

**COMMUNITY RELATIONS ADVISORY BOARD (CRAB)
REPORT TO CITY COUNCIL**

SUBJECT: Council Referral – Police and Community Relations

BACKGROUND: At the Regular Meeting on July 11, 2016, Council referred this matter to CRAB. Specifically, Council’s charge to CRAB was to establish police and community dialogue in light of recent national demonstrations regarding police incidents and the Dallas sniper attack on Police Officers.

DISCUSSION: CRAB considered and discussed this referral at meetings on:

- August 11, 2016
- September 8, 2016
- September 22, 2016
- October 3, 2016
- October 18, 2016
- November 1, 2016
- November 17, 2016

Members of the public and the Greenbelt Police Department attended/participated in these planning meetings. In addition, CRAB is grateful for the input from the Greenbelt Racial Equity Alliance (GREA) and other engaged citizens in the development of these forums.

After completing the planning process, CRAB decided to hold four forums – one in each section of Greenbelt and one specifically for youth. There was also an opportunity to provide anonymous input online. CRAB identified outside facilitators from the University of Maryland to conduct the forums, Dr. Kris Marsh (who facilitated the first forum) and Dr. Rashawn Ray (who facilitated the remainder of the forums). Working with the facilitators and others, CRAB identified a format for the forums and conducted targeted, and broad, publicity and outreach. These forums were held with the intent of gathering community input and hearing directly from citizens of all ages, as well as members of the police force, about the positive and negative perceptions and interactions between the community and the Greenbelt police.

From the outset, CRAB was in agreement that the forums are the start of a community-wide conversation that could serve as an opportunity to foster ongoing dialog throughout the city and community.

ACTION: CRAB took action by designing and holding the following forums:

- November 29, 2016 at Springhill Lake Elementary School

- May 23, 2017 at the Greenbriar Community Building
- June 13, 2017 at the Greenbelt Community Center
- November 21, 2017 at Eleanor Roosevelt High School

Summaries of each forum are attached to this report. A brief survey was made available on the City website to receive comments from the public who could not attend the forums or preferred to remain anonymous. A printout of these comments is also attached.

RECOMENDATION: CRAB was satisfied with the level of public attendance during these forums in light of the fact that this was a new format and opportunity for the City to come together in this way. Public comments were presented respectfully, and public participation in subsequent small groups was cooperative and rewarding. CRAB was also pleased with attendance by police staff and the cooperative, informative responses to public questions and comments. The Board was particularly gratified by Acting Chief Kemp's efforts to find common ground and present departmental policies. His full and open cooperation was crucial to the dialogue and results. CRAB-recognizes that this is just one step toward an enhanced relationship between the police and the community, and recommends continued opportunities for the public to feel comfortable in sharing their stories.

Following these forums, and upon further deliberation and discussion, CRAB recommends the following steps be taken by the City to continue the dialogue and continue building trust between the community and the Police Department:

- Continue at-least annual (1/year) Police/Community Forums to have stakeholders gather on a regular basis. The sessions do not have to be formally-facilitated but could be informal (e.g. potluck, athletic event, etc.). CRAB will be responsible for coordinating the sessions. This ensures that the Police and the community have an opportunity to meet regularly. In the execution of the forums, CRAB will:
 - Continue to rotate the location of the forums throughout the multiple sections of Greenbelt.
 - Institute a standing annual Police/Community Forum at Eleanor Roosevelt High School (similar to the forum held November 21, 2017) for high school students. The session held during the school day, during the week of Thanksgiving allowed for full participation by members of the student body identified as appropriate by the school.
- Require the Greenbelt Police Department to publicize information about the Department's efforts in the News Review and regularly on the City website and other online platforms, including:
 - Implicit Bias Training
 - Meetings with the Deaf community

- Police complaint procedure
- Establish a standing citizen-member review panel to consider police concerns and complaints. CRAB recognizes that there are existing processes in place within the police department and the City Manager's Office for investigating complaints about police activity. However, those processes can be perceived as somewhat rigid and closed, and can leave the complainant with misunderstandings and lack of ultimate resolution. Our hope is that an independent panel of fellow citizens can help to resolve misunderstandings before the process begins and help shape the issues if an initial resolution is not forthcoming.

Prince Georges County and Baltimore City (e.g. Civilian Review Board) have similar groups that can serve as models. The proposed format would be for a citizen to file a notice, verbal or written seeking panel review of a matter. The panel would listen to the citizen's concern or complaint, then seek a response or explanation from a member of the police leadership or a representative of the City Manager's Office. –After discussion, if the complainant is still not satisfied, the panel would forward the matter to the City Manager as a formal complaint, as they feel it is appropriate. The complainant, of course, retains the right to file a complaint directly themselves after this process or to forego the panel's consideration altogether.

- Membership should include representatives from each section of the City.
- The Panel does not take away from existing authorities of the City Manager and others but seeks to lift the burden off the Police Chief, City Manager, and Council by serving as an opportunity for complainants to air concerns prior to formal decisions.
- Expand the Police Blotter to include positive Police activities which occurred in the past week.
- Have the Police Public Information Officer (PIO) or a member of command staff regularly attend City Council meetings to talk about current activities and accomplishments.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rick Ransom, Chair
Community Relations Advisory Board