

CITY OF NORWICH
Police Reform
Community Advisory Board (“CAB”)
Meeting Minutes
October 14, 2020
3:00 p.m.
Norwich Fire Department

PRESENT

Mayor Shawn Sastri
Police Chief Rodney Marsh
Distract Attorney Michael Ferrarese
First Assistant District Attorney Christine Rudy
Assistant Public Defender Rosemarie Richards
Pastor Jen Westervelt
Vincent Nucero via Zoom
Adrienne Zornow
Dave Jennings
Melody Girgenti
Adrienne Zornow
Missy Beers

ALSO

Lynn Murray
Scott Burlison
Rueben Roach

Welcome and Meeting Info

Adrienne Zornow (Stakeholder and Committee member) started the meeting – stated it was the 3rd meeting and that we would be discussing the role of the police. She stated that this was a hot button topic and that she wants to make sure that the police department doesn’t feel like what the committee talks about should be construed as punishment or that they are doing anything wrong.

Guest Speaker – Mental Health

Guest speaker could not attend she will be at the October 21, 2020 meeting.

Review Previous Minutes

No changes were made to the minutes.

Update

Rueben discussed that the union was voting on a candidate to represent the PBA.

Rueben also discussed that transparency was important for the Police Department. He discussed two incidents that are on Social Media regarding the Norwich PD.

The 1st incident was a picture of 4 police officers standing in their parade uniform and a swastika symbol was superimposed in the picture. He stated this was done because there was one supervisor that checked to make sure that the police cars were cleaned every day and if they were not then he would make them go back out and clean the vehicle. He noted that the Police Officer who put the picture up is not working with the Norwich PD.

The 2nd incident is of a Facebook post that was sent to a sergeant who was on vacation during the Christmas holiday. The sergeant asked the police officers on duty for Christmas Eve how their shift was going. The 4 police officers on duty sent a picture to the sergeant giving him the middle finger. The sergeant then posted the picture on Social Media, the picture was for the sergeant not for the public. It was noted that this picture was distasteful and inappropriate and was taken down immediately.

A question was asked regarding Social Media – Can the police department be more engaged on Social Media to address the issues?

The Police Chief stated that on most cases the lawyers put a gag order on the police department so that they can not comment on any investigations

Google Drive Tutorial

Adrienne Zornow gave a short tutorial on how google drive works.

Significant Finding from annual police reports

The committee wanted to know what a “fix it ticket” and a “aided code” were:

Fix it tickets are those tickets that are issued by a police agency (example a ticket for a headlight being broke) the individual has 24-48 hours to fix the problem, once the vehicle is fixed the individual brings their car and the ticket to the police department and a police officer will sign off that the car has been fixed. The individual then takes the ticket to court and the ticket is dismissed.

Pastor Jen asked if this process runs smoothly? Police Chief Marsh says it takes a couple minutes. He did note that the individuals must bring their car to the police station and if there are no police officers available the individual would have to return or go elsewhere.

Aided Codes are a catch all and they consist of:

Fingerprinting, Funeral processions, helping landlords, CPS visits, MCAT visits, parents calling the station because their child is acting out and ask to have a police officer come to their home and talk with the child, prisoner transportation, barricades, placing no parking signs, assist parole officers, etc.

The next question was what is the difference between welfare checks and record checks:

Record checks are when someone needs to get fingerprinted for an employment opportunity, criminal history checks, etc.

Welfare checks are when a police officer must check on an elderly, mental health checks, etc. A discussion took place over mental health checks, it was noted that there were 3 different categories of welfare checks that the police officers must respond to 941, 945 and 2209.

Discussion, Work Time

Animal Control – Pastor Jen was wondering if we could consider handling dog control in a different way. Can we have a recommendation for another avenue to explore so that our police officers are not tied up. It was noted that Council has discussed hiring a dog/animal control warden back in the PD budget. Discussion took place on what happened to the dog control position, it was mentioned that the prior chief made the decision to hire another police officer instead of a dog control officer. It was mentioned that NYS Ag & Markets requires that a City have a Dog Control Officer employed. The question was raised if the police officers like that part of their job and Police Chief Marsh stated no.

Parking tickets and no parking signs and police barriers was discussed. Parking tickets are not being completed that was a major job of the old dog control warden. The City has lost revenue because we do not have the staff to issues parking tickets.

The police department is assigned to event set up and take down. Our police officers before an event (i.e. Colorscape, GusMacker, etc.) must put up no parking signs and road barriers for these events. When the event is completed, they must go back and take down the signs and barriers. It was discussed and the committee agrees that the function of a police officer is not to put up no parking signs or road barriers and would suggest that this process be looked at. There were several suggestions: have volunteers put up and take down signs/barriers, have DPW take over that process.

It was decided that the committee would recommend that the City of Norwich hire a dog/animal control/parking position.

Criminal Complaint breakdown, the most were trespassing, disorderly conduct and grand larceny. Can you speak to the criminal complaint breakdown?

Discon (disorderly conduct) is a quality of life issue: quality of life issues, examples were: people talking loud/fighting in street at 2:00 am and people have to get up and go to work the next morning, children not being able to play in their yard because of needles, etc.

There were 120 arrests in August and September and most of these were warrants due to bail reform. Criminal justice reform has changed the way police officers respond to complaints.

It was noted that the police department should be able to patrol in an area with high crime. What can we take off your plate so that police officers can patrol the streets of Norwich?

Police Chief Marsh discussed how long it takes a police officer to complete paperwork after an arrest. A typical time frame is 6 to 7 hours per arrest. Adrienne raised the question can someone who is not a police officer do bookkeeping and administrative work? Police Chief Marsh stated that in a perfect world he would love to have a clerical position for the police department to upload DEMS, etc. This will be a recommendation from the committee to the council.

Mental health issue was brought up again, this is another area that the committee will need to discuss. The statute says that a police department must evaluate and transport mental health patients. The committee believes there should be other options for mental health issues.

Review Progress and action items

We will continue with the role of a police officer for the next session.

Police Chief Marsh will put in the Police Officer duty schedule to review. Members asked if a list of what a police officer/fire police can do compared to a civilian.

DA Michael Ferrarese would like to discuss 911 calls next week.

Ride along, if anyone wants to do a ride along, Chief will need home address and date of birth. Pastor Jen asked if this can happen on a regular basis? Chief Marsh states that you can do a ride along numerous times.

Determine Leader for Next Meeting

Pastor Jen Westervelt will lead the next meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Next meeting October 21, 2020 at 3:00 p.m.