

[MUSIC PLAYING]

NINA MOINI: Our top story tonight-- Minneapolis community leaders will gather for a meeting to address a string of gun violence. 13 people were shot and 1 person was killed within 24 hours this past weekend. The shootings took place at Reign Nightclub in Uptown and the other near the intersection of 19th and Nicollet Avenue in the Stevens Square neighborhood, just South of I-94. And last night, another person was shot at that same intersection. Tonight's meeting will include Minneapolis City Council Member Elizabeth Shaffer, Hennepin County Sheriff Dawanna Witt, and members of the Minneapolis Police and staff from the mayor's office. Council Member Shaffer joins me now. Thanks for your time this afternoon.

**ELIZABETH
SHAFFER:**

Of course.

NINA MOINI: So you represent the area of Minneapolis right on the border of these incidents. And staff from the ward which represents Uptown will also be at this meeting, we understand. Why is it important for you to bring together city and law enforcement officials at this time?

**ELIZABETH
SHAFFER:** Whenever we have a crisis situation, it's all hands on deck. We need to have all the various jurisdictions, all the people with resources to come together, to really discuss and analyze what piece of the puzzle do you take, and how can I support you in your piece of the puzzle. And really, realize that this is going to take all of us. We cannot point fingers. We cannot point blame, but we can collectively encourage one another to really make a difference and really change the tenor and these activities that are really outrageous.

NINA MOINI: So you shared a message with constituents yesterday that public safety in Uptown and 19th and Nicollet have been already a major focus of your office for the past several months. What kind of work has your office been doing?

**ELIZABETH
SHAFFER:** Well, we've been working very closely in the Uptown area, having monthly meetings, multi-jurisdictional meetings between Hennepin County, Metro Transit, the 5th Precinct, opioid resource groups, both from the city and the county, really trying to have a discussion-- the library leadership there in Uptown-- really having a discussion of how we can come together to tackle this. And that has been successful in Uptown.

We have seen a change in the tenor of what is happening on the streets around open drug use and open drug sales. So of course, when this report of violence comes, it is with seriousness that we brought around the open drug use. We're going to be bringing that same seriousness to this report and incident of violence, both in Uptown and in 19th and Nicollet.

And in 19th and Nicollet, this has been a tougher situation since I started. This has been an activity area for drug use, drug sales for the last six years, really since COVID. And so with this incident, I think this brings a renewed commitment from me, from all those of us that have been already been working on this behind the scenes to get a little more higher profile. That, this area does deserve the change in the environment, just like Uptown did. And we now, I think, have some momentum to try to see some change.

NINA MOINI: Do you have any information that any of these shootings were connected to drug use or selling open-air drug sales, as you were talking about. Because I understand you had a meeting this morning with the Minneapolis Police inspector for the precinct. What kinds of conversations did you have, and did they give you any information about motives or any possible connections between the shootings?

ELIZABETH SHAFER: Yes, there are some possible things that we are considering. And I think that this evening, law enforcement leaders will be sharing what they can publicly. And I would encourage, anyone that's in the newsroom to attend that meeting. But of course, whenever there is a string of incidents, you have to look for connections and look into that. But nothing is public at this point that we can share.

One of the things we did share in this meeting is-- and really, I included Ward 10 staff. Council Member Osmond was in on this meeting as well as myself, county staff, Inspector Kelly. What I wanted to focus on is, yes, the report. But now, what can we do? Where is the breakdown and resources that you're experiencing that are making this harder to deal with? And that was really one of the main focuses of our conversation-- is what can we do to move forward to support both the county and MPD's efforts from our side as council members.

NINA MOINI: In just the last hour or so, Mayor Jacob Frey shared what the immediate response will look like, which includes increasing patrols like you talked about. Can you tell us about what exactly that looks like?

ELIZABETH SHAFER: I have not heard the mayor's report at this point in time, but I can tell and speak to a larger systemic issue that, yes, it's great if we're sending some more temporary patrols to the area. We absolutely need it. Maybe even a targeted enforcement, I'm not sure. But what we do need for the 5th Precinct is an additional community response team.

Currently, the 4th Precinct has this group. The 1st Precinct downtown has this group. And the 3rd and 5th precinct share a CERT team. And the CERT team is really a special unit that focuses on all pieces of a targeted investigation. They would do undercover work, they would do arrest work, they would be doing investigation into what's going on, and all of the fallout around a specific hotspot.

And currently, the 5th precinct and 3rd precinct are sharing that group. And we need to think about long run, with all the incidents that we've had in South Minneapolis since Operation Metro Surge to today, to really finding a way that MPD can have a community response team designated for the 3rd and designated for the 5th. And so that's something we're really going to be talking to the mayor about for long-term support for this area.

We did have a federal case that was played out right here at 19th and Nicollet not too long ago, where 29 people were arrested. Not all of those were at 19th and Nic. But a vacuum was made for three days, and then somebody else moved in. So we need some tools for long-term enforcement, and I think the CERT team for each of those precincts would be one of the opportunities. I also think the council could think about readdressing the drone issue that was voted down.

NINA MOINI: Yeah, tell me about it. I was going to ask you about that because there was a 6-6, it sounds like, split. You voted in favor of this, a pilot program which would deploy drones. How do you think drones would have helped in these most recent instances of gun violence?

ELIZABETH SHAFER: Well, I am not a law enforcement expert to know exactly how they may have been used. I think they can be used possibly for chasing suspects maybe, or keeping track of where cars are going or headed to. I think they can also be used for, if there was a gun or if there is still a gun in the area, they can go in and find that before an officer has to put their own life in danger-- would be some of the examples of that. But yeah, it is an interesting thing that I will be following up on because this is in Council Member Osmond's area, and I do think drones, we need to be using any of the technology that we have available for supporting our officers when we're so short-staffed.

NINA MOINI: I know Reign Nightclub will want us to clarify this didn't happen inside, but it was outside where a lot of people were hurt. At 1:30 today, you're going to be part of a Business, Housing, and Zoning Committee meeting where Reign is up for their liquor license renewal. I wonder how businesses in the area, if they are at all part of this, or part of maybe hold some responsibility in any way, or if any of them would have to change any practices, do you consider surrounding businesses during something like this?

ELIZABETH SHAFER: Oh, absolutely. Yeah, we have actually pulled the Reign license from the consent agenda today to allow city staff to do some more follow-up with the owners and management directly. We just want to understand better what's going on. We want to go back through the 911 calls to that location to see how many resources we have been spending in that area directly related to that business. So, yeah, not normally what my initial report is. We have not had a lot of official violations from this business, but we're taking extra precaution here just because of what happened and pulling it for today to give staff more time to look into that.

NINA MOINI: And just lastly, Council Member Shaffer, many people already know that MPD is in the middle of a leadership change. There's an interim chief right now, Bill Peterson. How is the city working with MPD to make sure that some of the instability recently within the ranks isn't impacting public safety?

ELIZABETH SHAFER: Well, I think our choice of Bill Peterson really has made that a non-issue in many ways. He is very familiar with many of the violent incidences being in charge of the 1st Precinct that we've experienced in Downtown and being a key player for the city already. So he knows a lot of the personnel, he knows the structure, he knows the tools and the toolkit to be able to call upon in times of crisis. So in my opinion, I feel like there is no gaps at this point in time. If we would have had a different interim chief, maybe. But at this point in time, he is really the best person we could have at this moment.

NINA MOINI: All right. Council Member Shaffer, thank you for your time.

ELIZABETH SHAFER: You're welcome.

NINA MOINI: That's Minneapolis City Council Member Elizabeth Shaffer.