



Police Commission Meeting - Tuesday, September 27, 2022 @ 6:00 pm. **Hybrid Meeting: In-Person & Virtual via ZOOM 9/27/2022**

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Meeting Started at: 6:04

Commissioners present

Stephanie Seguino, Jabulani Gamache, Melo Grant, Shireen Hart, Suzy Comerford, Jack Keefe and Kevin Garrison.

Also Present

Mohamed Ibrahim, Commission Clerk, DC Wade Labrecque, Bill Neil and Debbie Ingram from Vermont Interfaith Action.

1. Agenda

1.01 Call to order

1.02 Roll call and determination of quorum

Quorum is complete.

1.03 Adopt the

Motion to approve by Commissioner Hart, seconded by Commissioner Grant. Motion passes unanimously.

2. Minutes

2.01 Approve minutes from regular commission meeting August 23, 2022

Motion to approve by Commissioner Hart and seconded by Co-chair Gamache.

Minutes were approved unanimously.

2.02 Approve minutes from Police Commission Executive Session, September 6, 2022

Motion to approve by Commissioner Hart and seconded by Co-chair Gamache.



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Approved 6 yes, 1 abstention.

3. Public Forum

There were no public comments.

4. Chief's Report

4.01 Chief's report

Co-Chair Gamache invited Commissioners to comment on the Acting Chief's report. Co-chair Seguino noted that the Acting Chief could not attend the meeting because he's conducting a recruitment trip. She also noted that at a previous meeting, bicycle thefts were discussed. At that time, the Acting Chief stated there would be a bike registry to facilitate return of stolen bikes. The community was recently notified of the creation of that registry. Co-chair Seguino recognized the work that has been done by the BPD to facilitate this. She also extended the Commission's appreciation to the Acting Chief for his recruitment efforts that led to a slight increase in the number of sworn officers. Commissioner Grant recommended to DC Labrecque that the public be encouraged to use the bike index along with the city's tool to register their bikes, noting the University of Vermont alerted students they should use the bike index after a series of bicycle theft. Commissioner Grant asked DC Labrecque about serving an order and DC explained and will resend the needed information.

Co-Chair Seguino drew attention to a recent ATF press release with regards to information about BPD participation in the **Chittenden County Gun Violence Task Force**. The press release is posted to Board Docs. The task force was formed with ATF and several local, state, and federal partner agencies to utilize various investigative techniques and to leverage the collective resources to address the increase of gun incidents in our community.

5. Commission Business

5.01 Bill Neil and Debbie Ingram from Vermont Interfaith Action (VIA) presented VIA's "A Vermont Guide to Community engagement with Local Police Departments. Policing Guide with Debbie Ingram & Bill Neil.

Presentation by Bill Neil.

Highlights of the Policing Guide are as follows;

- Some form of civilian oversight of law enforcement is important in order to strengthen trust with the community. Every community should define the appropriate form and structure of civilian oversight to meet the needs of that community.
- A first step in opening up dialogue between the police and concerned members of the community they serve.



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The following are examples of questions to guide engagement with local police agencies.

1. Awareness of explicit and implicit bias

- What has the department done to ensure that officers understand the difference between explicit and implicit bias?
- What tools have officers been given to become more aware of their own personal implicit biases and mitigate against them when dealing with the public?

2. Training in de-escalation practices

- Besides the basic training at the Vermont Police Academy, what additional training have officers received in de-escalating potentially volatile situations?
- Have all officers received training in de-escalation tactics?
- Is periodic retraining expected or required?
- What alternate methods of dealing with uncooperative individuals, not including the use of force, have officers been trained in?

3. Performance expectations

- How do supervisors establish and reinforce performance expectations?
- How do supervisors assure that all persons with whom officers come in contact are treated with respect and dignity?

4. Officer performance review

- Does the Chief review and evaluate officer performance? on a regular basis (at least annually)?
- What are the tools and processes used for performance review? Is performance information solicited from parties outside the Police Department?
- Does the Chief examine department activity data (such as traffic stops, arrests, Complaints, use of force incidents) down to the individual officer level to probe for performance concerns? How are performance deficiencies and training needs handled?
- How often are officers given routine evaluations of the performance of their duties and their general conduct?
- What methodology is used in these evaluations? Is there an attempt to collect feedback from community members?

5. Accountability

- How can complaints against specific officers be submitted by a member of the public?
- What is the process of investigation of complaints?
- Is there any provision for independent investigation?
- What response is provided to the complainant?
- Does the Chief have a process to record and track troublesome performance?
- Who decides the consequences for unacceptable behavior and/or a repeated pattern of such behavior?



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- What are those consequences, and are they clear and consistent?
- Is there a possibility for meaningful citizen input regarding the consequences?
- Is there a clear message that violent tactics, violent language, and disrespectful attitudes are not appropriate and will not be tolerated?
- Have policies been changed to help officers avoid situations in which unacceptable behaviors might occur – e.g., mailing a ticket to instead of stopping a driver whose taillight is broken?

6. Data collection

- Does the department collect and record data on all key department activities (e.g. traffic stops, searches, arrests, uses of force)?
- Is the data reviewed regularly for accuracy and quality?
- Is the data analyzed and compiled in a published report at least annually?
- Is the data used to probe for potential concerns such as racial bias, gender bias, excessive use of force, or over policing?
- Does the department collect traffic stop data, arrest data, and other information about incidents? If so, what kind of methodology do they employ? How is this data recorded and accumulated? Can it be disaggregated by race?

7. Data analysis

- Does someone who is well-versed in understanding the implications of such data help in interpreting it for the department?
- Does the Chief share both the data and the interpretations with the officers, town leadership, and the general public?

8. Hiring/discipline/firing policies

- Is the department seeking to recruit people of color as officers and other staff? What methods does the department use to advertise and recruit for staff openings?
- What behaviors trigger a disciplinary action?
- Is violation of de-escalation policies or demonstration of bias an offense that one can be fired for?

9. Community involvement

- Are there ways for civilians to weigh in on interpreting traffic stop, arrest, and other data? What are these ways? Do civilians have the opportunity to provide substantive input rather than superficial interactions with officers or the chief?
- Does the Town or City have a Police Commission?

10. Mental health issues



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- Have officers received any training in understanding serious mental illness?
- Is there an outreach worker from a local designated agency or specialized service agency that police can call on when a situation necessitates it?
- Is there a more formal embed system?
- Is the funding for this adequate and sustainable?

11. Substance use disorders (SUDs)

- Is there an outreach worker for assistance with individuals who have SUDs, especially those who chronically have interactions with the police because of their SUD?
- Are there clear steps outlined to get the individual the assistance they need?

It was proposed that the guide be presented to community members in each of the 5 geographic areas that BPD patrols in Burlington.

Commissioner Grant asked what other projects VIA is working on regards to community's issues. Debbie Ingram said that in regards to racial justice we have a group concentrating on economic chances for people of color, and with regards on housing and land ownership, also we're in a partnership with Vermont racial justice alliances.

Co-chair Seguino thanked Debbie Ingram and Bill Neill for their report, and noted that the VIA guide offers people a way to get engaged to address their concerns and also learn about policing from the police department and learn about the challenges that police officers might face. The Commission is committed to greater community engagement and we're working on involving the community more.

5.02 Mental health summit

Co-chair Seguino noted that the Police Commission recommended this summit because of the sharp increase in mental health incidents in recent years with effects on public safety. Communication with CSL Lacey Smith, who coordinated the summit, indicated that Smith has met with the mayor about the summit, noting that many of the next steps that need to be implemented start at the executive level. The next step is to speak to the CommStat group with the hope that this group will take up this subject matter more consistently moving forward. Lacey Smith indicated she would provide the Commission an update once she receives feedback from the City. She is also in talks with relevant parties at the State level, to understand what City representation is needed although she is only able to fill this role temporarily due to her other responsibilities as CSL.

Commissioner Grant emphasized the importance of supporting our communities and each other as mental health and drug abuse has a huge impact on the quality of life and can impact crime and homelessness. She encouraged all community members to read the synopsis of the mental health summit, posted on Board Docs.

Some of the key takeaways from mental health summit:

- Identified need for stronger coordination between City, Department of Mental Health, and the Agency of Human Services, specific to the issues identified in the statewide mental health system, to include advocacy for additional



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funding--Identified need for advocacy and continued partnership with our local mental health partners to address community level barriers, not caused by state system

- Identified need and desire for coordinated communication to the greater community about initiatives and decisions within the mental health system.
- Identified need for continued relationship building between mental health workers and the police department, within intentions of continued learning around limits of roles within both systems, collective shared objectives, and training

5.03 Mental health and complaint policy revision updates

Commissioner Hart will circulate a progress report about the revisions to mental health-related police directives to the Commission before the next public meeting.

Regarding revisions to the complaint policy, Co-chair Seguino reported that the Commission sent a survey to complainants from FY21 and FY22 to gain information on their experience which the Commission will use to revise the policy. She noted that that complaints are an opportunity for communication between BPD and the community, building both understanding and mutual trust.

Co-chair Seguino said the response rate was 50%. Main results indicate that there needs to be improvement in informing complainants of the complaint review process, and in the timeline for response to the complaint, and especially ensuring that complainants are informed as to the disposition of their complaint. Results are summarized below. Open-ended questions on how to improve the complaint process echoed these findings with complainants indicating they would like to be informed of the timeline for action on their complaint and to be kept apprised of the status of their complaint.

Percent Yes

Complaint acknowledged by BPD?

50%

Complaint acknowledged by BPC?

25%

Informed of process?

8%

Informed of outcome of complaint?

42%



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5.04 Review of Body-Worn Camera Release Policy

In October 2021, the Commission passed a motion to adopt a Body-Worn Camera Release policy. The motion indicated the Commission should conduct a review of the policy in April 2022 to assess how well it has functioned. Acting Chief Murad in an email to the Commission noted that key to implementation of the policy is the hiring of a redaction specialist. Once the position has been filled, BPD will be able to engage in earnest with the policy. Co-chair Gamache moved to table this item to January 2023.

The motion seconded by Commissioner Grant.

Motion was approved with one abstention.

5.05 Use of force reports, August and September

Co-chair Seguino explained to the public that the Commission reviews UOF incidents on a monthly basis (these are posted to Board Docs). In the event the Commission indicates concerns with any of the incidents, we may request body-worn camera videos of those incidents to review. Specific concerns with such incidents are taken up in executive session.

Several videos from this month's use of force report were requested by Commissioners.

5.06 Use of force report, September

Reviewed. with no further discussion.

5.07 Commissioner comments

None.

5.08 Setting agenda for next meeting

Commissioner Comerford suggested Commissioners think about educational topics and speakers for future meetings and of ways to encourage community to be more engaged in Police Commission business.

6. Commendations

6.01 Commendations received for August 2022



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The BPD received 2 commendations:

1. A resident wrote "I just wanted to thank BPD officers for responding quickly and effectively to the vandalism this morning in the Five Sisters neighborhood. It was a frightening way to wake up but reassuring that officers were there in a hurry to finally put a stop to the property destruction."

1. In a second commendation, a family member expressed gratitude to officers that responded to her suicidal cousin having significant withdrawals, who also wanted officers to kill him. The officers were able to effectively communicate on a three-way call with the male needing assistance and the family member, and were able to get the male to walk outside without incident. "They were so professional and handled the situation very well." The family member also stated that her cousin has a lifetime of trauma, drug and alcohol abuse, and suffers from bi-polar disorder, and thanked BPD for getting him the help he needed.

7. Anticipated Executive Session

7.01 Anticipated Executive Session

Co-Chair Gamache moved a motion to start the executive session and Commissioner Hart seconded it.

8. Adjournment

8.01 Motion to Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 8:44 pm. Motion by Co-Chair Gamache, Commissioner Grant seconded the motion.

Generated By Mohamed Ibrahim.