

MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY RELATIONS ADVISORY BOARD MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2020 VIA ZOOM TECHNOLOGY.

The meeting began at 7:35 pm.

Members participating were: Jamie Krauk, Rick Ransom, Dan Hamlin, Rev. Ray Raysor, Kevin Hammett, Sherry Burks, Lisa Lake and David Moran, Staff Liaison.

Also participating were: Kevin Murphy, Employee Relations Board Chair, Findley Holland Youth Advisory Committee liaison, Police Chief Rick Bowers, Jeff Harrison, Bob Rand, Katie Pugliese, Lois Rosado, LaWann Stribling, Daniel & AJ, Bill Orleans, a resident (identified as Caller 443) and others.

Welcome & Introductions

Rick welcomed everyone and the Community Pledge was read. There were introductions.

Greenbelt Fair & Just Policing Act Proposal

Jamie summarized CRAB's proposed Communication to Council offering to facilitate some forums either specifically on the Mayor's proposal or on the broader topic of police-community relations. She reported the Communication presented three options and asked for Council's feedback. Jamie asked CRAB members to comment on the document.

Ray announced that his boss, County Council Member Hawkins, had just been elected Chair of the County Council and indicated Mr. Hawkins was very interested in the items on CRAB's agenda. Ray stated he was in favor of the Communication document.

Sherry agreed that CRAB should send the Communication. She believed it covered CRAB's discussion over the past few meetings.

Dan agreed; Kevin agreed and Lisa agreed.

Responding to a question from Bob, Jamie explained that CRAB had met with the Mayor to get answers about his proposal and was also interested in bringing folks together to talk about the proposal. Rick indicated that CRAB wanted to let Council know about potential forums and offer its services. Jamie stressed that previous CRAB minutes reflected that was in support of the intent of the Mayor's proposal.

LaWann asked why CRAB had to get Council's feedback. Dan responded that CRAB was appointed by Council. He saw CRAB's mandate as serving the people of Greenbelt and that CRAB makes recommendations to Council. Dan stressed that CRAB did not have to make recommendations that made Council feel comfortable. Rick stated that CRAB felt they didn't have enough information from the community. Jamie cited CRAB's history of making recommendations on police community relations.

Ray moved that CRAB send the Communication to Council. Rick seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

LaWann asked how CRAB would reach the community. Jamie responded that CRAB was proposing to hold forums in advance of a Council work session, but could also help facilitate community input as part of a work session.

AJ referenced two recent petitions presented to Council and asked if CRAB was aware of these. Jamie responded that yes CRAB was aware.

#### Council Referral – Racial Equity Legislation

Jamie discussed the proposed legislation and reported that CRAB had reviewed both the Ordinance and Resolution at the last two meetings and made some recommendations. She indicated that CRAB's intent was to bolster the intent of the legislation.

Rick stated he had worked on the Resolution, incorporated some input from others on CRAB and consolidated some information. He wanted the Ordinance to focus more on what Council was establishing. Rick referenced Greenbelt's early history as a segregated community by the Federal government. He believed that City departments needed to review their policies to make them more equitable.

Jamie reported that CRAB had stated its support for the intent of both documents. She indicated individual members had provided recommendations and Rick had tried to consolidate these CRAB recommendations with the intent of strengthening the documents. She asked for additional comments from CRAB members.

Ray stated that residents of Franklin Park see both the racial equity legislation and the Fair and Just Police Act as "hand in hand." He stated that Franklin Park residents feel Greenbelt was set up for white people. Ray stated that most of the advisory groups are chaired by white people. He referenced the NAACP action in 2009 to force Greenbelt to have black people on the City Council. Ray stated that Franklin Park residents still talk about these issues. He stated that black people want the Police and that they need better training. Ray stated that Greenbelt Police used to be considered "cowboys" and that you don't come to Greenbelt because those police will get you. Ray stated that the police were carrying out the conscience of Greenbelt because they didn't want black people in the City. He stated phrases like "old Greenbelt" and "historic Greenbelt" separate the people in these areas from the people in Franklin Park. Ray cited a survey done in Franklin Park which asked if residents had been to the Library, Co-Op grocery, etc. and less than 10 people out of 100 responded yes and most indicated they felt they were not welcome. Ray stressed that these were the kinds of conversations occurring in Franklin Park and believed they were different than the conversations occurring in other parts of Greenbelt. Ray observed that people outside of Franklin Park did not want district representation on the City Council because Franklin Park would gain three seats on the City Council.

Caller 443 stated she was a resident of Greenbelt and a native (born and raised) of Prince George's County. She indicated that at one time the Greenbelt Police did have the "cowboy"

representation described by Rev. Ray and she didn't think this was right. The caller noted the new Police Chief and stated she no longer saw the "cowboy" perception.

Regarding police reform, Caller 443 asked if CRAB supported it. Rick responded that CRAB was supportive of making things better, consistent with the Community Pledge. He stressed CRAB wanted to hear from all sides in order to make recommendations. Jamie responded that at previous meetings CRAB had expressly supported Mayor Byrd's intent and the fact that Mayor Byrd was clear in saying there can be support for the Police and a need to continuously reform/improve, and that both can coexist.

Caller 443 expressed concern that residents who are opposed to Mayor Byrd's proposal might not want to come forward (at a forum) and may not feel comfortable especially given CRAB's expression of support for his intent. Rick responded that the intent was to strengthen rules and policies and work with the police to address concerns that some residents might be treated differently because of race.

Caller 443 cited the Mayor's proposed police oversight committee and referenced a County grievance office. She felt this committee should not be selected by the Council but instead picked by the Police. Rick responded that CRAB was open to hearing comments from all sides and would make recommendations based on what they hear. The caller again stated she would be reluctant to participate in forums based on CRAB's statement that they support the Mayor's intent. Rick discussed the prior forums that CRAB held and reported that CRAB had already made some recommendations regarding additional police transparency and police oversight.

Caller 443 noted that her only son wanted to be a police officer, but her ex-husband talked the son out of it. She was now thankful her son did not go that route. Caller 443 expressed reservations about CRAB being open-minded.

Ray stated that the reason slavery in the US lasted so long was that the good people did not stand up because of concern about what other people would say. He stated that black people have to remind their children, especially the boys, about how to behave and white people don't have to do this. Ray observed that white people don't have to think about if they are doing something wrong. He hoped groups like CRAB would see people as human beings and not black versus white.

Bill expressed his hope that the forum would be open to all, where participants could ask questions of one another. He hoped that by answering each other's questions, there might be a better attitude about the proposals before Council. Bill encouraged Caller 443 to participate in the forums and hear the responses from other Greenbelt residents.

Jamie read from CRAB's Communication citing the following:

"CRAB is prepared, in advance of the first hearing or work session, to hold 2-3 such virtual forums inviting members of the public to weigh in with questions and concerns about police-community relations. In an era of division and heightened opportunity for frustration, anger, and misunderstanding on multiple sides of issues, the purpose of these forums would be as an

opportunity to foster listening sessions for our citizenry. There is more that unites us than divides us. The results of these forums would be provided to Council as fodder for further discussion. These sessions would be in addition to, and prior to, Council's sessions. They would cover a slightly broader topic than the proposal itself."

Kevin H. appreciated Bill's comments and referenced other forums CRAB held where there was a polarizing atmosphere. He believed it was important for residents to have an opportunity to ask questions and hear from others.

Jamie acknowledged a chat comment from LaWann that indicated other forums and meetings on this topic had already been held.

Katie appreciated the discussion. She expressed frustration that when people say "black lives matter" or "let's hold police accountable," there is an immediate assumption that people are attacking the police. She stated for her this was not the case. Katie believed it was reasonable and right to want accountability from government officials, especially the police who carry weapons and have the power to take someone's life. She didn't believe police should be exempt from oversight. Katie indicated the intent of wanting something fair and just shouldn't be a problem. She recognized there could be differences over the details.

Jamie asked CRAB members to share any additional thoughts on the legislation. She observed that the type of comments being made by residents are exactly what CRAB is talking about regarding forums.

Jamie hoped Caller 443 would participate in the forums and that all participants would feel comfortable and heard. Caller 443 responded she would not feel comfortable. Jamie reiterated that CRAB welcomed all perspectives prior to making recommendations.

Jamie and Rick asked if the Board was comfortable moving forward. Ray moved to proceed with transmitting the edited Resolution and Ordinance. Sherry seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Lisa was curious about a school issue that had been shared with CRAB. David responded that the email was shared with CRAB as an FYI, but if CRAB wanted to take it up it could.

#### Reports from CRAB (ear to the ground)

Ray announced he served on the Prince George's County NAACP Executive Committee. He indicated they had worked for three years to get rid of County Police Chief Hank Stawinski because he was racist and had no oversight. Ray also thanked Chief Bowers for his efforts to have police officers attend Franklin Park events.

Sherry announced that she was moving from Greenbelt and would be resigning from CRAB. She appreciated CRAB and was grateful to have served on the Board. Sherry said CRAB was welcoming and would listen. She stressed that the community was in good hands and indicated

she would miss everyone. CRAB members thanked Sherry for her service and indicated she would be missed.

Katie expressed appreciation for Chief Bowers and stated that requests for oversight and accountability doesn't mean you don't appreciate the Police.

Rick stressed that even when folks disagree, the listening opportunity is very valuable.

Kevin M. thanked CRAB for allowing him to listen in. He complimented CRAB on the discussion and did not hear any irreconcilable differences.

Caller 443 was glad she joined the discussion. She stated she did not know that Franklin Park had 9,000 people. She suggested that with the revitalization of Beltway Plaza and additional housing proposed there, perhaps Franklin Park needed its own police force. Ray observed that Franklin Park needed representation on Council. Caller 443 suggested Ray run for City Council.

#### Next Meeting Date

CRAB members agreed that the Board should hold the next virtual meeting on January 14.

Rick thanked everyone for attending.

The meeting ended at 9:40 pm.