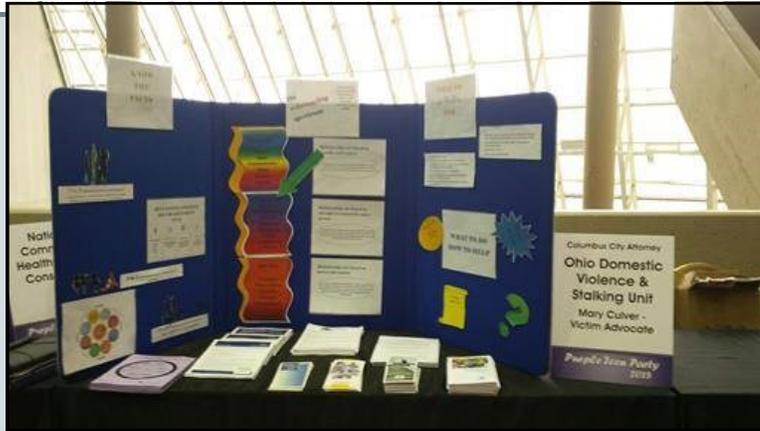
Vanessa is pictured here with Chief of Staff Bill Hedrick and Principal Assistant City Attorney Robert Tobias at the awards ceremony held in April.

Assistant City Attorney Kristen Kroflich coordinating with CPD, Code Enforcement, and Columbus Public Health to shut down a problem property on the city's West Side in March.



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Domestic Violence & Stalking Unit advocates Mary Culver and Shannon White represented the City Attorney's Office at the Teen Purple Party earlier this year, an event sponsored by [Jewish Family Services](#) and their "Let's Talk Respect" program.



The Teen Purple Party helps teen girls and their mothers and mentors celebrate individuality, self-respect and healthy relationships.

A special thanks to Mary and Shannon for contributing their time and expertise to this event.

Our Prosecution Division hosted Gahanna Middle School South student Rachel Sipes for career day in April. Rachel is pictured here with Chief of Staff Bill Hedrick.



If you know any students who are interested in learning more about the law and Franklin County's criminal justice system, please contact Chief of Staff Hedrick at 614.645.8874 or brhedrick@columbus.gov.



Gil Leffler, Dave Fox, and Kendra Wiechart of our Stalking Unit recently conducted training for students (12 years and older) and school personnel at the [Ohio School for the Deaf](#). The training was regarding "sexting" and the sending of inappropriate or offensive electronic messages.

The professional relationship between the Stalking Unit and OSD is long-standing and has led to our investigators and advocates being invited regularly to provide training at the school.



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Scenes from the Kossuth Street Earth Day Celebration and Memorial Garden for Janea Harvison and Donell McDonald.

A special thank you to Michael Doody for inviting director of the Domestic Violence and Stalking Unit Anne Murray to speak at the event.



Assistant City Prosecutor Mike Wander, DV Sgt. Rick Ketcham, and DVSU Director Anne Murray conducted 14 hours of training about domestic violence, stalking and protection orders with the Columbus Police Division's 123rd recruit class. Pictured is Mike addressing the class.

Congratulations to Chief Prosecutor Lara Baker-Morrish, who was installed recently as President of the [Columbus Bar Association Alliance](#). The Alliance works with the CBA to "to foster understanding of the legal profession through education and community service."

Pictured (left to right) are: Sharon Chappelle, outgoing president and incoming advisor, Lara, Heather Robinson, incoming president-elect, and Margaret Theibert, incoming secretary.



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Meet the Staff

From a Meritorious Service Award given by Columbus Chief of Police Kim Jacobs to the Mayor's Award for Excellence for Community Service to the Northland Community Council's President's Award, Assistant City Attorney Bill Sperlazza has earned plenty of accolades recently. What becomes readily apparent about Bill is the well-deserved recognition is a product of his strong work ethic and competitive spirit, qualities he inherited from his family and further forged by the region where he was born and raised.

Bill hails from the Mahoning Valley. His maternal grandfather worked more than 30 years for Wheeling-Pittsburgh Steel and his paternal grandfather ran a small coal mining operation for 25 years. His grandfather, father and several uncles were college athletes and that was the path Bill envisioned for himself as a youth. He played basketball in high school and expected to play collegiately, with the plan to eventually get into coaching.

However, a knee injury and subsequent ACL surgery his senior year in high school ended up causing a detour for his career choice. He still tried to walk-on the Youngstown State basketball team his freshman year, but his knee injury persisted. It was at this point that Bill decided to channel his drive, his competitiveness, and his intensity completely towards academics and attacked his coursework the same way he used to attack opponents on the hardwood.

After graduating with a degree in Political Science and minors in Accounting and Psychology, Bill entered the Ohio State University Moritz College of Law, taking inspiration from a family friend who was an attorney. During his second year in law school, he was hired as an intake officer in the City Attorney's Office. He moved up to law clerk and arraignment coordinator before being hired as a prosecutor after passing the bar exam.

Bill served as a courtroom prosecutor for about four and a half years, handling thousands of cases, before moving over to the City Attorney's [Zone Initiative](#) in 2012. As a Zone Initiative Attorney, Bill hit the ground running, working closely with police, code enforcement, building inspectors, health officials, neighborhood associations, and community members to eliminate public nuisances and blight in Police Zone One on the city's north side.

Working with a great team, Bill recently helped shut down six hotels that were operating as havens for drug trafficking and prostitution and got two more to begin operating up to community standards.

Bill also is the attorney assigned by City Attorney Pfeiffer to work with the public and an array of investigators on behalf of the City of Columbus to legally challenge the liquor permit renewal applications of problematic establishments deemed to be causing harm to communities.

Bill explains that his approach is simple: develop relationships with community members, law enforcement, and other public officials to help people and protect neighborhoods. He is resolute and aggressive in attacking problems, just like he used to be on the basketball court and in the classroom. And while he humbly appreciates the recognition he has received for his efforts, his greatest satisfaction is in knowing that he is helping others and doing what is right.



Bill Sperlazza

Title: Assistant City Attorney

Education: Ohio State University
Moritz College of Law, J.D.;
Youngstown State University, B.A.;
Girard High School, Girard, Ohio

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Citizen Action

The City Attorney’s Office took to the airwaves recently to shine a light on a group of accused thieves who normally work in the shadows, preying upon their victims during moments of vulnerability.

The suspects all have outstanding warrants for their arrest and are being featured in the latest episode of [Fugitive Files with Bill Hedrick](#), a joint production with [Columbus-TV](#).

The [U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics](#) reported in its most recent [National Crime Victimization Survey](#) (NCVS) that more than 11.5 million people nationwide were victims of personal property crime, including burglary and theft by deception. The federal government considers the NCVS to be “the largest national forum for victims to describe the impact of crime and [the] characteristics” of the offenders.

These statistics are based solely on reported incidents. It is likely that many more incidents of theft go unreported for a variety of reasons, including victims who may blame themselves for being scammed.

The City Attorney’s office hopes their campaign to educate and alert the public about personal property crime offenders will help victims understand that it is important for their voices to be heard.

Some of the suspects featured in the new [Fugitive Files](#) episode include Chad Edward Crosby, known as the “Craigslist Con Man” for his repeated use of the popular advertising web site to identify victims for his scams, and Steven Ressler, who is known as the “Car Repair Racketeer” after being accused of taking down payments for auto repair work he never performed.



Also featured was Hayley Stepp, who made headlines last year when she was caught on camera stealing from a *Street Speech* vendor struggling to overcome homelessness and stay off the streets. Ms. Stepp was originally summonsed to appear in court to answer the charges against her in late 2014 but she never appeared. Just recently she was arrested and convicted.

Chad Edward Crosby



DOB: 7/5/1984 (Age 30)
Height: 6’2” **Weight:** 160
Hair: Brown **Eyes:** Green
Case Numbers:
 2015 CRB 000111
 2015 CRB 004588

WANTED

Steven Ressler



DOB: 5/30/1962 (Age 53)
Height: 6’1” **Weight:** 185
Hair: Brown **Eyes:** Blue
Case Numbers:
 2014 CRB 031845, 2014 CRB 031847, 2014 CRB 031848, 2014 CRB 031844, and 2014 CRB 031849

WANTED

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