

Police Reform Task Force Meeting

August 10, 2020

Attendance

Task Force Members: Joy LeViere, Quintin Bullock (co-chair), Richard Garland, Valerie McDonald Roberts (co-chair), Angela Reynolds, Reverend Marie Kelly, Bobbi Watt Geer, David Harris, Monica Ruiz, Nathaniel Yap, Sharon Werner, Sylvia Fields, Tim Stevens, Patricia Leftwich

Guests: Ms. Beth Pittinger, Executive Director, Citizens Review Board; Dr. Emma Lucas-Darby, Chair, Citizens Review Board; and Ms. Erin Bruni, Office of Municipal Investigation

Staff: William Lamar, Alexander Fisher, Hersh Merenstein (Local Gov. and Community Relations Coordinator), Alaa Mohamed (Policy Coordinator), Rebecca Glickman (Intern), Shatara Murphy (Department of Public Safety), Lindsay Powell (Assistant Chief of Staff)

Citizens Review Board Presentation, presented by Ms. Beth Pittinger & Dr. Emma Lucas-Darby

- The Board has had subpoena power since 1999, it is enforced by the courts
- Board is comprised of 7 volunteer members; 4 appointed by city council, remaining 3 are directly selected by the Mayor
 - Must have 2 law enforcement professionals on the board at all times, don't have to be active in service
- Through board actions, the PBP have disposed of 3,400 cases
- There is one vacancy on the board currently, would like to convert that position to a community liaison
- 2002 report determined that 60 college credit education requirement for police officers is not the problem, it is more likely the written exam
 - READ THIS- there are a lot of great recommendations
 - Recommends that college credit requirement not be removed, only lowers the standard
- Any policy that chief of police tries to establish must be viewed by the board first
- This year, the board put in a budget request to convert the vacant position to a community liaison and add a Research and Planning Analyst position to look at best practices
 - Would want task force support on this
 - Gives investigative team ample time on cases
- CREA act should be amended to add civilian access to case documents
- Body cam footage secrecy elevates public suspicion, why wouldn't we make this public?
- State statutes under which municipalities are organized should require police accountability plan
 - These recommendations were provided to the state a few years ago by the board
- Stop gap measure- nothing can be done without further review, places checks and balances on police behavior

- Defunding the police= reordering our public safety priorities to meet the needs of everyone involved while maintaining police accountability but not overextending our assumption of police capabilities
- Police social work curriculum, develop necessary expertise for support of community when called to certain situations
 - Currently, crisis intervention training is given to police
 - These models have been used in New York, Richmond and Sacramento
- Public witness model of accountability (for any critical incident)
 - Moves incident outcome out of bureaucracy completely
- Board wants to work on relationship with community (it is a part of their mandate),
 - Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers has been huge partner, connection with Pittsburgh Public Schools

Office of Municipal Investigation Presentation, presented by Ms. Erin Bruni

- Office handles misconduct complaints against all city employees (including police), does public safety background investigations
- Does not make as many policy recommendations as the CPRB, focused on getting the work done
- OMI is a hybrid of a city government organization and civilian review organization
 - Civilians and police working side by side; can get specific private documents from police
- Deals with a wide variety of allegations during investigations; reports are sent up chain of command which is read by chief of police who agrees or disagrees with results
 - Chief decides what disciplinary action is, OMI doesn't make any discipline recommendations, they are the fact finders only
- If a police have an encounter best served by social services, they typically complain to the OMI, which rarely has the resources to redirect those complainants
 - The CRPB does make referrals; links people with behavioral health services, etc.
- There are a lot more avenues to file a complaint than there were before; OMI tries to be more proactive and promote their services at community events, etc.
 - How do we make OMI more accessible?

Q&A/ Discussion

- OMI does not reflect rate of misconduct, many people mistrust the complaint system, and therefore do not report
- David- Why is there such a low sustained rate of all of the complaints filed?
 - Erin- the OMI has to have the facts to sustain those allegations, there are a lot of times where the OMI doesn't know what happened
 - Beth- 596 allegations were not further investigated, sometimes what people think is misconduct is not misconduct, do not understand the role of police in the community
 - Ex: traffic stop victim claims they were profiled; facts show there was a legitimate technical issue with the vehicle & expired registration discovered once stopped

- The CPRB are required to stay in the middle, use facts to make recommendations/ analyze situations, otherwise people will be fearful of bias when reporting to them
 - Is there some system in place that keeps track of who is pulled over & let go/ who is stopped?
 - Richard- there *are* incidents of profiling based on fanciness of car, etc. A segment of this population does not feel comfortable or like it is worth it to report police misconduct when pulled over.
- David- Why are there overlapping agencies?
- David- Would you be better off as an agency should we push for the ability for you to impose discipline?
 - The board is an independent agency, how do we measure effectiveness?
 - Only the Mayor has the power to form a contract with the FOP
 - One of the ways we can define effectiveness is by the number of people that attend the board's meetings (around 40 people since going on Zoom)
 - There are a lot of times an officer is being disciplined not from a citizen complaint
- David- Do you favor more information going out to the public for greater transparency about police discipline?
 - Bobbi- How can we be more transparent about accountability to build more trust from the community?
 - Erin- A complainant are notified about the outcome of their own case
 - Beth- the board is not here for the community, but here to give an objective impartial evaluation on both sides; board receives a lot of criticism for recognizing officers that have done good for the community
 - Board has to remain an integrity/ credibility for both sides of misconduct complaints
 - Officers and complainant are informed of outcome of the complaint involving them
 - Complaints to the board are masked to avoid exposure, however public hearings are recorded and published
- Patricia- how diverse are those who review these complaints? What are their backgrounds/ where do they come from? How do we optimize this review so that is more user-friendly?
 - Beth- 3 people who perform investigations (one black female, one white female, one white male), council (white male), two law enforcement reps (one white, one black), rep from LGBTQIA+ community, etc.
- Sharon- racial profiling is a problem; the current systems we have in place is not set up to properly address these issues (those of the OMI & CPRB); are there recommendations the CPRB has given regarding officer wellness?
 - Yes, many of these are a part of report shared with task force, will discuss more on this later
- Tim- How do you get around the fact that often times those accused of misconduct are put back on the job? Could the CPRB look at how they have been marketed throughout the years? There is a community misconception that they are for the people and not an objective perspective...

- Beth- it is the arbitration system doing this. Look into them (who are their clients, what is their process, etc.), try to get their records of arbitration hearings, who was heard, etc.
- At this moment, is there a discipline for a police officer who turns off their body camera?
 - David- the policy says that officer who does this is subject to discipline, question is how strongly is this actually enforced?
- What if officers were told not to stop people because of a broken light, etc., but rather took down their license number and sent them a warning by mail or something of that nature?
 - Beth- You may not have a licensed driver, car may be stolen, etc.; there are nuances to this.
 - That is a great idea, you should bring this up to the cops you are working with
 - Erin- our offices are not within their right to make this sort of recommendation
- Patricia- How can we optimize what both of your agencies do? Implement a committee that strictly deals with the community?
 - Emma- we could use another staff member to assist with investigations, make things more timely; recommendation from task force to fully support the board as it is, increase funding to add community outreach position
 - Beth- the board asks that you endorse referendum requiring all police complaints go to the board, creates a whole new avenue of influence and information, requires full participation of PBP (if officer fails to participate, this will be grounds for discharge), board members can only be removed for cause
 - Beth will send out the language for this referendum
 - The task force can support anything that falls under the board's mission and unique role
- Valerie- If I am someone with a complaint about police, do I complain to CPRB or OMI? What is the difference?
 - Erin- we refer complaints to one another, often people are confused by two agencies & won't cooperate with both (lead to different outcomes)
 - Beth- when they come to one of us, we share with all of us; sees this process becoming more flexible down the line
 - What would your recommendation be to streamline how the general public enacts change?
 - Beth- there will always be duplication because OMI has requirement to investigate (90 day requirement, board has 6 month requirement)