



Citizen Review Board Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, September 20, 2022

4:00 PM

1) Call to Order

The meeting was Called to Order by Chairperson Hunt.

2) Roll Call of Members

Members present: Tiffany Hunt, Lee Nathans, Becky Guzman, and Glenn Soden

Also in attendance: Ben Kessler, Elizabeth Ellman, Gary Lewis

3) Approval of Minutes

A) 2022 March CRB Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve the Minutes by Ms. Guzman, second by Mr. Soden.

4) Presentations/Special Guests

A) Chief Lewis

Chairperson Hunt asked Chief Lewis how his time in the Department has been going, and how the CRB can best support.

Chief Lewis indicated he is looking holistically at the internal functions of the Police Department and the Community as a whole. He is looking to create new best practices through auditing and reviewing old practices, interaction externally through community outreach, and enhanced internal communication. Chief Lewis indicated he is making himself available and also that a mounted horse unit is being created; the logistics of this was discussed.

Mr. Nathans asked about Chief Lewis' previous experience with Citizen Review Boards. Chief Lewis indicated he has had experience in Louisville; the group worked primarily to promote and enhance public safety, although they did deal with complaints. Chief Lewis thinks Bexley's CRB could expand to include this.

Ms. Guzman asked about staff openings; Chief Lewis indicated the agency is fully staffed with one officer in the Academy. Chief Lewis wants to create lieutenant positions to allow for promotion and additional recruitment.

There was discussion about Bexley residents joining the agency and a youth academy. Chief Lewis does not want to minimize those who came before him and believes the force will become disciplined with oversight and administrative processes. He will implement checks and balances that will be reflected back to the public. He wants to be accessible and visible, and would like there to be more ambassadors and residents who want to see and engage with the Chief. Succession planning is part of the Chief's vision and he stated he will start fresh with a new perspective and vision.

Chief Lewis explained he believes the community has been receptive to giving him space to make change.

Mr. Soden said the force is responsive. Chief Lewis indicated "predicable is preventable" and he will work to change the model to a more proactive approach.

Mr. Nathans indicated there have recently been crimes of opportunity in both the residential and commercial sectors.

Regarding traffic offenses, Chief Lewis indicated Mayor Kessler has a comprehensive approach; additions have been made to help drivers slow down on Main Street and officers are still engaging on Main. There are a number of crashes on Broad Street. Chief Lewis indicated there is a difference between policing and public safety, which each requires a separate approach.

Mr. Soden shared he has observed the issue of enforcement versus policing, and discussed enforcement versus opportunity. Chief Lewis stated these types of things need to be looked at wholistically, the purpose of education, and the message that is being sent. He indicated he reviews all shift records and noted that many warnings are issued. Mr. Nathans shared that much is situational and Mr. Soden said warnings are good ideas.

Chief Lewis stated that citations will become income-based and are issued to change behavior; Mayor Kessler indicated he believes money is lost by prosecuting the tickets that are issued.

Ms. Guzman discussed mobile speed cameras and stated that they are objective; laws and statues make it easy to be prejudiced and act on prejudice. She would appreciate the change because things can be difficult when someone is legally justified but things are more complex ethically and/or morally. Mayor Kessler clarified that mobile speed cameras will be on side streets where it would be an ineffective use of resources to place a cruiser. These would be placed on streets where there is a safety concern and with ample signage. Per the current iteration of state code, any revenue from a camera is a direct reduction in local government funding; this is an attempt to prevent this practice from being a revenue leader. Mr. Nathans shared his opinion that it is counter productive where there is a reputable agency. Mayor Kessler indicated there is a corollary between countries that use these types of cameras and traffic deaths.

Mayor Kessler indicated that drivers are adapting to the engineering changes.

Board members agreed the conversation with Chief Lewis has been helpful, and Chief Lewis stated his style is different and he is looking through a different lens than what was done previously.

5) Public Comments

6) Unfinished Business

7) New Business

Mayor Kessler stated one formal complaint had been submitted this year regarding a playground incident, in which there was an altercation between children, which was followed by a police officer speaking to the children. The complaint was responded to by the Police Department and an appeal had not been filed.

Ms. Hunt recommended Kobe Osei as the fifth member of the Board.

Mayor Kessler explained there was a complete record of the event at the playground. Mr. Nathans said he believes that having documentation allows for proof. Mayor Kessler stated this interaction was discussed in the Juvenile Interaction working group. The interaction has been referenced in conversations about the appropriateness of police interaction in various scenarios. Mayor Kessler shared an allegation that had been made as part of that interaction had been refuted.

Chief Lewis asked about records retention for the CRB; Mayor Kessler said there isn't a statute of limitations for filing a complaint, but there is a window for an appeal. He further clarified that once a complaint is filed, a longer timeline hinders the investigation due to a lack of records. Mayor Kessler shared his belief that there should be some sort of closure and meeting attendees discussed how this could work in conjunction with pending court cases. There was further discussion, but the Board members did not agree on a time limit. It was generally agreed upon that language could be added to the appeal form.

8) Adjourn

Motion to adjourn by Mr. Soden, second by Ms. Guzman.