

Minutes of Hyattsville Police and Public Safety Citizens' Advisory Committee meeting on October 13th, 2021

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Chairperson Patricia Page called the meeting to begin at 19:37

In attendance on the Zoom meeting

- Committee
 - Committee Member Taylor Wilder
 - Chairperson Patricia Page
 - Committee Member Bette Dickerson
 - Committee Member Mariel Alper
 - Secretary Joel Chan
 - Committee Member Jerome Brown
- Council / Liasion
 - Mayor Kevin Ward
 - Liasion Deputy Chief Scott Dunklee
 - Council Member Rommel Sandino
 - Council Member Robert Croslin
 - Chief Jarod Towers

Agenda and Notes

Approval of minutes

- Committee Member Bette Dickerson motioned to accept minutes from August
 - Committee Member Taylor Wilder seconded
 - Passed with zero objections
- Committee Member Bette Dickerson motioned to amend the minutes from September
 - Requested changes:
 - Clarify that Deputy Chief will stay on if requested to do so after hire of new chief
 - Add details on which officer (Officer Kelly Hernandez) graduated from Drug Recognition Expert Training
 - Clarify details on police appreciation event
 - Clarify that we planned to add five dozen cupcakes gifted by bakery
 - Clarify that Committee Member Bette Dickerson planned to attend the shifts
 - Secretary Joel Chan seconded
 - Passed with zero objections

Introduction of new Chief Jarod Towers

- Chief Towers introduced himself
 - previously in Calvert County; then in Cheverley, ended up acting chief end of 2018 for 11 months, then was chief of police in 2019
- Highlighted reputation for being hard on officers in terms of discipline, which he addressed proactively with HPD officers who had concerns; clarified that this came from a strong belief in accountability, and only led to termination in serious cases with integrity issues where training and progressive discipline had not been successful
- Q&A:
 - Committee Member Taylor Wilder: why did you apply to Hyattsville?
 - Chief Jarod Towers: have developed relationship with former Chief Atwood; realized overlap in values of community and department; impetus was ~month after Atwood took another position, then was approached by Atwood to think about applying
 - Secretary Joel Chan: wondering if you had heard about citizen review board
 - Chief Jarod Towers: yes, in general supportive of community involvement, but concerned about details of implementation given new legislation requiring county oversight; concerns about possibility of confusion with multiple findings. Eager to keep an eye on this and work together with county and city to do this well.

Issue of trash overflow

- Chairperson Patricia Page raised the issue of overflow of trash in her Ward; only two cans; some place in plastic bags, which overflows to the streets sometimes. Would like to recommend WPDW conduct assessment of trash that's outside trash can; could possible solution be to issue extra or two trash cans to residents, so that trash is not on streets, with concerns about rodents? Not sure if in all wards, but definitely in Ward 5
- Liaison Deputy Chief Scott Dunklee: would be great to get representative from ward 5 to discuss
- Mayor Kevin Ward: re: rodents, started treatment about 2.5-3 weeks ago, will continue, coordinating with e.g., north point, and want to adjust to other areas. also, re: trash receptacles, working to hold private property owners and business owners to empty on a timely basis (bc city isn't responsible for those), and increase collection frequency back to pre-COVID levels
 - have also talked with DPW about increasing
 - have also talked more to push private property owners (with citations) to hold them accountable for making needed changes
- Committee Member Bette Dickerson: thank you for your active attention!

Virtual technology for officer training

- Committee Member Bette Dickerson requested an update for the committee on virtual technology for officer training
- Liaison Deputy Chief Scott Dunklee: this is about mental health training; VR goggles, to simulate scenarios of interactions with people who are having a mental health crisis; you act, and then later the recording is played back to you from the person's perspective
 - We were also told that the Committee could try them out if we got them

Police appreciation event report

- Chairperson Patricia Page: would like to credit Committee Member Bette Dickerson for efforts and hard work to make this event a success
- Liaison Deputy Chief Scott Dunklee: officers were thrilled with the card and the cupcakes
- Committee Member Bette Dickerson: thank you to Chairperson Patricia Page for, and thank you to Committee Member Mai Abdul Rahman for giving some money to help with the costs. We would like to continue periodically showing our appreciation!
- Chairperson Patricia Page: maybe something for national police week? if not for this week, maybe by end of October

Hosting a public safety night / outreach

- Chairperson Patricia Page was thinking about nov 11, but ward 5 is holding fall community harvest on nov 13; will probably delay
- Council Member Rommel Sandino: question, is this similar to national night out?
 - Chairperson Patricia Page: trying to do something similar to Mt Rainier

- Committee Member Bette Dickerson: are we going to do neighborhood walks again?
 - Liaison Deputy Chief Scott Dunklee: had planned, pre-COVID to do one ward per month. Would like to revisit this in the Spring, but possibly also in the fall if possible. Did do this with the City employees recently.
 - Mayor Kevin Ward: suggest including people from DPW and others from health and safety as well in this community walk
 - Committee Member Mariel Alper: This event might also be a good opportunity to crowdsource ideas for priorities for the council.
 - Committee Member Bette Dickerson: also want to hear the good things!
- Chairperson Patricia Page suggest creating a PPSCAC complaint and compliment form for people to contribute to
 - Liaison Deputy Chief Scott Dunklee: that's already in place, will send us a copy
 - Committee Member Bette Dickerson: we should integrate this channel with what are hearing also

Closing

- Committee Member Bette Dickerson motioned to adjourn at 20:30
- Committee Member Jerome Brown seconded
- passed with zero objections