

Connecticut General Assembly
Logistics
Subcommittee
Police Transparency & Accountability Task Force

Rep. Joshua Hall, Chairperson



c/o Judiciary Committee, Room 2500
Legislative Office Building
300 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, Ct 06106

Minutes
Tuesday, December 1, 2020
5:00 p.m., via Zoom

Attendees: Joshua Hall (Chair), Chief William Wright, John Szewczyk, Stephen Saloom, Daryl McGraw, Ken Green, Shafiq Abdussabur, Melvin Medina, Bishop John Selders

Others: Ken Barone (CCSU), Karen Boisvert (POSTC), C.J. McGuffey (POSTC), Andrew Clark (CCSU), Deb Blanchard (Judiciary Committee), Renee LaMark Muir (CCSU), Sharad Samy (CCSU), Brian Anderson (AFSCME Council 4), Sgt. Jeff Reimer (AFSCME Council 4), Lorin Dafoe (AFSCME Council 4), Attorney Andrew Matthews (CSP Union), Bill Malitsky, Sergeant Kris Engstrand, Attorney Patti Shea, Deirdre Daly, Alexis Smith, Vanessa Avery, Donald McAuley

I. Convene meeting and welcome

- a. Chair Hall convened the meeting at 5:05pm. At the request of the chair, members and guests introduced themselves.*

II. Approve October 27, 2020 and November 24, 2020 meeting minutes

- a. A motion was made by Ken Green to approve the minutes from 10/27/20 and 11/24/20. The motion was seconded by Chief William Wright. The minutes were approved unanimously.*

III. Police Union Presentations

Chair Joshua Hall opened the discussion by thanking members of the different police unions for attending. He informed them that they would have 15 minutes to share their thoughts and recommendations with the subcommittee to help inform the work of the committee.

- a. AFSCME Council 4*

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Sergeant Jeff Reimer from the East Windsor Police Department, and President of AFSCME Council 4 Public Safety Committee was introduced. Sergeant Reimer began with comments regarding Section 16 of the bill, the new mental health requirements for officers and the failure to comply or pass with mental health checks. Sergeant Reimer also spoke about Section 30 of the bill, an officer's ability to be charged with a felony on the grounds of not reporting another officer's behavior. He suggested that this section of the law is too vague and needs further clarification. Sergeant Reimer then discussed recommendations currently being considered by the subcommittee. He was concerned that compiling citizen complaint information against officers is not necessary, unfair, and jeopardizes the safety of the officer. Sergeant Reimer urged the task force to use the POSTC process for managing complaints. He also urged the subcommittee to highlight the cases where officers correctly do their job, and to not further stigmatize the profession.

Lorin Dafoe, staff attorney at AFSCME Council 4, discussed the constitutional issues regarding the new deadly use-of-force standards outlined in the bill. She also discussed Section 41 of the bill, regarding governmental immunity, and believed that the provisions were both unlawful and could endanger officer's safety.

b. Connecticut State Police

Andrew Matthews, former president of the CT State Police Union and current executive director spoke next. He stated that since the Police Accountability bill was passed this summer, there have been 53 retirements and 1 resignation in the field. He spoke about the concerns of Troopers regarding Section 41 of the bill, which he mentioned was a major stressor for officers as they work to protect the public. He also spoke about Section 29 of the bill, stating that any changed to use-of-force standards should require additional time for training. Attorney Matthews highlighted Section 3 of the bill, stating that the language was too ambiguous. He also highlighted Section 16 of the bill, stating it needs more consideration for officers' mental wellbeing. Lastly, Attorney Matthews addressed his concerns regarding Section 40 of the new law.

c. Police Officers Association of Connecticut

Sergeant Kris Engstrand of the Police Officers Association of Connecticut was the final union representative to address the subcommittee. Sergeant Engstrand, echoed many of

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the previous concerns highlighted by the first two presenters. He also provided insight into the need for more funding for training, and the necessity to have the April 1st deadline regarding changes to the use-of-force standards to be delayed. He also mentioned that he is aware of 7 officers that have left the profession since the bill passed. He talked about the importance of recruitment and improving morale within the profession since the passage of the law.

IV. General Discussion

Chair Hall opened the meeting for comments, questions, and discussion. Ken Green asked Lorin Dafoe about statistics on POSTC overriding a decision by the Department of Labor to fire an officer. Lorin Dafoe responded that she did not have those statistics. Ken Green then asked the presenters how a police department would find out about a current officer needing mental health support. Attorney Matthews responded that CSP uses an early warning system to detect if an officer is having an issue and will send the officer for an evaluation to ensure they are fit to perform their duties. Attorney Patti Shea also mentioned that there are peer support groups within departments for officers with traumatic experiences.

Ken Barone corrected the record, Sgt. Reimer stated that there is no racial profiling in Connecticut. Ken stated that he has co-authored all statewide studies since 2015 and the studies never concluded that there is no racial profiling. The studies are complicated, nuanced and simply identify racial and ethnic disparities, which have been identified in every report. Ken then asked if the presenters should provide information regarding new liabilities for officers under Section 41 of the bill. He mentioned that it was stated that officers would not need additional liability insurance and questioned whether that was correct. Attorney Matthews responded that many officers believe that if they do their job they may be sued, and as a result of that belief, they may purchase liability insurance for peace of mind. Ken questioned whether that was necessary since the new law didn't appear to remove indemnification for officers.

John Szewczyk asked presenters if they had suggested changes regarding the mental health examinations and to ensure that they wouldn't be weaponized against an officer. Sergeant Reimer responded that the bill needs to include what happens to an officer if he is deemed mentally unfit to return to work. Attorney Matthews responded that the bill attacks mental health, drug testing, discipline, qualified immunity, personnel files, etc.

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Attorney Matthews also stated he hopes for further discussion and conversation on these issues with the subcommittee.

Melvin Medina asked Sergeant Engstrand for clarification on the point made about the public having a false belief that the police are against them. Sergeant Engstrand replied that we need to stand together as a community and fix the issues and not pit cops against the public. Melvin Medina then asked if presenters believe what happened in Minneapolis does not affect Connecticut policing. Attorney Matthews replied that in New England there is pride in having the most trained, professional, and selective police officers in the country. Melvin Medina replied that he was inquiring about the use of deadly force. Attorney Matthews replied we don't have the data to support those numbers. Melvin Medina then inquired if police departments track the data of how many people die during interactions with the police. Attorney Matthews replied that he believes his agency does, and they report it to the FBI. Melvin Medina asked if presenters believed it was necessary to collect that data. Attorney Matthews replied yes, it is important. Melvin Medina then asked what direct harm was coming to police officers due to this bill being passed. Attorney Matthews replied that Troopers have been stripped of some collective bargaining rights, and have experienced damaged reputations.

There was no additional questions or comments.

- V.** Announcement of time and date of next meeting.
 - a. The next meeting is scheduled for December 8th at 5:00 p.m.*
- VI.** Adjournment
 - a. Meeting was adjourned at 7:15 p.m.*