

POLICE COMMUNITY RELATIONS & REVIEW COMMISSION COMMUNITY MEETING

ITEM 1.

Call to order.

The Oxford Police Community Relations & Review Commission meeting of June 11, 2020 was held virtually and called to order at approximately 7:00 p.m. by Pat Meade. Members present were: Amber Franklin, Larry Nadler, Deirdre DeLong, Egon Kraan and Hannah Stohry.

Doug Elliott, City Manager and John Jones, Chief of Police were in attendance for the City.

ITEM 2.

Approval of Agenda.

Pat Meade amended the agenda to include discussion about the proposed chokehold ordinance. Larry Nadler moved to approve the agenda as amended; Egon Kraan seconded. The motion passed 6-0-0.

ITEM 3.

Approval of Minutes of the May 14, 2020 Meeting.

Larry Nadler moved to approve the minutes; Egon Kraan seconded. The motion passed 6-0-0.

ITEM 4.

Discussion.

- A. The purpose of this meeting was to provide the public with an opportunity to discuss policing in America in light of current events and what steps would be appropriate in Oxford.

Brandon Humphrey, 609 Ogden Ct. - Regarding how Oxford can build trust, Humphrey called for easier access to information about the police department practices and spending; a re-envisioning of what public safety actually means and a commitment from the police to 8 Can't Wait, a project by Campaign Zero; and long term systemic changes that include a redistribution of the city's resources away from police and more towards programs that will serve our community.

Heidi Schran, 319 W. Withrow St. - Ms. Schran echoed Mr. Humphrey's remarks. Ms. Schran noted she was an educator at the high school and she sees parallels between the culture in law enforcement and the culture in education. Teaching has gone through a cultural evolution that she

believes policing needs to go through. If there is a transgression a teacher/police officer cannot come back from, the union should not be able to protect the teacher or the police officer. She sees the culture of policing moving towards motivating citizens not by force or intimidation but by cultivating respect for relationships.

Janis Dutton, 302 W. Vine St. - Ms. Dutton wanted to know how long complaints are kept on file in Oxford. She stated she was involved in effecting Taser policy in 2008 and recommended viewing “Killing Them Safely” as part of the Division’s Taser training.

Justin Chandler, 106 ½ W. Chesnut St. - Mr. Chandler seconded what Mr. Humphrey said and he thanked the city for having the PCRRC for people like himself to have a place to speak their minds and hopefully make positive changes in Oxford.

Tamise Ironstrack, 64 Lantern Ridge Road - Ms. Ironstrack believed the SROs worked for the BCSO and wanted to know the reason why OPD does not have SROs in schools. She also questioned if police officers are even necessary in the schools. Her concerns were with how police interact with students in schools.

Jason Bracken, 401 E. Church St. – Mr. Bracken said he agrees with everything he has heard so far. He wanted to know if the city has ever had a protest that has gotten destructive or violent and what equipment and tactics do officers have available that might be used in that situation.

Nadja Hofmann, 122 Beechpoint Drive – Ms. Hofmann shared an unpleasant experience she had with a police agency about 10 years ago where she felt profiled.

Chantel Raghu, 338 N. Locust St. – Ms. Raghu shared she hasn’t had any negative experiences with police, but friends and family have. She has wondered that when she has had to call the police, did someone with a gun need to respond to the call for service.

Fran Jackson, 114 Country Club Dr. – Ms. Jackson said she appreciated the diverse crowd at Monday’s rally Uptown. She would like to see a change in policy in the way police profile blacks in Oxford. She would like regular town hall meetings where the city can give updates and where people can express themselves without fear.

Karen Francis, 25 Lantern Ridge Rd. – Ms. Francis said something to consider is that police look powerful and are armed. She suggested that instead of looking at themselves as police officers, officers should look at themselves as peace officers.

At this point in the meeting Pat Meade and other members of the commission began to address the public’s questions and comments. Mr. Meade clarified Ms. Ironstrack’s comment and stated that two schools have BCSO deputies as SROs and that the three schools within the city limits have OPD officers as SROs.

Deirdre DeLong clarified Ms. Francis' comment and stated that all city of Oxford officers are certified as peace officers. Ms. DeLong stated that officers are trained in de-escalation first. She said that situations like responding to a disabled motorist can change quickly into a life and death encounter and therefore, unfortunately, a firearm has to be ready at hand.

In response to Ms. Francis' comment, Amber Franklin said it is not just the title "Peace Officer" that is important, language is important as well. Ms. Franklin shared a study in which body worn camera videos were analyzed and it was found that police officers used different language when interacting with black people and white people.

Amber Franklin addressed Brandon Humphrey's request for easier access to information by advising him of the PCRRC annual reports and data reports that are published on the city's website. Egon Kraan recommended attending the Citizen's Police Academy, stating it was very enlightening and informative. Mr. Elliott said the budget is available on the website. He said the website is full of information and if there is anything else we should be sharing, we'll do what we can, as the city is open and accountable. Mr. Meade reported that the city has been fairly responsive when asked for information. Mr. Elliott encouraged people to attend the PCRRC meetings or at least read the minutes that are available on the website.

Amber Franklin, in response to Fran Jackson's comments, wanted to reiterate that the commission still wants to hear from the African American community, especially the young adults.

In response to Janis Dutton's question, Chief Jones stated that a citizen complaint would trigger an internal investigation. After an internal investigation is completed, if action is taken, the complaint remains permanently in the officer's file. If no action is taken, the complaint remains on file for two years. The formal complaints are part of the data report that is provided to the PCRRC. He said policies are public record and are available upon request. Jason Bracken asked if it was a requirement for them to be removed after 2 years or simply that they have to remain available for 2 years, and not necessarily any longer, to which Chief Jones advised that record destruction follows the rules according to our records retention schedule. Mr. Bracken followed up by asking if the investigations are totally internal and is there any independent review or oversight, to which Chief Jones said most of our investigations are internal due to the nature of the complaint, but if there was something like an officer involved shooting, he would likely have Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation investigate it. The PCRRC reviews the investigation as well to ensure we are proceeding fairly.

In regards to Mr. Bracken's question about protests, Chief Jones advised we have handled peaceful protests well and have allowed protesters to express their first amendment rights. He added we would rely on mutual aid partners if we had a protest that broke out into a true riot. The officers have riot batons, gas masks, and riot helmets should they need them.

Chief Jones advised that our officers do not carry Narcan and that EMS carries Narcan. There has not been a need for our officers to carry Narcan because EMS does a great job responding to calls for service.

Amber Franklin commented further on internal investigations by adding that when the commission first started, a community member came to the board with the idea of subpoena power. Ultimately it was determined that it was mostly larger cities that can afford to have paid citizen oversight committees. Our commission consisting of volunteers is providing a model for smaller communities.

Chief Jones reiterated what Ms. DeLong said about our police officers still attend a basic peace officer training academy. He said over time that language seems forgotten. In the policing world what has been talked about a lot is the warrior vs. guardian mentality. He said that while there are times that officers have to go into the warrior mentality, our police officers are embracing the guardian mentality. Hannah Stohry wanted to know where she could read about what defines guardian versus warrior. Chief Jones said it probably could be found in the Ohio's Policing in the 21st Century documents, but he would find it and share it with her.

B. PROPOSED CHOKEHOLD ORDINANCE

Amber Franklin stated that looking at the Use of Force policy, it states that officers cannot shoot at a moving vehicle or from moving vehicle, but it does have a caveat of something along the lines of "unless absolutely necessary".

Deirdre DeLong stated that chokeholds are not typically taught in traditional use of force training classes. She said that training methods do not advocate chokeholds unless in the officer's opinion it saves a life.

Egon Kraan thinks the commission should use caution and ensure all things are considered before making a decision. He does not want to take tools away from our officers.

Chief Jones pointed out that the commission was talking about administrative rule making or policy. What was proposed by council is an ordinance in law. These are two very different things. He said to look at police accountability and how it has been improved, one of the reasons being administrative rule making. Where there is a lack of policies your values come into play. So we have a lot of very specific policies our officers must follow. He said you can't answer all questions in policy so that is why we have values. Chief's thinking is chokeholds are already banned by our policy, but if you want it expressly written then it should be in policy with the language from the National Consensus on Use of Force.

Larry Nadler's focus of concern was on the intervention section of the ordinance.

Mr. Elliott said that while he understands the sentiment behind creating the ordinance, he does not agree with the ordinance as it is currently written.

Pat Meade stated that creating the ordinance is a way for elected officials to make a statement about their values. He suggested the addition of “vascular neck restraint and other tactics that restrict breathing as a method of restraint”. He also recommended changing the words “public servant” to “police officer”.

Egon Kraan said that in one of the documents the chief provided to them, called National Consensus on Use of Force, chokeholds are prohibited unless deadly force is authorized.

Hannah Stohry would like to see what the language would look like in the Use of Force Report.

As far as rewording the ordinance, Ms. Stohry wanted the ordinance to clarify what officers does the ordinance include? Are OTPD and MUPD officers included? Is the ordinance in conflict with other current ordinances? Are there other methods of restraints that could potentially be included? Is there also potential for training for alternate methods?

Ms. Raghu advised she considers herself a frugal councilwoman and wanted to focus on evidence based changes that are shown to prevent violence. She believes that with enforcement redundancy, creating a local law is increasing the likelihood that the law will actually be followed.

Janice Dutton said she was part of the conversations that were responsible for forming the commission and recommended that some of the work the commission does be codified because institutional memories are not enough. She also recommended that we make website easier to negotiate.

Brandon Humphrey said that he thinks that symbolic gestures are important even though the ordinance is not enforceable. He also agreed that the wording of the ordinance needed to be changed, specifically the words “public servant” needed to be changed.

Bill Snavely said that he is the author of the ordinance and recognized it needed rewording and was happy it was brought before the PCRRC.

Hannah Stohry posed Jason Bracken’s question in the chat - If this isn't actionable outside of being an expression of our values, then take this expression of our values as a call to provide solutions to the underlying issue that the ordinance attempts to address. How can we reduce the chances for types of holds that take the lives of citizens unnecessarily? Which is a far bigger issue than George Floyd.

Amber Franklin moved to recommend supporting the spirit of the ordinance with the following statement: “We demonstrate support of the spirit of the proposed ordinance and that we

recommend that the city council refine the wording to specify what a public servant is and also specify the use of chokeholds as a form of restraint”; Hannah Stohry seconded. Deirde DeLong abstained. The motion passed 5-0-1.

ITEM 5.

- A. Yearly Report for the August meeting
- B. Next Meeting – August 20, 2020
- C. Adjournment – Larry Nadler moved to adjourn; Egon Kraan seconded. The motion passed 6-0-0. The meeting lasted two hours and thirty-two minutes.