

**City of Hyattsville
Race & Equity Task Force
March 28th, 2023
Zoom
Minutes**

PRESENT

Task Force Members:

- Co-Chair Alicia Sanchez Gill Freemyn (AF)
- Co-Chair Jennifer Gafford (JG)
- Record Keeper Vice Secretary Jocelyn Medallo (JM)
- Member Rodrigo Blanco (RB)

Staff:

- Race & Equity Officer Shakira Louimarre (SL)
- Hyattsville Police Department, Chief Jarrod Towers (JT)
- Hyattsville Police Department, Deputy Chief Laura Lanham (LL)

Guests:

- Chuck – Ward 3
- Kayla Woods
- Marshall

7:04 pm – Welcome & Call to Order – Co-Chair Gafford

7:05 pm – Roll Call – Co-Chair Freemyn

7:05 pm - 7:06 pm – Acknowledgement of Guests– Co-chair Freemyn

7:06 pm - 7:07 pm - Adoption of February Meeting Minutes- Secretary Medallo

AF moves; JG seconds

7:07 pm -7:24 pm – Hyattsville Chief and Deputy Chief of Police Introduction – Chief

Jarrold Towers and Deputy Chief Laura Lanham

- JT: We have invested people who truly care and look to grow and be invested in our community. We are lucky to be able to work with the community to tap into that. We have done a lot in 18 months to invest in transparency and accountability. In the past, we have struggled to get out clear and transparent data due largely to staffing and technology.

- We have since been able to acquire software data and training which will allow us to put our complaints database on our website so that it is accessible, people are able to track their complaint through adjudication, file complaints and access this information. We are looking forward to sharing how much we have invested in transparency and accountability and how we work with our community. One of those platforms will allow for community engagement and feedback.
- LL: This is an important part of how we envision how the police department fits into the Hyattsville community.

7:25 pm - 8:10 pm – Community Policing Presentation and Discussion–Co-Chair Freemyn

** Highlights listed; see Slide to [Community Policing presentation](#) for further details.

- Some of the changes have already been implemented since the first draft of the RETF plan.
- It is well documented that communities experience role differently based on identity – disproportionate police encounters and criminal justice system. Often the police officers in the US are traced back to history of slave patrols and colonialism. For many communities of color, police authorities have a tenuous relationship.
- There is a range of strategies and opinions around policing. But I will focus on the Divest / Invest Strategy. [See Community Policing presentation for additional information.]
 - US is the most militarized in the world. Investing in Goal 2.
 - Goal 3. Criminalizing behavior rather than addressing their root causes. Social workers, should be first responders to certain issues instead of police.
 - Goal 4. Decriminalizing low-level offences. Many high-profile killings of Black folks started off with low-level offences that did not need to escalate to violence.

- RETF is not necessarily leaning into all these goals and strategies but you will see some of these things come into the RETF’s recommendations.
- About the Hyattsville Police Department (information from [City of Hyattsville Police Department Annual Report 2020](#))
 - 40 percent Black, 2 percent Other – now nearing 50 percent Person of Color. The demographics of department has been one of our main goals – to ensure that it better reflects the community. We have 5 commanders and 2 women leadership and 2 Black leadership.
 - According to a [Hyattsville PD 2022 Report](#), PD reported 925 crimes against persons and properties and nearly 24,000 total calls for services.
 - Hyattsville PD has adopted the 21st century community policing model.
 - In December 2014, then President Obama issued Executive Order appointing an 11-member task force on 21st century policing. Underlying themes: Change culture of policing, embrace community policy, building community capital (trust and legitimacy); pay attention to police burnout
 - Hyattsville 21 Century Policy Progress Report (2019) – *see slides for full report*
 - Hyattsville has 57 items across pillars successfully completed; 7 items are partially completed – made headway on 93 percent of the tasks that help us get close to 21st century policing.
 - RETF Plan – *highlights below but please review the presentation for all points*
 - Review of assets that will help us achieve more equity in policing.

- One is that across race, class, has a pretty good reputation with not many high-profile police violence. We know as a city that Hyattsville PD is embarking on a 21st century policing model. PD engages community the. Hyattsville is a sanctuary city that does not cooperate with ICE detention and enforcement. PD trains police offers on bias and is creating some transparency. The city is engaging in a cadet program to bring in new officers. Advisory committee for police accountability and oversight. City is implementing first responders program, mental health wellness.
- Can PD share more about the mental health programs manager and the mental health first aid responders program and if that lives within the PD or if it is a separate agency, as other jurisdictions are doing?
 - CT: We are constantly evolving. Mental Health now reports for the Deputy City Administrator and no longer is in the PD. There are two programs in PD: mental health wellness peer support program where officers are required to see a clinician once a quarter. We started this before it was passed into legislation – one of the first in the nation to do this. The second program is the crises intervention program is a co-responder program that sits within PD involving a license clinician who works with PD in the field. There are other programs within the county.
- Assessment of Gaps
 - Historically has had challenges maintaining and recruiting officers

- Low attendance at community meetings – residents’ voices are not always heard. What are some of the ways we can engage and ways in which we can make community meetings more accessible when shaping community policing?
 - Ease and availability of data
 - In 2020, in Hyattsville, people of color were disproportionately stopped in traffic violations.
 - Traffic law enforcement policy is incomplete, leaving ambiguity for how police handle verbal abuse and limited guidance for drivers not suspected of violated crimes.
 - The language promoted an “us versus them” culture – I want to acknowledge this was a gap identified by RETF previously.
 - PG Country Citizen Oversight Complaint Panel is inactive as of 2022. Currently, Hyattsville does not have its own citizen oversight complaint panel.
- Data
 - African American and Latinos still made up a majority of citations
- Next Steps: For this round of RETF, we want to see PD take steps to:
 - Disaggregation of data and availability of information
 - Look at ACLU training on Citizen Review Board – how to expand
 - Review diversity hiring strategies
 - Continue to build understanding
 - Institute more anti-racism training for officers

- Center anti-racism but not ignore other communities / other dimensions of identity
 - Resolve policy ambiguity around traffic stops
 - Develop Hyattsville Equity Framework & Vision (Ex: Fairfax, Baltimore, Alexandria)
- DISCUSSION
 - JT: On civilian oversight, the CCOP, the county's oversight panel, went inactive because legislation in July 2022 replaced at county level -- Accountability Board. Under that legislation, HVL PD is required to send all complaints against police practices that involve a citizen to the Residents Charging Committee after we complete an investigation. No longer can HVL PD determine findings, nor what the discipline can be.
 - Marshall: Is there a date set for members to be selected? Does the county board have legal authority?
 - JT: Robust process. Legislation requires that Boards are requires that members are appointed by Country Executive so there were announcements for committees. There were interview panels selected by PG County. Police Accountability Board makes recommendations for law enforcement based on trends. The Administrative Charging Committee has final say about findings and discipline.
 - LL: Legally we may not be able to have a HVL citizen's review board. By statute, it must be held at county level. As the law is written, we can not

have our own board and there is discussion on changing that but it would not be mandatory.

- JT: There are multiple platforms we are working on – statistical data and findings of misconduct. I want to check that the statistical system will provide demographics to our website. I have not given a progress report to the community since I have been here but would like to give a status report of where we are. Training on implicit bias – history that law enforcement played a direct role in slavery; trainings should be ongoing and we need to make the investment on implicit bias training. The staffing level went from 48 to 50 since I have been here, and I asked for 2 additional positions. One of these positions is a full-time training coordinator to ensure that training programs are talking to each other, holistic, and incorporating NAACP, other studies - so we can be at the forefront of progressive policing in the DMV.
- LL: The PD is held accountable to many policies. Each policy isn't a silo and you are expected to follow all of them. PDs are also held accountable to trainings. While the national conversation is important and unfortunately the horrific Memphis incident, that PD had started to hire officers who had a felony conviction. Our PD would not do that because that is illegal here. Chief Towers has more stringent requirements than the minimum legal requirements.
- Co-Chair Freeman: As we iterate and hear more from our neighbors, we will come back to you with more.
- SL: RETF will weigh in on Co-Chair Freeman's presentation and we will solidify those recommendations. We will ask Chief Towers to look at the recommendations.

8:10 pm - 8:20 pm –Discussion of Bodily Autonomy Act Draft Feedback– Co-Chair Freemyn

- Dan Broder sent the draft; there were very few edits, for example, including gender neutral and gender expansive language --“Women and birthing people”
 - JM: What buy in is there? This is the third iteration, as I understand. Have we engaged the medical, healthcare professionals, licensing boards, and other stakeholders for buy-in? Legislation seems to ensure that – consider adding professional sanctions, in addition to civil liability, criminal liability.
 - AF: What buy in has there been with other reproductive justice groups? On next steps, I will follow up with Dan Broder.

8:20 pm - 8:23 pm – Open Discussion

- SL: Council Member Denis and CM Waszczak did make the offer of sharing Ward discretionary funds with RETF. SL will work on a mock-up – flyers and tablecloth for promotions.

8:23 pm – 8:25 pm – Next Meeting Agenda – Co-Chair Freemyn

- We will revisit 21st century policing report and recommendation to HVL PD
- By next meeting, feedback from Dan on stakeholder engagement, particularly stakeholders that have done reproductive justice work from an equity lens.
- Debrief from HVL Housing Event on March: feedback from neighbors and residents
- Aging & People with Disabilities presentation

8:26 pm – Adjourn Meeting

- JM moves; AF seconds