

Oxford Police Community Relations and Review Commission Report

June, 2024

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 Division, 2) increase accountability and credibility with the public, 3) create a fair and impartial complaint process, and 4) advise the Chief of Police, City Manager, and the City Council about division policies and procedures regarding matters that affect the public, and public perception, of the OPD.

This report is a summary of the five meetings held by the PCRRC (August 17, 2023; November 16, 2023; February 15, 2024; May 16, 2024; and June 6, 2024). The following summary is organized in accordance with section 141.043 (e) of Ordinance No. 3339, Duties, which states “The Commission shall prepare and present a yearly report to the citizens and the City Council that analyzes data on citizen complaints, complaint disposition, investigative findings, and disciplinary actions taken by OPD. The report shall set forth any recommendations made on police policies, procedures, training, hiring, and the complaint and investigation process. The report should also summarize the yearly community meeting, designated for citizen input.”

The most significant incident which occurred in Oxford and which involved investigation by OPD involved the November 18, 2023 use of force case outside Brick Street Bar. The Commission addressed this incident in three meetings (February 15, 2024; May 16, 2024; and June 6, 2024). The February meeting preceded the court case and included attendance by approximately 20 community members and participation by 6 members of the community about the incident (this was the annual meeting designated for citizen input). The PCRRC listened to citizen’s concerns. At the May meeting, the results of the two formal investigations and the court case were presented, along with OPD’s proposed training plan (which reflected ongoing training as well as additional training components, partly in response to the November, 2023 incident and recommendations contained in the Dayton attorneys’ report). These additional training modules include a Legally Confident-Tactically Confident class and Defensive Tactics training. Six citizens participated and advanced several suggestions, including having complete audio as well as visual information regarding body cameras; not having an officer involved in a use of force incident collect evidence regarding that incident; considering the impact of qualified immunity on the writing of the Dayton attorneys’ investigative report; and holding multiple meetings involving PCRRC, the Civil Service Commission, the Student-Community Relations Commission, and citizen groups such as the NAACP and OCPJ. OPD recommended endorsement of the OPD Training Plan by PCRRC and the purchase of the Professional Standards Tracker software. At the June meeting, PCRRC formally voted to endorse the Professional Standards Tracker software (as a supplemental budget purchase, as per the City Manager). The training plan will be voted upon for endorsement based on a written proposal at the next PCRRC meeting. The PCRRC supported holding community meetings, with these meetings proposed by citizen groups, to improve communication and understanding

between OPD and the community. OPD's body cameras are modern, state-of-the-art and the 30 second audio lag was explained as occurring because the video goes back 30 seconds when an officer activates his/her body camera. It would be impractical to exclude an officer involved in a UOF incident from evidence collection, but this exclusion would occur in critical use of force incidents.

The annual data report showed there were eight citizen complaints, with the following results: four exonerations, two unfounded, one with discipline (for inappropriate comments); and one termination (a part-time PSA). 23 negative online feedback responses were received, with 20 of those responses focused on the November, 2023 incident. There were two positive online feedback responses as well. The report also included data summaries for traffic citations, charges and arrests by race, use and display of force incidents (both less than one a month), traffic stops and crashes by race, pedestrian stops, and pedestrian stops by zipcode (45056 vs. other zip codes). The data were similar to prior years. Also, data involving the fairly new Social Service Liaison position were provided. The SSL made 162 referrals to various agencies based on 118 citizen contacts.

PCRRC addressed various additional issues this year. During the August, 2023 meeting, Chief Jones provided updates regarding SROs; hiring of full-time officers, part-time Public Safety Assistants, and a part-time Dispatcher/Clerk; and how school busing changes affected traffic patterns around the schools. At the November, 2023 meeting, PCRRC provided input to Chief Jones for the annual data report (which was delivered at the June, 2024 meeting; adopted new rules for public participation at PCRRC meetings (mirroring City Council, with a 5 minute limit per person); and discussed the online feedback form and sharing feedback with PCRRC. In addition, Chief Jones provided a primer on No Knock Warrants and Knock and Talk Procedures. During the February, 2024 meeting, PCRRC voted, at the request of Chief Jones, to shift the August, 2024 meeting to September, 2024. Also, Chief Jones provided an overview of OPD's Use of Force Policy. The May, 2024 meeting was devoted entirely to discussion of the November, 2023 incident. Similarly, the June, 2024 meeting was focused on recommendations in response to the November, 2023 incident and the annual data report.

The PCRRC has completed eight years of service to the City of Oxford and its citizens. The year was fairly busy, with the November, 2023 incident occupying much of the Commission's focus. It is hoped that some positive outcomes have resulted from discussion of this incident and that the police-community dialogue which started as a result of this incident leads to further discussion for the betterment of the Oxford community. As always, we want to thank the city administration, city council, Chief Jones, and OPD for their openness and cooperation. The PCRRC looks forward to serving the citizens of Oxford in the coming year.