

CITY OF NORWICH
Police Reform
Community Advisory Board (“CAB”)
Meeting Minutes
January 20, 2021
3:00 p.m.
Zoom meeting.

PRESENT

Other

Police Chief Rodney Marsh
Assistant Police Chief Scott Burlison
Christine Rudy – First Assistant District Attorney
Police Officer Brandon Clarke – PBA President
Pastor Jen Westervelt
Adrienne Zornow
Missy Beers
Lynn Murray

Meeting Intro:

Important dates coming up: January 26th there will be a public forum, CAB will not be presenting, any community members that want to review the common council meeting can go to the City of Norwich Facebook page. Community members who would like to give feedback/comments, ask questions, give feedback are able to do so by contacting City Hall to register. Who else will be a part of the public forum? It would be helpful to have other committee members at the public forum to assist with questions.

Council Presentation Updates

The red notes will be updated as we talk about those areas.

Police Department rules and functions, our short-term goals, some of the feedback, the council was asking questions related to qualifications and salary for positions such as the Administrative position as well as the parking reinforcement animal control. Lynn will get with the Director of Finance to come up with a yearly salary for each position, for the job description we should give them copies of the job description.

Chief Marsh: The DEMS/Secretary position being a dispatcher, he has had that discussion with Alderman in past years and there is a lot of reasons why that would never work, the DEMS secretary would be responsible for the body worn cameras, the booking room and cell block cameras, radio transmissions, phone call 911 recording, office manager position, paperwork, FOIL request, request for other records, this would be a full-time position. The idea of having a civilian sitting at the desk, we average about 24 walks in complaints, 31 phone calls per day. The desk officer is in charge of the cell block or booking room and when the arresting officer needs to go on another call the desk officer is responsible for the suspect and a civilian would not be able to be in charge of the cell block. Chief Marsh was asked that he document the job duties for this position to be added to the final work plan.

Adrienne suggested that we put links into the final plan. Pastor Jen wanted to know how the plan gets to the Governor. It is sent as an email.

An alderman mentioned a possibility of grant funding for new positions, but another alderman said that these are permanent positions and grant funding is not permanent. Adrienne can see where the alderman

was coming from, but she thinks that sometimes you can get funding from a position and then once you prove that is necessary then it might be easier to get in the actual budget and she does not want to leave any stones unturned. (Pastor Jen will comment on funding sources to be reviewed at a later date).

An alderman pointed out that there should be a cap on the long-term goals. So, we are saying implementation exceeding 18 months but not more than how long? (example: 18 months but not longer than 5 years) Adrienne does not know if it is feasible to do that as a broad stroke because some of the long-term goals would not be maxed out at 5 years. So maybe each goal should have its own timeline. This will be set aside and looked at when discussing each goal.

Part time Police Officers – questions would be how many hours would they be expected to work? A concern about a part time Police Officer arresting someone and what would happen when they had to testify at court, how would that be handled if the officer is part time and isn't able to be there? Currently officers end up going to court outside their scheduled work time. Chief Marsh: has had the same conversation with many alderman over the past years, he is against the part time officers, reasons: training would be a nightmare to try and keep them trained because they have other jobs, another thing they may work a couple of days and may not work for another couple of weeks they may start an investigation then may not return again for days and weeks and there is a lot of information they may have on that compliant and another officer would not be able to follow up on the rest. There is the court if they make an arrest there are felony hearings, grand jury and trials that would require them need to leave their full-time job in order to complete their duties. This would have to be contractual; you would have non-union members doing union member work which is a violation of the Taylor Act. In regards to retired officers: the officers that have retired in the last several years would not want to come back to Norwich due to the compliant volume that Norwich handles. The idea to have part time officers is to reduce overtime, but when we are fully staffed our overtime is nonexistent and if we have a secretary the officers would be able to be on the road more. Adrienne stated that once everything is in place if there is still an abundance of overtime or officers on leave then part time officers should be addressed. Asst. Chief Burlison – during the committee meetings we talked about community policing, there is no way you are going to put a part time officer who works once a week, twice a week or once a month on the streets and expect the Norwich City Police Department to foster a better community relations when you have part time officers that are not being seen every day by the public, they are not dealing with mental health, they are not seeing the needs of the community only on a part time basis. The community policing component will not be there with part time officers. Pastor Jen – do we keep it as part of the plan, do we make a revision, it does say add part time police officers or expand several full-time officers, do we focus on one or the other, what are our thoughts. Adrienne does not think that we make any decisions on major revisions until after the public forum, she thinks there is a way to re-word it to make sure that the goal of the plan is still there but to also honor the concerns of whether there is contract implications or training issues and hopefully it will not need to be addressed.

Adrienne wanted to know if we could hire a part time police officer to do PR? Officer Clarke stated it would be challenging with the flow of the day to day, week to week of the department, if you were not there. It would be a heck of a task to try and get the message to the public about the department with a part time position. Nancy wanted to know if we talked about the Secretary position to take on the PR aspect and then we would not require a police officer to be the PR, Pastor Jen said correct, Adrienne said that would be the best case scenario but again it is really unknown how much paperwork, etc. would be expected and depending on who it is they can only do so much just trying to think of a plan B. Nancy said putting it on a police officer would make more sense. Adrienne agreed Asst. Chief Burlison talked about a training. Asst. Chief Burlison - FEMA offers a 7-hour course for PR, you still have an officer be the PR person and to disseminate certain things and if it is major incident it would come from the Chief and doesn't believe that a civilian should do the PR position.

Officer Clarke – The union attorney says it would be a contractual agreement between the City and the Union as far as adding part time Police Officers to the NPD.

Adrienne had one more thing, and Alderman brought up adding more Police Officers to the NPD. He had mentioned Chenango County is almost 900 miles and has approximately 23 Officers, he was trying to compare 2 square miles of Norwich and the 20 officers that are currently employed versus how many officers Chenango County had, he was trying to say they had a lot more ground to cover and about the same amount of people. She wanted to know if there were additional statistics like the Chief had mentioned like how many calls are fielded per day, to her it does not matter how much physical square footage there is in the area it is about the traffic of activity and Pastor Jen thinks it is also about the population density. Chief Marsh said population and the City of Norwich is the county seat. When we get a call an officer responds within several minutes were the county is so spread out that they might not get there until the fight is over, and our arrests are right up to where the County is. Adrienne thinks we need more statistics. Asst. Chief Burlison says you cannot compare apples to apples because the County does not handle dog control; etc. Officer Clarke says that policing the city is different than policing the towns and county, the street team dealt with just the basic quality of life issues, like loud music and house parties, this team made the quality of life in Norwich peaceful and community members were staying into the City. Chief Marsh - remembers when a city resident came to the meeting and told the council that she regretted purchasing a house in Norwich because of the poor quality of life.

Community oriented policing

Should I note the alderman suggestions on purchasing an electric bike. Adrienne thinks only if there is a grant funding opportunity. If there is any grant for equipment that is better for the environment or what no like why not, but I do not think it would be something we should address as we have bikes that work.

Promote the opportunity for community members to participate in ride a long need to be added to the citizens police academy. Bike patrol and foot patrol would only be in the schedule if NPD is fully staffed. Chief Marsh - when we are fully staffed it is a 4-man rotation. A sergeant at the desk and 3 officers on patrol. So, two officers could be on patrol and one officer on bike or foot patrol. Adrienne's vision of foot patrol would be for the vehicle to be nearby, they would stop a couple blocks away and be out talking to people. Chief Marsh - the Police Officer could park on a side street take a walk around the community.

Missy deserves props for badges vs ballers with the basketball tournament was called out as a fun thing, then a question was asked about police department vs fire department basketball game, Pastor Jen we have not asked the fire department, so she does not feel comfortable putting that in the plan. Adrienne does not think it is necessary to put in the plan I think we can note it and again that would be a continuation of the board to flush out.

School Resource Officer – feedback from Alderman, retired police officers, age requirements were mentioned, armed officer's vs peace officers. Pastor Jen and Officer Clarke will continue to research what other schools are doing and they should be able to update the team next week.

Continuation of the community advisory board – Adrienne clarified that she meant the Superintendent of Norwich City Schools should be added to the community advisory board. Adrienne wanted to clarify the Charter. Dr. Harper sent an email about Dave and Melody and the importance of them being on the community. If Melody decides she does not have time from her first job to continue, we need to make sure that we are maintaining inclusiveness and have different perspectives so if community members drop out then she wants there to be some way for members to be replaced; to be able to keep the same spirit of the original community members. Committee members are mayoral elected. Each committee has a chairperson, and that chairperson is tasked with finding new members and then the Mayor appoints that member. Adrienne thinks this should be a conversation to explore this more. Not sure if there is a different way to organize the community advisory board and we should be proactive in making sure the advisory board is inclusive and has different perspectives, we need to figure out how to maintain that. Pastor Jen wanted to know how to recruit for members so that there is a well-rounded approach for team members. She also said that this component may need further considerations.

There is a recommendation that the Community Advisory Board should review police officer complaints, she mentioned we have not addressed this topic, but it will be addressed in the coming weeks.

An Alderman mentioned concerns on the use of force policy. He was expecting to see specific recommendations based on that policy. Missy, Adrienne, and Pastor Jen had a conversation and thought it would be wise to encourage him to review the minutes from the 1/6/2021 meeting, because the committee review this policy, and the minutes were very thorough. Adrienne stated - Depending on what comes up at the public forum some of these things that we have had discussion about without a recommendation still needs to be included in the background so that it is clear when people are reading it that this issue has been flushed out and addressed even if there is not a specific action item attached to it, she can see the concern, people don't know and she doesn't expect people to read all the minutes, but she thinks these hot button topics even if we don't have goals we need to be mindful to include these in the background. Pastor Jen - are you thinking in addition to the introduction. Adrienne is not sure yet, may know more when we go over procedural justice. A note was added to the introduction.

Recruiting a diverse workforce and one of the comments from an Alderman on the fees for civil service exams. Adrienne says that is another area where there is a lot of public support from our surveys, but this is outside the scope of work we are able to do. She thinks that in the plan somewhere we need to call out things we would love to see happen but at the common council level their hands are tied. Maybe adding in what steps need to be taking but there is nothing we can do at the local level to change the direction of this policy or that policy. He did say that every county or municipality charges a different fee, and the county is only \$15 but the Cities fees could be higher so it was not necessary a barrier in terms of an actual dollar amount that might be cumbersome, he understood the rest of the struggle with the civil service parameters. Chief Marsh - in the contract the officers must live within 30 miles which goes almost to Binghamton and over to Oneonta and just that only is good if someone is interested and owned a house and as long as they live within 30 miles radius they would not have to move. Lynn - City exams are \$15 for city residents and \$20 for nonresident, anyone that cross file must pay \$20. There is a fee waiver for candidates that cannot pay. Adrienne - can this radius be moved to 40 miles so that encompasses all of Binghamton. Lynn - The 30-mile radius is an MOU between the City and the PBA. Adrienne - we should make a recommendation to change the mileage to 40.

Should we add recruiting and recruiting a diverse workforce in the topics we discuss? Adrienne said she did not think so we should get through the current topics, once we do there could be some overlap that would address this area. We talked about racial disparities and building trust however, we do not have any action items in these areas, and this is one that can cross over, stick with what we got and once those are finished, we can add.

An Alderman suggested we consider another public forum following next Tuesday's meeting. Adrienne - we need to flush out when we should have another public forum. Lynn - final work plan on 3/2/2021, we could ask the council to have another public forum scheduled for 3/9/2021. Adrienne agrees that we should offer more opportunities for the public to be heard. Pastor Jen wanted to know how we are going to inform the public. Adrienne said we need council buy in first for 3/9/2021. Lynn will email the council to see about a public hearing on that day and will advertise.

Follow Up on Action Items/Close meeting

After public forum next Tuesday as long as people show up, we may need another de-brief, which will take most of the meeting next week. February 3rd will be the first day that we can start on the rest of the plan.

Next steps: Lynn - Review Job descriptions and create additional documentation about job duties and get salary from Director of Finance.

Chief Marsh – Secretary II job duties, being clear that this is not a dispatcher position.

Pastor Jen and Officer Clarke will do more research on the SRO position.

Capture information on why the City needs more Police Officers/compared to the Chenango County Sheriff Station. Adrienne will do research on this information.

Next meeting January 27, 2021 at 3:00 p.m. via Zoom

Closed meeting at 4:30 pm