

Oxford Police Community Relations and Review Commission Report

Friday, July 7, 2017

Pat Meade, Chair
Deirdre DeLong, Vice-Chair

Amber Franklin
Jonathon Joseph
Shana Rosenberg

Jacqueline Rioja Velarde
Aimin Wang

The PCRRC was established in December of 2015. The goals of the commission are as follows: 1) Improve communication between the community and the Oxford Police Department, 2) Increase police accountability and credibility with the public, 3) Create a fair and impartial complaint process, and 4) Advise the Chief of Police, City Manager, and City Council about department policies and procedures regarding matters that affect the public, and public perception, of the OPD.

Meetings and topics in 2016

Date: Feb 18th, 7pm

Location: Oxford Fire Station

Members introduced themselves and Pat Meade and City Manager Doug Elliott discussed the reasons that the commission was formed as well as the establishment, purpose, membership, and terms of the commission. Mr. Meade and Ms. DeLong were nominated as chair and co-chair, respectively.

Agenda items for future meetings were discussed: hiring practices; officer training; intercultural communication skills for officers; use of force policies and procedures; relationship between the Miami University Police Department, OPD, and the Oxford Township Police Department; Police reporting and crime reports.

Date: April 12th, 6pm

Location: Oxford Fire Station

Guest presenters Caitlin Rettenmaier and Caitlyn Findley from Women Helping Women attended the meeting. Women Helping Women is an advocacy organization helping women who are victims of stalking, domestic violence and sexual assault. Ms. Rettenmaier noted that the organization sees a need for trauma informed police officers, an alliance with officers and their organization, and assistance with transportation needs for survivors to attend support group meetings in Oxford.

Chief John Jones gave a presentation on training protocol for officers and answered commission member questions.

Date: May 5th, 6pm

Location: Oxford Fire Station

There was more discussion about Chief John Jones' training presentation at the previous commission meeting.

Patrick Meade asked the commission if there were other topics that we wanted to review. The topics raised were: Crisis intervention and de-escalation when officers are interacting with individuals with mental health conditions; Diversity; Issues surrounding domestic violence, including training and protocol; Information about the relationship between OPD and MUPD.

The commission discussed a complaint launched by a Mr. Ken Bitters against OPD. This complaint pertained to the perceived mishandling of an animal control concern. Chief Jones and City Manager Doug Elliott reviewed the complaint documents and procedure with the commission as well as the response to Mr. Bitters' complaint.

Date: August 10th, 6pm

Location: Oxford Fire Station

Guest presenter Captain Ben Spilman discussed the mutual aid agreement between the City of Oxford and MUPD regarding policing within the community. This mutual aid agreement allows OPD to request assistance from MUPD when extra officers are required. Likewise, MUPD relies on OPD as its primary backup when extra assistance is needed.

At the end of the meeting the commission presented Chief Jones and the OPD with a letter in response to the national events during the summer of 2016. This letter expressed support for community policing.

Date: September 7th Ad Hoc committee meeting

Location: Lane Library

Meeting to discuss agenda items for October 11th community meeting

Date: October 11th, 6:30pm Community Meeting

Location: Lane Library

In addition to the commission members, other attendees included Kevin McKeegan, City Councilor; Glenn Ellerbe, City Councilor; John Detherage, Fire Chief; Perry Gordon, Property

Officer; Geoff Robinson, Police Lieutenant; Lara Fening, Police Lieutenant; Ben Hool, Police Sergeant; Alan Kyger, Economic Development Director.

Commission members introduced themselves to the community, discussed the history and purpose of the commission, and reviewed previous meeting topics and discussion points.

Community input included questions regarding training of officers, funding for training, data collection, complaint procedures, and commission subpoena powers. Community member Linda Kimball recommended that members of the commission join the National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement (NACOLE).

Date: Dec 15th, 7pm

Location: Oxford Courthouse

City Manager Doug Elliott presented the commission with sample data reports which included information such as citations and arrests by race, ethnicity and age from January 2015 to December 2015. Data was also presented regarding percent of the Oxford population by race based on the 2000 and 2010 Census and the 2011-2015 American Community Survey. A report with a tally of the age, sex, race and ethnicity of persons arrested, 18 years of age and over, for November of 2015 was also presented. The commission requested a report of the 2016 arrests and citations based on the examples provided by Mr. Elliot.

Patrick Meade asked staff to investigate how to start tracking stops that don't result in citations or arrests and the commission as a whole discussed the importance of stop data by race to address any concerns about racial profiling through police stops. Mr Elliott noted that the OPD would be instituting body cameras in the near future, which would assist with data collection. Community members asked questions and made comments related to stop procedures and warnings, sexual assault, racial profiling, and data collection.

Jacqueline Rioja Velarde noted we had previously discussed recording instances involving a person with mental health issues. Shana Rosenberg advised she did research and there were departments that obtain the type of data this commission has asked for as far as stops and mental health conditions. Ms. Rosenberg suggested that the Delaware, OH police department is currently collecting that data and Mr. Elliott said he could call them.

When asked by Ms. Rosenberg about an uptick in hate crimes since the national election in November, Chief John Jones said that none were reported. Amber Franklin asked if the School Resource Officer had reported any concerns about climate in the schools since the election and Chief Jones said no. A community member asked about hate crimes in Butler County and Chief Jones said that he was not aware of any.

Meetings and Topics in 2017

Date: Feb 16th, 7pm

Location: Oxford Courthouse

Commission was introduced to Matt Stitzel and Jeff Gord, OPD representatives who helped compile data. A packet containing 2016 statistical data regarding arrests and citations was shared by Chief John Jones and City Manager Doug Elliott and reviewed by the commission. The packet contained Arrests and Citations by Race statistics from January to December 2016; Arrests by Race statistics from January to December 2016; Arrests by Ethnicity statistics from January to May 16, 2016; Arrests by Age statistics from January to May 2016; Formal Complaints filed in 2016; and a sample of the spreadsheet Matt Stitzel fills out to compile the statistics that are reported to UCR.

Amber Franklin asked about the data as they related to a "hot list" of persons with outstanding warrants who had a history of theft and burglary that officers focused on serving just prior to the holiday break. Chief Jones had referred to in a December weekly report when he was summarizing ways OPD officers were planning to prevent and deter burglaries over the holiday break. Specifically, Ms. Franklin wanted to know if there was statistical data on those OPD sought. Chief Jones said that he didn't have that information in front of him, but he was confident most of the wanted subjects were Caucasian.

Shana Rosenberg noted that on the sample spreadsheet for April of 2016 it indicated that 0 rapes were reported, which led her to question whether OPD saw a lot of sexual reports filed or if MUPD fields most of them. Chief Jones explained 0 rapes indicated that no one was arrested for rape during the month of April 2016 but that did not necessarily mean no rapes were reported.

Ms. Franklin continued to encourage the collection of stop data, to which Chief Jones reported that the CAD/RMS software does not generate reports on the number of traffic stops conducted by OPD officers. The only way to produce stop data due to limitations in the available software would be to hand tally the numbers. While Chief Jones recognized the need, as well as the commission's desire, for OPD to collect the data, currently Butler County Sheriff's Office CAD/RMS does not compile the data.

Community member Janis Dutton advised that along with stop data, she also wants data on pedestrian stops, use of force statistics, and sexual assault figures. She believed we should collect data before we perfect data collection software.

Ms. Franklin shared that female Muslims reported to her that they had their hijab pulled off of them. These women were fearful of reporting the incidents because they don't know who to trust. They feel there is already enough attention paid towards them and are fearful of bringing more attention to themselves. Chief Jones stated he had not heard about anything like this occurring either on or off campus and he encouraged them to come forward to report the

incidents. Ms. Franklin shared with her counterparts OPD's position on immigration, and Chief Jones said that's a good way the commission can help with community relations. Ms. Rosenberg suggested putting a statement on Facebook on OPD's position against hate crime.

Community member Lexi Marsh volunteered to be an advocate for bystander training. She wants to be able to train witnesses of verbal or physical abuse on how to help diffuse the situation. Pat Meade advised that the Community Relations Committee (CRC) is currently talking about bystander training and he would share Ms. Marsh's contact information with that committee. Chief Jones advised he would share the information on bystander training on social media and attend the training to answer questions. Community member Linda Kimball suggested the CRC partner with the Talawanda School District.

Ms. Dutton reported that she read a column in the February 15th edition of the *New York Times* about sanctuary cities and she believed the OPD statement on immigration was not enough. She wanted to know what OPD's relationship is like with Sheriff Jones as she was familiar with Sheriff Jones' stance on immigration. Chief Jones explained there is a Mutual Aid Agreement with BCSO, that several of the OPD officers participated on BCSO's SWAT team, and that the BCSO dispatches OPD's Police and Fire calls for service. Ms. Dutton expressed concerned about arrest data being shared in the BCSO CAD/RMS system and how BCSO could use that information.

Date: April 27th 7pm

Location: Oxford Courthouse

Commission members reviewed the Use of Force policy and statistics presented by Chief John Jones and City Manager Doug Elliott. The commission, Chief Jones, and Mr. Elliott discussed that the Use of Force policies include all forms force can take, not just using handguns. The commission talked about clarity of policies including Pat Meade's concern about the policies regarding sanctions for use of force. Community member Linda Kimball discussed usage of Tasers by officers.

The commission discussed a Miami University student journalist's online Patch article that Amber Franklin was interviewed for that appeared to represent the stance of the commission as a whole. The commission talked about interacting with journalism students and how the commission would be represented.

Relevant Activities of Commission Members

- Aimin Wang, Jonathon Joseph, Jacqueline Rioja Velarde, and Shana Rosenberg attended the Citizens Police Academy that took place over 10 weeks beginning in February of 2016. The Citizens Police Academy is provided annually by OPD for community members interested in the Oxford Police Department and local public safety

topics. Participation in the police academy allowed the commission members to better understand the challenges faced by OPD.

- Patrick Meade suggested that some commission members join NACOLE (National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement). Amber Franklin Joined NACOLE as a regular voting member in December 2016. NACOLE is a non-profit organization that is committed to fairness and professionalism in policing. NACOLE works with individuals and agencies to establish or improve oversight of law enforcement officers throughout the U.S. and to build strong community bonds and trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve.
- Amber Franklin facilitated for “Unarmed” -- a discussion between Miami students and local police chiefs on September 27, 2016 to promote unity in the community.
- Amber Franklin attended two meetings for concerned international students and their allies. These meetings were held on April 25th and March 28th, 2017, at the Interfaith Center. Ms. Franklin attended these meetings as a member of the commission and to inform the attendees that the commission, Chief Jones, and OPD are there for the international community and would all like to hear about any safety concerns that international students may have.
- Chief John Jones joined Amber Franklin and her husband, Dana Miller, at the Bethel AME Church on Sunday April 30th, 2017. Bethel AME Church was celebrating their 170th anniversary.
- Pat Meade spoke to the Bethel AME Church and the Hopedale Unitarian Parish about the commission.
- Interviews for police officer candidates were conducted by OPD over the course of 2016. Pat Meade, Aimin Wong, and Shana Rosenberg took part in some of these interviews in order to observe and participate in this aspect of hiring for new officers.
- Several commission members attended the Community Picnic in Uptown Oxford on September 1st, 2016. This picnic is a very large welcome-back even that is organized by Miami University and the City of Oxford. We handed out ice cream and members passed out information to the community about the commission.

Commission Goals and Conclusions

The commission would like to communicate more with the African-American community in Oxford to get their perspective on the history of OPD’s relationship with their community that might affect current perception of the department. We would also like increased communication from other demographic groups in the community about their perspectives on policing in Oxford.

We will continue to discuss and implement ways for members to meet this goal of increased communication with the public.

We would like to assist Chief John Jones and the OPD to meet the mandate to gather stop data as outlined by the Ohio Collaborative policy on bias free policing: "The collection of data on all self-initiated traffic contacts to include, at a minimum, the race and gender of the driver of the vehicle stopped. For agencies that employ fewer than 35 sworn full time police officers, the collection of data does not have to occur until the year 2020". We are pleased that Chief Jones understands why this data is important to have on hand and that he hopes that software improvements will allow for stop data to be gathered by OPD prior to 2020.

Desired future meeting agenda topics: A presentation from Oxford Township Police Department about their policing in Oxford City limits and more information on screening and psychological testing of new officer candidates that would determine appropriate temperament and lack of harmful biases.

In conclusion, commission members are impressed with the transparency of Chief Jones and the Oxford Police Department in regard to their policies and procedures, and we appreciate the department's willingness and effort to provide the data required by the commission. We feel that there is a genuine desire by OPD to practice community policing and to have unbiased interactions with the public. We would like to see continual improvement regarding public perception of OPD among various demographic groups, particularly Oxford's African-American and international communities.