

Public Safety Citizens Review Panel

Meeting Notes: 6-29-2020

Meeting time/duration: 3-4:20 p.m.

Members in attendance:

Bob Smith, Emily Stacey, Amanda Bulriss-Allen, Tenzin Dorjee, Michelle Cromwell, Maxine Perry, Will Brewer, Caprice Johnson, Hilary Rogers, Jaime Douthat, Police Chief Ritter, Councilor Elizabeth Gibbs

Absent: Ruby Roach

Also Present: Mayor Colin Read as ex-officio

Nominated/Elected

Emily Stacey Chair

Caprice Johnson Vice-Chair

Elizabeth Gibbs Recorder

Meeting times/schedule set: meeting once/week, Wednesday at 2:00, Starting July 8th; the estimated duration for meetings is 1 ½ - 2 hours

Emily will be absent Aug. 1st and will be self-quarantined for 2 weeks after; we discussed using either Skype or Zoom for members who need to attend remotely

Tenzin will be absent Aug 10-22 and will self-quarantine for 2 weeks after

Discussion turned to how the panel will determine what problem areas to make our focus.

Bob: uncertain of what the community needs

Michelle: suggested we identify the problems and challenges of the community

Amanda: suggested we survey the community (suggested using Survey Monkey); should focus on community needs; panel should be driven by community wishes

Hilary: suggested having community members come to our panel and talk about their concerns

Maxine: suggested we perform a fact-finding before the process is started to get a feel for what the community needs

Hilary: agreed and stated that different members of the community will have different needs

Amanda: the Margaret St. office of the Police Department has created good interactions with people

Bob: expressed the need for a 'change' not 'attack' culture; stressed the importance of understanding prejudice and bias

Maxine: suggested we have questions that we would like to ask for the community survey ready to share for next week

Hilary: suggested creating a shared form in google

Emily: cautioned that not everyone has access to resources to fill out a survey

Michelle: suggested Survey Monkey

Colin: informed the panel that City Hall has a mechanism in place for people to call, leave a message, and that message can be transcribed for us and placed in a google drive

Amanda: suggested going to the Food Bank to interview; she also suggested reaching out to PHA (Plattsburgh Housing Authority) folks for survey help

Hilary: suggested we set an agenda for the next meeting

Emily: come with questions for the survey and address what is on the resolution to drive the agenda

Tenzin: suggested compiling complaints against the police to identify areas of problems; asked for statistical data of crimes, where they occur and how they are handled

Amanda: would like to have information on mental wellness and substance abuse interactions

Bob: asked Chief Ritter what his relationship with the police union is like

Chief Ritter: it is good

Bob: what is the process to bring in union members? Wants to know if the union/contract is more about protecting members than finding solutions

Chief Ritter: assured that conversations are productive with the union

Maxine: what is the grievance process (for the police union)

Chief Ritter: explained that the conversations begin with him, then they could go to the Mayor or arbitration, depending on the nature of the issue

Tenzin: suggested we send Chief Ritter questions directly

Amanda: asked Chief Ritter what was the police department reaction to the creation of the panel

Chief Ritter: the police department members have a lot of questions

Amanda: said it's important to have a 'unified front' and maintain positive relationships with the police

Michelle: stated the importance of unpacking our assumptions and expectations

Maxine: agreed that our mindsets are all so different; we need to change mindsets and think differently

Tenzin: can we (members of the panel) contact members of the police department directly?

Mayor Read: hopes that questions go through the bargaining unit president or Chief Ritter

Bob: encouraged the police department members (officers and staff) to voice their views because it is very easy to make assumptions; there is a need to trust the system; let's go find the problem

Chief Ritter: he will talk to the bargaining unit president and ask if their unit would be willing to come to the panel and determine their willingness to participate in the conversation

Michelle: they are subject-matter experts

Chief Ritter: it is good to set the tone

Amanda: partnership as a change agent is a good approach

Chief Ritter: that is what the police department wants

Amanda: suggested we have questions for the police department AND have questions for the community

Tenzin: suggested we have one set of questions for the community and a second set of questions for the police department; then, compare the answers to each set of questions and come up with solutions to ensure that we are focusing on fairness and reliability of information

Chief Ritter: informed the panel that the Sheriff's office is also doing a citizens review panel because they are governed by a local legislative body (the County Legislator)

Bob: suggested that we should only focus on items that we can actually change; if you don't have the ability to change it, then don't waste time on it

Amanda: is going to connect with the Sheriff

Chief Ritter: is asking for input from the Sheriff

At the close of the meeting:

Please email Emily agenda items.

Meeting adjourned.