

Public Safety Citizens Review Panel Meeting Notes

Monday Aug. 17, 2020

Meeting Called to Order: Emily at 4:00

Members Present: Emily, Amanda, Michelle (arrived at 4:07), Maxine, Wil, Caprice, Chief Ritter, Elizabeth

Members Absent: Tenzin, Hilary, Jaime

1. Approval of the minutes for Aug. 10, 2020

In favor: Emily, Maxine, Wil, Caprice, Chief Ritter, Elizabeth

Abstain: Amanda

2. Motion to Remove Item 2 from the table

First by Elizabeth, Second by Wil

All in favor: Emily, Amanda, Maxine, Wil, Caprice, Chief Ritter, Elizabeth

Motion to Nominate a Vice Chair

First by Elizabeth, Second by Caprice

Nominated: Amanda, accepted

In favor: Emily, Maxine, Wil, Caprice, Chief Ritter, Elizabeth

Abstain: Amanda

3. Motion to Remove 3 from the table

First by Elizabeth, Second by Chief Ritter

In favor: Emily, Amanda, Maxine, Wil, Caprice, Chief Ritter, Elizabeth

Motion to Adopt Survey Questions

First by Levi, Second by Wil

Discussion:

Chief Ritter: praised Amanda and the group; hopes the panel will get the data they need.

Maxine: concerned on length, but agrees on the quality of the document; feels it is a bit deep.

Amanda: the survey is actually shorter in the Google form than print form; discussion on the distribution plan, technology and administration of the survey.

Elizabeth: read Counsel Schneller's advice on using volunteers to distribute surveys:

"To limit the City's liability—primarily due to COVID, but also due the unknown interactions which can occur with a door knocking campaign--I suggest the committee focus on virtual/remote survey options. In addition, they could explore phone options, placarding in public places, or mail options."

Maxine: she can coordinate with PHA

Michelle: questions how many community members in PHA?

Maxine: responds about 800 community members in PHA.

Amanda: suggests the distribution plan should be done by the working group.

Roll Call Vote to Approve the Survey Questions:

In favor: Emily, Amanda, Michelle, Maxine, Wil, Caprice, Chief Ritter, Elizabeth.

Old Business: Use of Force Policy

Elizabeth to Chief Ritter: can you share what changed between the original 2007 document and the updated document of 2020?

Chief Ritter: the new document is a somewhat model policy; a lot of transformation has happened in 13 years; in the 2007 document, more of a focus on penal law definitions; in the 2020 document, more of a focus on the sanctity of human life; acknowledges the focus on Use of Force and what is valid and necessary; the chokehold is banned; other changes over the last 13 years are defining certain levels of force; discussed what is the defense of justification; the penal law looks at qualifying circumstances for deadly force; it summarizes better levels; graduates into a higher level of intention (level 1-3); level 3=serious physical injury can cause death; may use in defense of your life or someone's life; if you are training someone to react you need to delineate; there is a use of force continuum.

Michelle: questions about de-escalation; where does de-escalation fall into the continuum? Questioned training.

Chief Ritter: discussed decision-making in a specific situation; used a Molotov cocktail as an example—if someone is using it as an incendiary, de-escalation may not be appropriate.

Michelle: intentionally and actively how does de-escalation fit in?

Amanda: with mental health folks, how does de-escalation look?

Michelle: interested in the intersectionality of mental health and race; for example, someone calls the police, police see a young, black, big man acting erratically—where does de-escalation come in?

Chief Ritter: de-escalation is always part of the equation; to say there is going to be a confrontation each time does not represent what PD does; appropriate only in a crisis.

Maxine and Michelle: there is always room for de-escalation.

Michelle: discussed the sanctity of human life; how are we enacting the sanctity of human life ALWAYS.

Chief Ritter: we are always at a certain level and we need to de-escalate; our baseline should mirror how you would keep it from de-escalating; use of force policy has to include de-escalation; this policy is heavier on the use of force.

Michelle: this creates a gap for us (the panel) to address; like the term “baseline”.

Emily: Some use of force continuum are a bit more lengthy. They can be up to five and there's a lot more information. But I can see where it looks like an officer is arriving on a scene and goes into attack mode. That's the way that it looks; it's not necessarily the case. When there is a threat of imminent danger you do not have time to sit there and think about what you are going to do. This use of Force is more for imminent danger. Someone pulls a weapon out or you come to a scene and someone is bleeding and two people are bleeding and fighting and you don't know if there are any weapons there and you have to act quickly. Those types of scenarios are very appropriate for this type of model. But then we have this shade of gray where one situation may look like one thing but it is not.

Maxine: that's why they need training.

Chief Ritter: but also need to be good decision-makers.

Maxine: language barriers are also a factor.

Elizabeth: questions the screening process on officers' decision-making abilities.

Chief Ritter: try to replicate it the best we can; there is a 6-8 month training program; it does not give the green light to be on their own until completed; also acknowledges that can't control 100% of situations; cadets get to see situations in real-time; cadets rotate training officers to give perspectives, so over time they can prove themselves and get solo experience; they can only get over-time when their solo time is over.

Maxine: role playing is good, especially in domestic violence situations.

Wil: question about curriculum.

Chief Ritter: curriculum is broken into blocks.

Amanda: redirects discussion back to policy; stresses patience; in relation to training, what opportunities are there for ongoing training—how do they get on-going training?

Chief Ritter: not aware of any trainings like this.

Amanda: in the city PD, could officers benefit from more on-going training?

Chief Ritter: yes.

Michelle: sensitivity is important too, the affective piece.

Amanda to Chief Ritter: the city PD sent an officer to Recovery Coach Training, which gives an opportunity to be seen as helpers.

Elizabeth: officers are dealing with internalized trauma.

Chief Ritter: discussed the Employee Assistance Program; it is available but it is voluntary and difficult to enforce.

Elizabeth: can it be made mandatory? Or is that a CBA issue?

Chief Ritter: not a CBA issue; it can be mandated; can't be legislated completely; can't put people in a room and tell them to talk about their feelings.

Michelle: we are talking about one-on-one counseling.

Amanda: brought up peer-led trauma training; more likely to discuss trauma experiences with peers.

Chief Ritter: peer support is the model.

Maxine to Chief Ritter: do you have authority to mandate?

Chief Ritter: it would be more hands-on monitoring and closely watching behavior.

Emily: need to see a pattern of behavior.

Michelle: trauma is different for everyone.

Chief Ritter: discussed the NY State Police robust network and programs, such as the Snowslip foundation; DCJS was getting involved in the program.

Old Business, Item 2: discussion of how to distribute the survey

The working group will collaborate this upcoming week to discuss how to distribute widely the survey to as many people as possible.

New Business:

1. Panel openings: Bob Smith resigned; Elizabeth discussed/explained the selection process for new members; new members should be approved at the next council meeting (Thursday Aug. 20).
2. Public Comment: Amanda made a brief statement on why public comment has been reduced; we may not always have public comment during meetings to maximize our panel's work session; there will be a place on our website to submit public comment or leave a voice mail message.

Public Comment:

Sarah Martin: thanked Michelle on the discussion comments on de-escalation; alarmed that it's not top priority; heard the comment about "being jaded" and "maintaining compassion"; suggests relocating money for tactical gear to training; some members have expressed concern about police and public's interactions; we (the group she represents) are door-to-door trying to get input on concerns; states, "we are trying to get feedback"; offered to help.

Aubrey Eldridge: the last meeting from 8-10, the panel approved the minutes, but they are not posted and questioned the panel's adherence to Open Meetings Law and eliminating/minimizing public comment; with permission from the Chair, Elizabeth clarified for Aubrey what is allowable under Open Meetings Law.

Brianna House: at the last meeting, the panel shut down the conversation surrounding "defunding the police," but pointed out that we (the panel) don't have enough data to shut that down as a possibility; states that as a black woman, when police show up, the situation is already escalated and de-escalation is needed—always.

Joanne Britner: excited about the discussion of looking at resources; asks why aren't we doing anything with our youth; familiar with police presence when they are called to Lakeview Towers.

Next Meeting set for Monday Aug. 24th from 4-5:15

Motion to Adjourn: first Chief Ritter, second Maxine

All in favor by roll call.

Meeting adjourned at 5:17