

Connecticut General Assembly

Police Transparency & Accountability Task Force

Daryl McGraw, Co-Chairperson



c/o Judiciary Committee, Room 2500

Legislative Office Building

300 Capitol Avenue

Hartford, Ct 06106

MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, March 11, 2020

1:00 PM in Room 2A of the LOB

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 PM by Chairman, Daryl McGraw

Present: Daryl McGraw, Amy Bepko, Ken Barone, Sgt. John Szewczyk, Brian Foley, Chief Keith Mello, Chief Thomas Kulhawik, Chief William Wright.

Chairman McGraw welcomed the members and thanked them for attending.

Approval of the minutes from February 19 was given.

Meeting:

Ken Barone summarized the goals of this committee and addressed last meeting previous discussion on the process used by police to reduce profile-based traffic stops. There is currently a system in place to reduce these stops however, stops made due to socioeconomic status ex: uninsured cars, should be further investigated. Legislators need to be aware of the unintended consequences of the laws put in place.

Comments:

Chief Thomas agreed with Ken that the additional information presented posed many issues

Today's focus:

Today this committee wishes to explore how the officers address individuals with physical and mental disabilities. Additionally, the community attitudes and perception of police officers is of significant concern. By addressing these issues, the committee wishes to improve police transparency and accountability as well as trust between officers and community members.

Referencing p. 19 of the "President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing", Ken Barone references the collection of data as an avenue of police transparency. The need for additional data was noted in reference to a low community survey response rate with Mr. Barone questioning the depth and quality of the surveys. Chief Thomas Kulhawik said that they do this with the help of Sacred Heart interns however, they have received a response rate of 22%. CALIA requires community surveys.

Chief Wright addressed the issue of police related shootings noting that there hasn't been a death. The protocol set in place would require the Chief States Attorney and Chief Medical Examiner.

Ken Barone discusses the great amount of variation between department websites and public access to the information. Creating a list of the top five most important resources to provide to the public, CALIA maybe being number 1, will help create a uniform approach to the available information.

How do we take the temperature of the public?

- Proposed: climate survey, perception of public.
- Sgt. Szewczyk noted that while an emphasis has been placed on diversifying the department, little has been placed on the retention and promotion of minority/ members of the LGBTQ community. What are the retention rates 5 years later?
- Shafiq Abdussabur referenced Senator Bradley's external investigations. He went on to say that there has to be a place where members of the community can file a complaint. The Internal Affairs office is helpful. There must be a place an individual can propose a bill outside the department

Ken Barone noted that Civilians have also complained about filing a complaint within a department. They won't go back to the department and they are frustrated with the complicated process of CHR's.

Question for group: Are there other models for individuals to file complaint ensuring members of the community feel the process is fair? What can be done internally for officers?

- Gather information about retention of minorities, & promotion using surveys.

Sgt John Szewczyk felt the CHR process is difficult, and that officers will feel uncomfortable with making complaints because they went to the academy with these people.

Shafiq Abdussabur highlighted the issues seen in New Haven, if an officer feels the need, they may quit their job and hire an attorney, but if they are from the union, they will be given an attorney that works for both teams. A program that may help officers in this situation is called, PORAC. They will get you a lawyer from anywhere you want.

Ken Barone recommended that the group may want to develop a resource guide with a final product that includes a report that speaks to law enforcement to increase transparency. Within the report a document should be directed at the community to increase trust and transparency with law enforcement. The report could be created using a pre-existing survey, handed out bi-annually.

Chief Mello agreed that agencies can use the report as a guide/roadmap. However, hiring, retention and promotion is not the same in all agencies. The data will look very different for those that have different service rules. Shafiq Abdussabur commented on the importance of minority representation but that those individuals need to be the right fit. He suggested taking a look at who are the people in charge, to make sure they are representative of the community.

A concern was raised by Chairperson McGraw in the training process that older training officers aren't taking the training serious. He would like more information about the Post training including a list of hours spent on each subject.

Chief Mello stated that Post is the largest basic training facility in the state and that 2 or 20 hours of mental health training will not make the officers experts. He believes those municipalities should provide additional training. Those police officers will be getting paid to learn the components of de-escalation. Post is designed to educate in basic training, after that there should be agency training.

Chief Wright agreed with Chief Mello stating that when officers come back from training, they have the basics. They are then given additional courses on ethics, sexual harassment and discrimination twice a year. The extra training is a local

issue (local government). If the right people are hired and trained correctly, we will have transparency. The public should understand that the officers are well trained.

Shafiq Abdussabur poses a question to the group, "Do we want to go after the gun manufacturers or the community response"? For example, the day before the kid was shot, we need to ask as officers what could we've done for the community? What could the community have done, and now that it's happened, how are we as officers going to handle it? It's been 50-60 years filled with negative ideas about cops and now we need to create honest transparency.

Annie Dance spoke with the committee about the fact that no one with a disability is on the task force stating that she would like to be a resource. Prior to the meeting she was prevented from entering the building with her service dog.

Nearing the end of the meeting, Chairperson McGraw began to summarize what had been discussed noting that there had been a lot of disagreements about what we should focus on. He appreciated Mr. Foley's focus on police shootings, and transparency. If, 12 hours of training is with a taser, he felt not enough time has gone to the other areas.

Ken Barone suggested that the committee hone in on the mission and vision, to have a product for the end of year. He suggested we create a policing guide on transparency and accountability. The creation of a task force schedule, where each meeting explores a specific topic was also suggested.

Topics to discuss & final thoughts

- Community input and involvement
- Officer client services: Give direction on how often should they be done
- Complaints: What process should be used internally and externally (officers & community members)
- Data collection: What do we currently collect? Other things we should collect? What are other states doing?
- What is the recommendation we have to improve transparency and accountability?
- Brian Foley: What happens when there is a police shooting? How do we respond, transparency. This should be the main focus for this task force.
- Chief Mello: We spent a whole year on accreditation for training, we need to get focused

At the end of the meeting Ken Barone recommended in a week, the task force examine the law that says how police address people with mental and physical disabilities. He encourages the committee to invite people that may help everyone be more informed.