

Panel Notes for Monday July 27, 2020

Meeting brought to order: 4:09

Roll Call: Emily, Amanda, Maxine, Wil, Hilary, Jaime, Chief Ritter, Elizabeth

Absent: Bob, Tenzin, Michelle, Caprice

1. Adoption of the Mission Statement

Motion to adopt Maxine's statement by Chief Ritter, second by Emily

All in Favor: motion carried

Adopted Mission Statement:

The Public Safety Citizens Review Panel is committed to working with the Plattsburgh City Police Department to review its policies and procedures and to submit recommendations for best practices, which will foster trust, respect, and encourage the pursuit of positive relationships with all members of this community.

2. Create a Nominating Committee

Discussion:

Hilary: we should not nominate because the Common Council should fill the vacancy, otherwise it's like we are nominating ourselves.

Amanda: a new person should be nominated the same way the panel was created.

Hilary: the public should have the opportunity to bring their own names for consideration.

Amanda: agreed with Hilary.

Chief Ritter: agreed that names should be brought forward from the mayor and appointed by Common Council Resolution.

Motion by Hilary:

To enable Emily Stacey to act on behalf of the panel to request the Mayor's office to seek nominations and approval to fill vacancies on the panel and to nominate and be ratified by the Common Council.

Second by Chief Ritter

All in favor; motion carried.

3. Fill the Vice Chair

Discussion:

No one is currently interested.

Elizabeth: we have several members absent and a position unfilled; do we want to wait until the panel is in full attendance and the vacancy is filled before we fill the vice chair?

Agreement in the panel to wait.

Motion to table: Jaime, second by Amanda

All in favor; motion to Table the Item carried.

4. Discussion of the Existing Use of Force Policy

Elizabeth: asked questions about training for the officers

Chief Ritter: discussed the importance of finding vetted trainings for his officers; there are some additions to this policy; firearms training happens 2 times per year; looking into someone to do

de-escalation training; asset seizure pays for trainings; there are already trainings for hostage and live shooter drills.

Amanda: are there other trainings?

Wil: would like to see the old use of force policy.

Chief Ritter: it is already uploaded in the shared drive.

Wil: questions about reporting and also on discharge of firearms reporting.

Chief Ritter: there is both internal and external reporting; use of a weapon is a reportable use of force; officers need to determine and evaluate 'what is a threat'; incidents are reported to the DCJS (Department of Criminal Justice); there is also a state reporting component.

Amanda: how many per month do you see?

Chief Ritter: under 5

Amanda: do you see any trend in those?

Chief Ritter: he looks for trends, especially if there is an historical trend with a specific officer.

Jaime: questions about the duty to report

Chief Ritter: new to this document

Maxine: asked about the 2017 incident that has been in the media

Elizabeth: we are not an investigative panel or a panel that is tasked with reviewing the conduct of officers; we are only empowered by the Resolution language passed by the Common Council.

Hilary: it's important to look at the process and make recommendations on the process, not case specific, only a review of process to make recommendations.

Amanda: agreed with Hilary; there has been confusion especially with public statements about our panel; we do not have an investigative role.

Hilary: need to look at how the process works.

Elizabeth: referencing the document, questions of the totality of circumstances.

Chief Ritter: the policy can't address everything

Elizabeth: do we have enough training for these areas?

Chief Ritter: don't have enough training; can never have enough training.

Discussion ended: we will continue discussing this document at our next meeting.

Old Business:

1. Establishing groups for the survey: it was agreed that we would communicate by email on survey questions; Emily needs people to respond to emails and communicate to each other and to her.

New Business:

1. Open Meetings Law
Hilary spoke to the city attorney (Dean Schneller) who clarified the need for the panel to adhere to Open Meetings Law; when city employees (in this case, Chief Ritter) and a lawmaker (in this case Councilor Gibbs) are involved, it makes a grey area in the case of Open Meetings Law; city attorney believes the panel is subject to the Open Meetings Law. Additionally, the FOIL (Freedom of Information Law) clerk is the city clerk.

Public Comment:

Matti Allen: audio of the last meeting during public comment was indiscernible and asked if meeting minutes could be made public.

Elizabeth to Emily: I will contact Beth Carlin for that.

Hilary: we need to add approval of the minutes to our agendas. When they are approved, then we can ask for them to be added to the website for public view.

Amanda: we need to make dates available.

Sarah Martin: suggest posting agendas on-line too; ~~agreed on our action that we can not approve our own members~~; said the panel can appoint among ourselves and don't have to go back to the common council; has questions about what trainings are available to police officers and open to the public for review; shared that the public role in the panel work is confusing; shared that NY State passed an anti-chokehold law.

Aubrey Eldridge: she likes comments at the end of the meetings; she also thinks the mayor should appoint vacancies, not the panel.

David Yokum: suggests we make a public statement about how we are not an investigative panel.

Desi Racicot: worked for the city as a police officer and was the Chief of Police; unclear on what our role really is; suggest an official letter to the mayor asking to clarify our role to the public; the Governor's mandate says the Chief of Police should bring policies; suggestion to let the Chief of Police do their job, make policy, and bring those to the panel for review and discussion; informed the panel that experts already in this area of law enforcement and we don't have to invent anything here.

End of Public Comment

Next Meeting Set for Monday Aug. 10th @4 in the Common Council Chambers

Motion to Adjourn: Amanda, second by Maxine

All in Favor

Meeting Adjourned: 5:07