

MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY RELATIONS ADVISORY BOARD MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 13, 2020 VIA ZOOM TECHNOLOGY.

The meeting began at 7:34 pm

Members participating were: Jamie Krauk, Rick Ransom, Dea Zugby, Ray Raysor, Kevin Hammett and David Moran, Staff Liaison. Also participating were Bill Orleans and Amanda.

Welcome & Introductions

Rick welcomed everyone and read the Community Pledge.

Approval of Minutes

There were no Minutes to approve.

Community Feedback

CRAB agreed to skip this item until any community members joined the meeting and wished to provide feedback.

Review of Previous CRAB Reports on Police Community Relations and 13th Amendment Freedom Day Holiday

There was discussion of CRAB's previous report on police militarization (Report 2019-2) and how it differed from the proposed Fair and Just Policing Act by Mayor Byrd. Rick noted that CRAB had observed Greenbelt Police Department APC had been demilitarized and was not used for offensive purposes by rather used defensively to protect both officers and citizens. Jamie asked if the Mayor was proposing to return the APC to the Federal government. David responded that the Mayor had presented a broad proposal with many elements. He noted that Council had directed the City Solicitor to draft legislation and also planned to hold work sessions, public hearings and make referrals to advisory groups. David did not have the Mayor's slides but recalled the proposal referencing returning military equipment, but not a specific discussion of the APC.

Jamie indicated that CRAB did not necessarily have to weigh in on the Mayor's proposal at this time and there would be opportunities for CRAB input and the process evolves. David noted that several of elements of the Mayor's proposal had already been discussed by CRAB. Jamie expressed gratitude that Council was taking up these subjects.

Rick reported there wasn't a Council consensus to ask CRAB/PSAC to hold hearings on this matter.

Lisa indicated that she had reviewed the Mayor's presentation and didn't have comments at this point.

Rick referenced the Council discussion of the Law Enforcement Officers Bill of Rights (LEOBR). Rick also stated that Mayor Byrd was open to suggestions.

Jamie applauded the Mayor's efforts stressing the City can have both good existing policing while making improvements. Rick agreed and indicated it did not need to be an adversarial process. He stated he hoped the Police would support most of the changes.

Ray stated that the Mayor would appreciate this take understood the perspective Jamie and Rick mentioned. Ray further noted that the Mayor understood it is a work in progress.

Rick turned to CRAB's recommendations in Report 2018-1 (Police & Community Relations). There was discussion of the first bullet point (community forums). Jamie noted that CRAB had continued to hold the annual ERHS forum but not a . David reported that the Police Department had been holding community meetings in Franklin Park and Greenbriar. Ray stated there was a more positive police presence in Franklin Park by attending community events.

Rick indicated that he had seen more positive information in the News Review about Police activities (second bullet recommendation in Report). Kevin agreed that he also seen this information. Ray stated that CRAB had a positive effect because it continued to hold forums and make outreach efforts.

Rick asked about Police efforts to meet/liaison with the Deaf community. David believed the Department had made outreach to the deaf community particularly through Alice Mitchell and agreed to follow up with Chief Bowers.

David indicated the Police complaint procedure was on the website and that the Department was also working to revamp the website in regards to police training and other information.

Rick discussed CRAB's recommendation for a citizen review panel and noted that the Mayor's proposal also included this, but the proposal granted the panel binding decision making authority and he was not sure this would be allowed under current State law. Rick did state that creation of an independent panel was headed in the right direction.

Lisa agreed that the Mayor's take on the issue was great. She also mentioned her son had shared that the Youth Advisory Committee had been discussing Police and community issues as it relates to Eleanor Roosevelt High School and issues there.

Rick recalled a previous CRAB discussion that sometimes people need to hear from other residents that what has happened to them is not necessarily a negative thing and noted the panel may not see the same severity that the complainant sees.

Kevin stated an independent body that would review and provide analysis would be helpful.

Ray stated that people just want to be heard and know that someone will listen. He believed it would be good to have a review board to listen to concerns. Ray noted if there was an officer with a history of incidents it could have been identified and addressed sooner.

Rick believed that an independent body could affirm there was or wasn't a problem.

Rick asked about the recommendation to expand the Police Blotter and have the Police PIO regularly attend Council meetings. David responded that Chief Bowers or a member of the

command staff are often attending Council meeting on another matter and can comment on anything

Ray stated that any organization takes on the personality of its decision maker and asked if the “personality” of the Department was reflecting what Greenbelt wants. David indicated that both Chief Bowers and Ms. Ard had a strong commitment to community policing. He noted that the Police department had experienced vacancies and the hiring/training program consumes a significant amount of time.

Jamie stated she was somewhat satisfied with the progress made since CRAB’s report. Lisa and Jamie noted that every community is talking about these issues. Lisa observed that Progressive Maryland has a number of police reform proposals and perhaps there were some synergies. She believed the community had a good relationship with the Police and believed CRAB’s efforts helped to keep this going.

Rick summarized CRAB’s discussion for two resident attendees who joined the meeting.

Amanda appreciated CRAB’s discussion of this issue. She indicated the Mayor’s framework was based on President Obama’s Mayor’s Pledge and “Eight Can’t Wait”.

Rick believed one of CRAB’s next step was to wait and review legislation when drafted but asked if CRAB members concurred.

Ray encouraged CRAB Members to pay attention to what they hear and learn out in the community. He also believed CRAB members should talk to their neighbors and get feedback.

Rick asked about Anton’s Law.

Bill disagreed with the recommendation in CRAB Report 2019-2, that it was not the jurisdiction of local governments to recommend to Congress that the program be terminated. Regarding the Mayor’s proposal, Bill noted that some Council members wanted to defer/hear from PSAC, CRAB and other Boards on the proposal. Bill suggested that CRAB recommend to Council that CRAB looks forward to a positive action among Council and reject a delaying tactic to wait to hear from advisory groups.

Rick stated the need for an Ordinance that provides specifics that both CRAB and the Council can review and deliberate on.

Kevin noted that Amanda had provided information in the chat about Anton’s Law (HB 1090). Amanda read a summary of the bill which was in response to the death of Anton Black and difficulties by his family to get information due to LEOBR protections for the officer.

Ray asked about procedure and protocol and asked if CRAB had to wait until legislation is drafted and/or referred to CRAB. David responded no CRAB could weigh in on the Mayor’s proposal. He noted that Council voted to direct that an Ordinance be drafted and that would have to be introduced at a future Council meeting.

Jamie reiterated that CRAB applauded the Mayor’s introduction and looked forward to it proceeding to the next step of drafting an Ordinance and that CRAB did not need to see it before

it was introduced. She further reiterated that CRAB sees elements in the Mayor's proposal that were included in its prior Reports, as well as some elements that differ with CRAB's prior reports. Jamie stated that CRAB does not view their role as telling Council what they want to hear.

Rick asked CRAB Members if they felt there was a need for CRAB to hold public hearings and believed CRAB should wait until a bill was drafted.

Ray believed CRAB had enough information and hoped could support the Mayor's proposal at its next meeting.

Kevin indicated CRAB was on record stating the Board was encouraged and supportive of the proposal moving to the next step, and planned to discuss it more fully at the next CRAB meeting.

Dea agreed with what Kevin said. Dea referred to an article in the Greenbelt News Review about police arrests and the numerical differences between people of color and cautions.

Rick encouraged CRAB members to watch Mayor's proposal at the August 10 meeting so that CRAB can determine next steps and its next meeting in some fashion. CRAB members agreed to this approach.

Reports from CRAB (ear to the ground)

Rick asked how the feeding plans were going in the community and asked if the City was making progress. Ray responded that in Franklin Park the answer was yes and things were better.

Rick observed the virus was somewhat contained in Greenbelt. Ray indicated that Greenbelt was doing better than other parts of the County.

Jamie noted that the other big topic was the upcoming school year and school related issues were weighing heavily on parents. Ray stated that children are getting sick from this and have lingering problems and this was part of the rationale to continue online education.

Next Meeting Date

CRAB members agreed that the Board should hold the next virtual meeting on September 10. Rick thanked everyone for attending.

The meeting ended at 9:15 pm.