

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

June 11, 2020

A meeting of the Public Safety Committee was held this date beginning at 1:04 p.m by video conference. Notice of this meeting was sent to all local news media.

PRESENT

Councilmember Shahid, Chair, Councilmember Seekings, Councilmember Sakran, Councilmember Shealy, and Mayor Tecklenburg **Staff:** Heather Malloy, Chief Curia, Rick Jerue, Chief Reynolds, Susan Herdina, Steve Ruemelin, Tracy McKee **Also Present:** Councilwoman Jackson, and Councilmember Appel
The meeting was opened with an invocation provided by Councilmember Shealy.

Approval of Minutes

On a motion of Mayor Tecklenburg, seconded by Councilmember Seekings, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the April 27, 2020 and May 1, 2020 meetings.

Update on Public Safety conditions and discussion regarding Saturday, May 30th

Chairman Shahid asked if Chief Curia wanted to give an update on structure fires and other events that had happened on the 30th and 31st. Chief Curia said he would. He didn't have the total call volume, but it was in the 90-100 range for the day. In the COVID-19 world, that was a very high volume. It was a normal call volume if they weren't experiencing a pandemic, but it was about 150% over what they were used to during COVID-19. From 10 p.m.- 6 a.m., they had 41 of those calls. They had 14 structure fires in the downtown area. That was 14 fires that the Fire Marshal division was investigating in conjunction with the Police Department. There was one additional fire in the remainder of the City for that shift and 12 additional fires in the City during the shift that were non-structural such as car fires, dumpster fires, and grass fires. At least one of those was a police cruiser downtown. Chairman Shahid said he believed some of the first responders were injured and asked how they were doing. Chief Curia stated that four went to the hospital that Saturday night. All four were released that evening. Three were able to return to duty on their next regularly schedule shift which was Tuesday, June 2. They still have one who was out on medical leave with respiratory issues. That was all due to exposure to tear gas. Chairman Shahid asked how they were doing now 12 days out from the incident. Chief Curia said they were back to a normal status. They were operating as normal. For a few days after the event, they upstaffed with a couple of units and the previous weekend, they upstaffed as well. Now, they were back to normal operations. They had the opportunity to debrief with the chiefs from all three shifts to make sure they could catalog the lessons learned. They were taking the civil unrest memo that had been prepared in preparation for the Dylann Roof trial and turning it into an SOG so that they could grab it quicker next time. Chairman Shahid said he thought on at least one occasion Chief Curia had given former Chief Tippett credit for a plan of action that he thought the department had very honorably carried out. He thanked the Fire Department for their service.

Chairman Shahid said they would shift to an update from Chief Reynolds. He had been getting regular updates since May 30th. They had an informal meeting the previous week with some of the King Street businesses. That was a good and heartfelt meeting. He and Chief Reynolds walked King Street Saturday morning and another small meeting on Sunday. They had been very active in responding to people's complaints and comments. Chief Reynolds said he had been out there some this week as well and would be out that night with some individuals. It had been a very busy, very difficult few weeks. They had been doing a lot of upstaffing of their people to make sure they had enough to handle the protests. He wanted to recognize some of their partners including the Fire Department. They had worked closely with SLED and continued to do that. They had also partnered with North Charleston and Mount Pleasant Police Departments, as well as the Sheriff's Office in both Charleston and Berkeley counties. They had gotten support from the National Guard and there were still some from the Guard available through the weekend. It was important to say what he was about to say in public meetings. He had said this before any of the protests and riots had occurred and that was his very painful disdain for what happened in Minneapolis. He couldn't make a strong enough statement against what occurred there with that officer. He had what he would describe as a murder that was videotaped and shown millions of times throughout the country. There was a white officer, in uniform, essentially killing another human being who happened to be African American. That death had spurred, rightfully so, an outcry to make sure there was justice for his family, the city, and this nation. He stood with those people that had spoken out and he spoke out himself. They would never support the policy that allowed for that type of behavior. It was equally as bad that there were other officers that didn't intervene. They had a policy that required their officers to intervene. If they saw something being done improperly, they had a requirement to intervene. They had incorporated a training called EPIC, which stood for Ethical Policing is Courageous. They went through scenarios and talking about being on the scene. They talked about how to intervene and do the right thing. They were creating a culture where people felt comfortable doing that.

Chief Reynolds continued and said that Wendy Stiver was in the new position of Director of Procedural Justice. She had met with a lot of people over the last few weeks and had spoken at one of the rallies. She was building relationships, so they could continue the conversation and be a part of this movement. There were a lot of really good people that were a part of the movement and leading. They had loud voices that they respected and were listening to. They were working with peaceful protestors that had a great message when it came to race, making reform, progress, and a demand for justice. They were leaning into that and making sure those voices were heard safely, peacefully, and responsibly. The other side to this was the riots. There was a lot of work being done to look at what occurred. There were a lot of moving pieces. They were still in the midst of this event. There would be continued protests and a need to be vigilant and protect their communities to make sure they didn't have violence. There was a lot of work being done as they looked at what happened. Another topic that was important was the wellness of their officers. This was a time where there was an attack on the police. He thought some of it was righteous because of what happened and the demand for change, so they had to listen. That was hard. Their officers were out helping people and being targeted. There had been people in this region who had their tires slashed, who had been cursed out and called names. It was a difficult time nationally and locally. He was proud of their officers, the men and women that stood in the gap and worked hard

to protect their city. It was amazing, the positive feedback they were getting. They were getting a lot of support and there was a lot of unity that was beginning to occur. They had one officer that was injured and had some stitches. They had people assaulted, and hit by things. But, they had been focused on resting, feeding, hydrating, and making sure they had information and communication. They were just now looking at the weekend head. They had given up some days off. He ran into officers who worked a couple of weeks without a single day off. They would give them a day off and they would work through because they didn't want to be short out on the street. They had been reaching out to the communities and partners. Everybody had been traumatized by this event and this movement in some way or fashion, mainly the riots and what had occurred that Saturday night. They were doing a lot to reach out to the residential and business communities and continue to strengthen those relationships. They were trying to get everyone to stand up on their feet. He couldn't thank the legal teams enough. They had helped navigate conversations around things like criminal charges, civil implications, and constitutional law issues. None of that was easy, but they were trying to get it right. They were continuing to learn as they navigated through it. He thought they had a good team working through those issues. They continued to look at things like equipment, training, staffing, and having conversations about what they were learning. They did have their third COVID case. That person was back to work now. They had never become symptomatic. They had 27 negative tests and three positives overall. They had 24 suspects, and over 50 warrants. They were working closely with the FBI, the US Attorney's office, the Solicitors Office, and other partners in the region to round up and get warrants on people. They would continue to make arrests until they had everyone identified and properly charged/in custody that contributed to the destruction of the city. He wanted to end by thanking everyone, City Council, the Mayor, other departments, and others in the community for helping them. He was going to hand it off to Heather Mulloy to articulate where they were at and what some of the next steps would be.

Ms. Mulloy stated that she had been tasked with putting together a timeline of events that occurred. In doing so, she was looking for things that were lessons learned, things they could look into, and also looking ahead to see whether or not they needed to do certain things if they were to get a civil suit. The City would not be immune from a suit. She thought every municipality in the country would have some type of civil lawsuit. When there was a protest, that usually occurred. Thinking in that manner, they had assembled a team to look at the civil aspect and that they were fully prepared for those types of things. When the Chief said they were still in it, that was true. She was trying to gather information surrounding those two days. That was a lot of information including body-worn camera footage and officer supplemented reports. They were getting a lot of information in and it would take a lot of time. They had cameras all over the city, in car cameras, and they were trying to piece everything together. She was also trying to talk to as many officers as she can. Initially, they had the criminal trials that were coming up, so there was a lot of work going on in that aspect. As far as the evidence, they were doing everything to preserve that. They had the new body-worn camera retention policy where they had extended the time period where they retain it. They were making sure that all that footage was retained appropriately. They were also getting a lot of FOIA requests right now. At the same time, they were responding to a lot of concerns and questions from the public. This was an enormous task and would take a lot of time to parse through everything.

Councilmember Seekings thanked the committee and the public safety team. He knew there was a lot going on. As was specific to the events that happened May 30th, the questions he had were what level of review was planned collectively between the Police and Fire Departments, what that scope of review would be, who would conduct it, and then how would any findings/conclusions be presented. He knew it wouldn't be immediate but asked if there was a plan to synthesize it in that fashion. Chief Reynolds said the answer was yes to all the above. Right now, the message he would give was that they were working through that process, but right now they had to work on protecting the city. That would take months to do. At some point, they would be able to synthesize it. They may be able to get an entity to codify and document it and have a good publication from it. At the end of the day, they would have an action that was more formal, public, and forward leaning to talk about lessons learned and how they had made adjustments, as well as what worked and what didn't. Chairman Shahid said that he asked Ms. Mulloy, as she reviewed and went through this process, to do it in a way that catalogued it so the review process would be a lot easier for everyone.

Councilmember Shealy thanked both Chiefs for their work. A lot of them dug into their backgrounds and had seen since then what they both stood for and they appreciated what they did. They knew the outstanding men and leaders that they were. Both of them had strengthened their respective departments. He thanked them for the way they did reach out to the business people and were continuing to build those relationships. He knew that was a tough situation to be in and there was a lot of anger. He wanted to ask that, as they moved forward and gave information out, if there was a way for the Public Safety Committee to get a heads up, even if it was just hours before so they weren't caught off guard before something went out to the media or the general public. Chief Reynolds said he thought the answer was yes. This was obviously a big deal and with all of their constituents having an interest in this, that was a reasonable request. He asked Mr. Ruemelin if they could make a connection with the Public Safety Committee and Charles Francis in terms of the news and things of relevance. Mr. Ruemelin said they could do that. Chairman Shahid said thanked them for that and said in particular with the number of arrests being made or when an arrest had been executed, those updates were helpful. People were very interested in that information. Councilmember Seekings said that there was a lot of information being gathered and there would be many spins on what all that meant. He asked if there would be a compilation of that data and internally, from their perspective, what it meant and what they had learned from it. He knew it wasn't happening any time soon, but it would be important because there would be a lot of other versions of that. Chief Reynolds said that the version they were interested in was the accurate one that would make them better and keep the city safe. There was no desire to hide anything and there would be lessons learned. He thought they were getting better each day and they had a lot of responsibility in all this.

Councilmember Sakran said that he thought everyone else had asked his questions, but just making sure they got a heads up as information became public was very helpful. He wanted to echo the comments to both chiefs. It had been a difficult couple of weeks for everyone. He was gathering that the morale in both departments was low and they could let him know if there was anything he could do personally. He also wanted to echo that, as the co-chair for the new Commission, every opportunity he got moving forward he would point to the importance of the protests but also the importance of protecting their

public safety community and that the aim wasn't directing to their men and women in the service. He wanted them to know that he would do everything he could to make sure both of those messages were conveyed equally. Chairman Shahid said he was glad that Councilmember Sakran had brought that Commission up. It was a Special Commission on Equity, Inclusion, and Racial Conciliation. Part of their task was to review the Racial Bias Audit and recommendations. He was glad that piece was central to their mission and it was critical. He knew that Chief Reynolds was not afraid of criticism or the truth. He would embrace it and make the department better. He thought that was true of both chiefs. They would embrace change and make the departments better and they would all benefit from that.

Mayor Tecklenburg thanked Chairman Shahid for calling the meeting. It was indicative of the transparency they had and would continue to have beginning with the racial bias audit they had, acknowledging that there were things they needed to work on and improve upon. They were doing those things. They were being transparent about what had happened on May 30th and were committed to having the after action of report analysis. Chairman Shahid said he noticed they had two other Councilmembers listening in and asked if they had any comments. Councilwoman Jackson thanked them and said she was grateful to hear when their chiefs could explain their goals and willingness to be transparent. She joined Councilmember Sakran in pledging her commitment to stand behind them. They wouldn't separate the Council from the people they gave their trust to. She thanked them and told them to get some rest. Councilmember Appel thanked Chairman Shahid and said he wanted to echo that sentiment and say that he could not express his support for the chiefs any more than he did already. He was making that known loud and clear in every forum that he could reach. During crisis, it was important for everyone to be a team and that was what they were. It wasn't just blind loyalty. He had full confidence in their leadership. He thought when they looked back and compared how the City fared relative to others, they would be very proud of what happened. He looked forward to continued efforts in the days to come. Chairman Shahid thanked the Public Safety Committee for all their hard work. They had just gone through a series of interviews, had been dealing with the COVID issues and were also tasked with issues regarding emergency responses. It would be a busy 2020. He appreciated all the comments made, and all those working. They needed to take care of their women and men in uniform. Training was a critical element, as was equipment. They were about to go into their budget process, and would have some tough decisions with that coming up. They were there to support, and asked the Chiefs to let them know what they could do to help. Mayor Tecklenburg asked if they could have a thorough review of the racial bias audit and all actions being taken because of that at the next meeting.

Having no further business, the Committee adjourned at 1:43 p.m.

Bethany Whitaker
Council Secretary