

Police Commission
Tuesday, October 22, 2024
Remote via Zoom and In-person in Contois Auditorium, City Hall
Burlington, Vermont
DRAFT MINUTES

Members Present: Shakuntala Rao (Chair), Jessica Oski, Jack Keefe, Robert Depper, Mary Cox (Remote), Susan Comerford (Remote)

Staff Present: Jon Murad (Police Chief), Jessica Brown (City Attorney), Kristen Kaichen (Administrative Assistant)

Public Present: Sandra Baird, Melo Grant (Councilor, Remote), Romeo Von Hermann

1. Adopt the Agenda

1.01 Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 6:00 PM by Chair Rao.

1.02 Roll Call and Determination of Quorum

All commissioners present except for Commissioner Kevin Garrison, who has resigned from the Police Commission.

1.03 Additions or Modifications to the Agenda

No motion to modify the agenda.

2. Adopt Minutes

2.01 Motion to Approve and Adopt Draft Minutes from September 24, 2024

Motion to approve the draft minutes from September 24, 2024 as written.

Motion by Commissioner Oski, Seconded by Commissioner Depper

Final Resolution: Motion Passes

Yes: Unanimous

3. Public Forum

3.01 The public is invited to address the Commission

Sandra Baird spoke to a complaint she filed on behalf of an individual's recent encounter with BPD. Baird stated there has been no response to the complaint and has notified the Mayor's Office, Councilor Grant, and Chief Murad of this matter.

Romeo Von Hermann expressed concern over the proposed charter change for police oversight, believing it will have negative implications on trust between citizens and law enforcement and urged the Commission and law enforcement community to address matters in earnest.

Councilor Melo Grant, attending as a member of the public, commented on the proposed police oversight charter change, stating there is no data to support the idea that oversight is a barrier to recruitment, and clarified the panel would be funded and would only be used in specific cases. Councilor Grant also asked BPD for recruitment data and exit interview data, emphasized the need to change BPD's online reputation and invest in digital advertising, and requested BPD provide more opportunities for public engagement.

4. Police Department Business

4.01 Chief's Report

Chief Murad presented the Department's October report.

- BPD had several departures this fall due to relocations and retirements, including Recruitment Coordinator Anhad Bajwa, Records Clerk Jane Hackley, Corporal Matthew White, Corporal Kevin Wilson, and Deputy Chief Wade Labrecque.
- Later this month, CSLs will be fully staffed.
- BPD currently has 65 total sworn officers and 59 effective officers.
- Incidents per officer have approximately increased by 200% from 2020.
- CAIP has a dedicated van for incident response.
- A clinical supervisor has been hired for the CARES team and more hires are anticipated.
- Incident volume has stayed relatively the same, with only a 2% decrease from 2023. The overall number of stacked calls have decreased but 'Stacked No Response' incidents have increased.
- Online reports are significantly down, partly due to the City's recent transition to a new website, which does not support BPD's online reporting form. BPD is working on getting this back up. Online complaint reports have also been impacted by the site change.
- For selected Valcour incidents, larceny is slightly down. Gunfire incidents have slightly increased from last year. Fatal overdoses are down but nonfatal overdoses have significantly increased from last year, the reasons for which Chief Murad is unsure.

Commissioner Oski asked if there are any incidents where only CAIP or CARES would respond. Chief Murad clarified CAIP responds to many incidents without sworn officers, but CARES has not been deployed solo yet.

Commissioner Cox asked if Street Outreach and CAIP's responses are reflected in the selected Valcour incident numbers. Chief Murad explained that any call coming into dispatch that gets logged and is then sent to CAIP or Street Outreach for a response is reflected. Any calls that do not come through dispatch for Street Outreach would not be captured in this data.

Commissioner Cox asked if BPD could track incidents by person to identify superusers of emergency services. Chief Murad confirmed that is possible and something BPD staff have worked on.

Commissioner Depper asked if Chief Murad has looked into how BPD's recruitment and retention data compares to other agencies nationally. Chief Murad said he does not have hard data because many agencies do not share their data with the public on a monthly basis the way BPD does, but does have anecdotal data from attending law enforcement conferences and events, and there is also compiled data from other agencies in the priority response plan report. Chief Murad agreed to send Commissioner Depper those resources.

Commissioner Depper asked for clarification on the analysis of non-fatal overdoses. Chief Murad clarified comparisons have been anecdotally made with other Chittenden County agencies to suggest Burlington is experiencing the largest increase of non-fatal overdoses. Fatal overdose data is provided by the State and the CDC. Commissioner Depper asked if the Department tracks the application of Narcan and how that could influence the non-fatal overdoses versus fatal overdoses. Chief Murad confirmed the Department does track Narcan application but does not believe those numbers alone would be sufficient to reflect what is going on in respect to non-fatal overdoses but will ask Senior Policy and Data Analyst Nancy Stetson to work on this request. Commissioner Cox added that many citizens also have Narcan themselves now, so people are administering Narcan to each other which would not be reflected in Police and Fire's data.

Commissioner Comerford urged Chief Murad to focus more on the South End's ongoing challenges with theft and to address complaints of unsafe, disruptive driving behaviors across the city.

4.02 Use of Force Report

BPD had no Use of Force Report to provide this month.

Commissioner Cox mentioned the Use of Force reports from June and July appear to be missing from the BPD's webpage. Chair Rao said the Commission should generally discuss how to manage their webpage and will reach out to City Hall for more information.

5. Commission Business

5.01 Discussion with the Chief: Risk Management for Officers; Health and well-being; Modern aids in report writing; ICAT and DD13.3 and Infrastructure

Commissioner Cox inquired about how officer fatigue is assessed within the Department. Chief Murad said many services are available through the Department and the City to support officers and manage fatigue but added managing fatigue has been difficult because to keep three officers on shift, officers often have to work overtime. Chief Murad added the Department does regular equipment checks and ensures employees maintain appropriate certifications.

Regarding modern aids in report writing, Commissioner Cox asked if BPD has considered transcription or solutions for report writing. Chief Murad said AI technology currently has too many issues in policing applications to be reliably used but otherwise BPD utilizes a suite of products available from Axon to improve report writing.

Commissioner Cox asked if BPD has adopted ICAT and if the Department would have any issues using the ICAT framework as a reference for rewriting DD13.03. Chief Murad confirmed ICAT is a foundational part of how BPD trains for incidents and use of force and would be amenable to having ICAT incorporated into the rewritten directive.

6. Commendations

6.01 Officer Commendations

Chair Rao shared a commendation for Officer Congdon's compassionate conduct with an arrestee who appeared to be under severe mental duress.

Another commendation recognized officers' use of de-escalation tactics in a recent response to an individual experiencing a mental health crisis.

Officer Philbrick was recognized for de-escalation, empathy, and kindness demonstrated in 2 separate incidents.

7. Commissioner Comments

7.01 Commissioner Comments

Chair Rao thanked Commissioner Kevin Garrison for his contribution to the Commission and the City.

The Commission thanked Deputy Chief Labrecque for his long service to the city of Burlington. Chair Rao asked Chief Murad if BPD has worked with anyone named Asha, explaining Asha appears on a video made by YouTuber Peter Sentinello and claimed to be working with the Police. Chief Murad clarified this person is a private citizen who sometimes provides useful information and is known in the community for starting an online catalog of theft in Burlington to help recovery stolen property.

Commissioner Cox affirmed the commendation for Officer Philbrick.

8. Executive Session

8.01 Executive Session

Motion to move for a special finding that premature general knowledge of the Commission's hearing of complaints and personnel matters would clearly place the City or a person involved at a substantial disadvantage.

Motion by Commissioner Oski, Seconded by Commissioner Depper
Final Resolution: Motion Passes
Yes: Unanimous

Motion to move to executive session based upon the special finding pursuant to 1 V.S.A. 3-13
ald.

Motion by Commissioner Oski, Seconded by Commissioner Depper
Final Resolution: Motion Passes
Yes: Unanimous

9. Adjournment

9.01 Motion to Adjourn

The Commission adjourned the public meeting at 7:41 PM.