

Charleston Citizen Police Advisory Council

January 3, 2019

A meeting of the Charleston Citizen Police Advisory Council was held this date beginning at 5:30 p.m., at the City of Charleston Police Department, 180 Lockwood Blvd, Training Room

Notice of this meeting was sent to all local news media.

PRESENT

Thuane B. Fielding, Chair, Rhett Outen, Hector Sanchez, Barry Wright, Ryan Davis, Doris Grant, Max Milliken, Savannah Wray, Kevin Smith, Chris Bryant **Also Present:** Reverend Kylon Middleton, Chief Reynolds, Chief Jerome Taylor, Lieutenant Shylah Murray, Captain Chito Walker, Bethany Whitaker, Council Secretary

Welcome/Call to Order

Ms. Fielding called the meeting to order. Reverend Middleton called the roll.

Ms. Fielding said they need to verify the March date, as well as pick the other dates. She asked the other members what they would like. The only meetings they had planned was the March meeting. They hadn't picked a date for May. They could put May 2nd down and if it was a problem, they could change it. Chief Reynolds said that would be fine with them.

Approval of Minutes

On the motion of Mr. Davis, seconded by Mr. Wright, the Council unanimously approved the minutes of the November 1st, 2018 meeting.

Public Comment Period

No public comment.

Old Business

Ms. Fielding said she believe three of them were going to schedule the Policing 101 and Ride-Along. She had turned in her paperwork for the ride-along. Ms. Grant said she had done the ride-along the previous week with Team 1 and it was interesting. There was a lot of multi-tasking that officers had to do. They had done a traffic stop. It was a little nerve-wracking riding around with someone that had a gun. Mr. Davis said he had done a whole shift for a ride-along. It was great and he had learned a lot. He had a lot of respect for what the officers had to put up with, just with their patience alone. There were hit-and-runs, and stolen cars. He would like to do it at night to see what the difference was. At all times, they didn't know what was going to happen. Ms. Grant said that the officer was very forthcoming with information and spent a lot of time sharing their process and procedures. He represented the Police Department very well. Mr. Davis said it was the same with the officer he rode with, as well. Reverend Middleton said that along with the Illumination Project, they hoped to have reverse ride-alongs, and

asked if they would be interested in having an officer shadow them in their daily activities. Ms. Fielding said that could be something they could discuss at the next meeting. She asked if they advertised ride-alongs at neighborhood meetings where other citizens not on the Committee would know they had that opportunity. Lieutenant Murray said that they did.

Follow-up from James Island Listening Session

Reverend Middleton stated that they wanted to follow-up regarding the Listening Session. They had some additional instances since the Session and they talked about doing some quarterly things. Ms. Fielding asked if they had been able to talk about the map and jurisdictional issues at the Session.

Mr. Wright stated that they hadn't gotten into great detail about the jurisdictional issues. A lot of people had their own agenda as to what they wanted to talk about. It was a good session because they had all of the authorities in one spot. People were enlightened about things that they didn't know about. They hadn't gotten anything settled regarding the jurisdictional issues, but people were able to get a better understanding as to what was going on. He was looking forward to what the next response would be from the City, County, and Town. They were at full capacity during the Session, so they would probably need a larger place for the next meeting. Ms. Grant stated it was a good meeting and to have the different jurisdictions present was a good thing. Some of the questions led to answers for the entities to discuss how they were collaborating together. She sat at a table with an officer and it was interesting to hear the officers sharing their own frustrations about irrelevant calls. An officer said they frequently received calls about people of different races walking on the streets, and they had to respond, which put them in an awkward situation because there wasn't a crime. People were just complaining. She also sat with the James Island Town Administrator and they spoke about their process of using the County for their police services. She seemed pleased with that process, and they spoke about looking at the effectiveness of that.

Ms. Fielding asked when the next meeting would be. Reverend Middleton stated they were to set up a follow-up with the nuclear group and they hadn't done that yet. Chief Reynolds stated they should set it up as soon as they could. Reverend Middleton asked if there were any additional concerns. Ms. Grant stated that some of the issues hadn't been resolved. Mr. Wright stated he felt they had gotten mixed responses, because at the meeting they had mentioned that some of the instances had been solved. But, the information wasn't being given to the public. The Sheriff's Office had stated that they had solved most of the issues. The community just knew that they had heard about the incident, not that it had been solved. They had another incident in Westchester that morning.

Chief Reynolds stated that incident was in the City. He and Eric Watson were at the Listening Session and they had talked about the fact that all of the cases had been investigated and were closed. The listening session was beneficial because people needed to hear that the different jurisdictions were working together. There were some people in the meeting who felt like they wanted more police presence, but at the same time there were people who said they didn't want to be over-policed. They were having the active conversation about how to find the balance. A mother had spoken up very forcefully and said that they wouldn't ever over-police her neighborhood. They wanted the police

present and making stops. Reverend Middleton stated he wanted to thank Mr. Milliken, Mr. Wright, and Ms. Grant because this was their area. They had good youth presence from the high school. They were concerned about their community, and as Committee members, they had taken leadership as it related to the facilitation of that forum.

Ms. Fielding asked if they would be focused on other areas, as well. Chief Reynolds said they would be. One of the fundamental goals of the Illumination Project was being present and listening and being engaged. There was a lot of opportunity for them to improve and build relationships. A big part of the James Island Session was so that people saw that the different jurisdictions were unified. Every community was different and had different challenges and needs. Mr. Wright said it was the first opportunity for everyone to meet everyone on Team 3 and also the Sheriff's deputies. That was unique. It would be good to have a meeting on Johns Island as well, because of the issue with jurisdictions there.

Mr. Sanchez said it would be a good idea to have a meeting on Johns Island because the community was expecting to have a presentation from the City and the County. With the Illumination Project, they had some meetings with the Hispanic community, but they needed to get a meeting with the rest of the community. Reverend Middleton stated that they had one or two listening sessions every month and they had one coming up in collaboration and partnership with the Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee on Criminal Justice Reform. Chief Reynolds stated they had mentioned all of the leaders that had made the meeting happen, but Mr. Wright and Ms. Grant brought the issues up, which ultimately led to that meeting. They were foundational in bringing the issue to the forefront and their voices were heard.

New Business

Reverend Middleton stated that he had provided a copy of the Illumination Project Bi-annual Report. It went from August-December of 2018. Goal number one was to develop a better understanding between citizens and Police of different cultures, backgrounds and experiences to build mutually beneficial relationships. Under the goals were strategies and there were 86 strategies that were the by-products of all of the listening sessions in Year one of the Illumination Project which created a strategic report out of which they continue to measure, assess, and try to bring about positive change. Goal number two was to build mutually respectful, trusting relationships between citizens and police. There would be a spring Citizens Academy. Through the various listening sessions, they had a total of 1,421 citizens that had participated in 2018. In the first year, they had about 856, so they were increasing their level of reach and engagement. The third goal was to develop and implement a training curriculum to enhance citizen's and police understanding of each other's roles, rights and responsibilities. The Police Department was looking at the areas and issues that most frustrated citizens and making sure that they were being addressed. The fourth goal was to develop and use best practices to improve citizen and police relationships through policies and procedures. The Citizen Police Advisory Council was a standard bearer in that area. The fifth goal was to expand the concept of community-oriented policing in all segments of the community. The CPD would be joining Nextdoor which was an app that citizens could download and give real-time perspective on their neighborhoods. The Illumination Project was moving forward. This was Year 4 and they were critically assessing their strategies and goals. They were having a

high-impact engagement year that year. They would have a celebratory year for Year 5 the following year. They were making steady progress.

Ms. Fielding said this was fantastic and asked how this was communicated out to the community. The average citizen may not know what was going on. Reverend Middleton said that through Lieutenant Murray's department, they handled the community outreach and engagement. They presented to the Mayor's Clergy Advisory Council. They could create a data base to push the information. It was pushed out on social media and was on the Illuminate web page. Ms. Fielding said this was good information and people needed to know the good news. They should utilize as many venues as they had. They could get the information for the sororities and fraternities and the schools to publicize the news. Reverend Middleton said he had been asked if the Illumination Project was still around. They needed to 'toot their own horn' a little bit. Mr. Davis said having the physical copy was good and if there was a way they could get that out to people, it would be good.

Mr. Smith asked what the listening sessions were focused on. In Year 2, they focused on bringing communities together that wouldn't be in the same room normally. Year one was about how Police could balance public safety with individual rights. As they developed, he asked if there would be a particular focus for the following years. Reverend Middleton stated that this year they had been moving more into the training pieces with the Police Department. The Illumination Project was directed by the Chief and there had been ten months where they had an Interim Chief which created some stagnation. Chief Reynolds had some specific training goals, some of which they had already started. They were trying to follow the plan as outlined. In Year 5, they would be making a new plan. Chief Reynolds stated that the Illumination Project was well-defined in the beginning. They had talked extensively about being responsive in areas of greatest need. The meeting in West Ashley after the double homicide did not have high attendance. The meeting on James Island had hit the 'sweet spot'. The East Side had a lot of needs and they needed to be attentive. There wasn't any one community that was better or worse than others, but if they did it right, they would be in the places where they had the opportunity to have the greatest impact. Mr. Smith asked if it was possible for a community or representative to request a listening session. Reverend Middleton said people did do that. Chief Reynolds said that the best ideas came from the bottom up and that was where they were headed. Chief Reynolds said that they were trying to get a place where the listening sessions didn't need to be as formal. Mr. Milliken said that the listening session on James Island was productive and they should follow-up and do it again.

Charleston Police Department- Information/Updates

Chief Reynolds stated they would be having a Hate Crime Forum on February 20th. It would be facilitated and would have a panel. Joe Engel would be speaking, as well as a survivor of the Mother Emanuel tragedy. It would be a discussion on the past, but also how they would lead into the future and how they could unite, as well as have total clarity and solidarity around the topic of hate. They wanted to have a real discussion around the facts and create a greater level of awareness that allowed people to share their stories. This topic was important and worthy of their time.

Reverend Middleton stated that Chris Bryant had played a major role in the federal case that involved the tragedy at Mother Emanuel, so they had people on the Committee that had experience in that area. He wanted the Committee to be a part of this on the ground level and be able to tell the community about it. Ms. Fielding said they appreciated the forward notice. Reverend Middleton stated that as soon as they had a flyer or announcement they would push it to the Committee members.

Ms. Fielding said that Captain Walker had given them extensive information at the last meeting regarding the Internal Affairs Audit and asked if there was any additional information. Captain Walker said they were in the implementation stage. One of the recommendations was condensing the manual and that's what they were doing, as well as educating the staff on the new processes.

The Chief Speaks- Information/Updates

Chief Reynolds stated there wasn't a lot to add about the Racial Bias Audit, but the procurement vehicle was in place. They had a contract with CNA. They had funding, as City Council had voted unanimously to support the funding. They would be meeting with the vendor the following Wednesday. Following that, there would be meetings scheduled and would be several different phases. The vendor would do an initial assessment of the data, meet with some of the Police Department's people, and at some point probably be in contact with the Committee. Reverend Middleton would be a part of that from the beginning and could help give them access to the Committee and its unfettered opinions and observations. It was an audit, so they wanted to look at things objectively. They wanted to get better and wanted to be transparent. He didn't know the exact time frame that it would take, but it would be ongoing. So, even when the vendor left, there would be more that the Department could do. It was important to work with the communities and be transparent. That was the most important to him. They needed to be open and engaging through the process so that there would be confidence when they were done. The objective was to see what the data said, and see where they were doing well, where they needed to improve, and how they could implement the changes.

Turning Leaf was an organization that was helping men who had been incarcerated and giving them opportunities and training. It was a group of men who were being reintegrated and the idea was to disrupt the pipeline of prison. Many of them had served many years. They were getting job training and the Police Department was a big sponsor and partner of the program. They were seeing some very good results. It was a complex issue, but this group was doing amazing work.

They had received their end of year statistics. They weren't official yet. As they looked towards the next year, they were scheduling an executive retreat to talk about where they were at and where they wanted to be. Among many things on that agenda would be the Illumination Projection and the audit. The City of Charleston, overall, was a very safe place and there were many good things to report. There would be more to come and it should be on the agenda for the next meeting.

As a personal reflection, he had the chance to be involved with several parades in the previous weeks. Charleston was an amazing place. As a newcomer to the City, he couldn't tell them how privileged he felt to be there and be a part of it. There were a lot of stories, a lot of history, and a lot of good people.

Traffic was their number one complaint, as it was in most every community. Someone had come to Headquarters on a Friday afternoon and gave him a presentation and a lot of what they discussed were traffic issues. He had said they were doing a lot more with traffic. They should see the officers out there addressing many of the issues. The challenge was that the people who were complaining the loudest were probably the ones that were getting tickets.

They had a homicide that morning, an 18-year old female, which was still an active investigation. It was not a random shooting and they were working closely with those in the Westchester neighborhood. It was a reminder that they had a lot of work to do. There were too many people carrying guns. The amount of guns and the willingness to shoot boggled his mind. He had a problem with it. There was nothing like talking with a mother who had lost a child. The numbers for the overall region were down, but they were still way too high. There would be a lot more they needed to do with community engagement, working with youth, and with the investigation. When they looked at the impact and PTSD, the kids in those communities had PTSD. They had fear that some people would never understand. It affected their ability to learn, their success in life, and their ability to feel safe. Mr. Smith asked what the average age of offenders was. It seemed like there was a particular age range. Chief Reynolds said they could get that data. There were two central causes of the homicides and other related shootings. The drug trade was one cause and the other was domestic violence. The drug trade was a violent industry that was alive and well in Charleston. People were dying from overdoses, from the homicides which were directly related to a drug event or retaliation related to it. The good part of it was that if you weren't involved in the drug trade, these shootings weren't random. The ages varied. Captain Walker said that it was a wide range. Chief Reynolds said that some communities were disproportionately affected by gun violence. Many of the offenders that were being arrested had multiple offenses at the time of arrest. Some had violent convictions. It was a complex and challenging issue, and there was a lot of work to do. They couldn't just arrest themselves out of the problem. If it was a drug problem, they could arrest a thousand people, and it would have no impact on the problem. The police were only one part of the solution. There was a variety of people, people who had mental health issues who didn't belong in prison. There were other people who absolutely needed to be in prison because they were violent.

Mr. Bryant asked if security camera registration was new. He had heard it because he was on the Nextdoor app. Chief Reynolds said they had done a press release and it had gone out on social media. Nextdoor would be growing a lot. He was excited to see how they could use it in their areas. One of the most effective ways of keeping the City safe, closing cases, and sharing information, came from cameras. Camera's cost money and the City didn't have a lot of money. They had less than 100 cameras. They learned from other jurisdictions that banks and homes already had cameras that people owned. So, they now have the ability for people to sign-up as a subscriber, so that the detectives knew that there were 'x' number of people who had cameras and had permission to access it if they needed to. If nothing else, it was a database of what cameras were available. People could volunteer and sign-up, but it wasn't required. They were getting a lot of inquiries already. Mr. Bryant said they needed to get the word out. There were people that he knew who would be interested, but may not be connected on social media. Ms. Grant said she had seen it on the Police Department's website and her HOA had sent something out.

She asked if the Police Department had an internship program in place. Chief Reynolds said they were working on that. It was high on his list. He had been an intern. They could give an update on that in March, as well. They were also working on volunteers. One of the biggest asks from the individuals who graduated from the Citizen's Academy was how they could continue to give back and stay involved. Captain Walker said that they were actively recruiting. Terry Cherry had reached out to every school in the State. It was developing. They were building a new social media site specifically for recruiting and retention. Chief Reynolds said that when he started as an intern, he was thinking he would go into the Federal Division, but he was really impressed at the Police Department and that was what had developed his passion. Ms. Fielding thanked Chief Reynolds for all of the work that had been happening. Everything they had shared was a testament to his commitment and his staff's commitment on wanting to bring about improvements.

Having no further business, the Citizen's Police Advisory Council adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

Bethany Whitaker
Council Secretary