

Minutes of Hyattsville Police and Public Safety Citizens' Advisory Committee meeting on April 14th, 2021

[In attendance on the zoom meeting](#)

[Agenda and notes](#)

[Review minutes](#)

[Updates from police](#)

[Corporal Chris Evans presentation on how to start a neighborhood watch program in your ward](#)

[Corporal Chris Evans presentation about SRO program](#)

[Personnel and training](#)

[Implementation and impact](#)

[Q&A](#)

[Discussion on civilian oversight committee proposal \(led by Council Member Danny Schaible\)](#)

[Background and overview of proposal](#)

[Questions and comments](#)

[Committee's stance on proposal](#)

[Other / misc. Items](#)

[Closing](#)

In attendance on the zoom meeting

Chairperson Patricia Page called the meeting to begin at 19:34

Committee

- Chairperson Patricia Page
- Vice Chairperson Mariel Alper
- Secretary Joel Chan
- Committee Member Jerome Brown
- Committee Member Bette Dickerson
- Committee Member Maggie Brunner
- Committee Member Mai Abdul Rahman

Council / Liaison

- Council President Kevin Ward
- Council Member Daniel Peabody
- Council Member Danny Schaible
- Council Member Ben Simasek
- Liaison Deputy Chief Scott Dunklee

Other

- Corporal Chris Evans

Agenda and notes

Review minutes

- Committee Member Maggie Brunner motioned to accept
- Committee Member Bette Dickerson seconded
- 0 objections

Updates from police

- Murder on Hamilton Street
 - HPD worked with PGCPD to resolve case
- Incoming police chief
 - Will go through applications shortly after Election May 11th, 2021, so that incoming Mayor can have some input

Corporal Chris Evans presentation on how to start a neighborhood watch program in your ward

- About Corporal Chris Evans
 - Originally from DC
 - Law enforcement background
 - In Hyattsville since age 16, volunteer firefighter
 - Then dispatcher for county 9-11 for 4 years
 - Then joined HPD
 - Part of Community Action team
- Two active neighborhood watches right now
 - Ward 2 is the most active, meet monthly (3rd Wednesday)
 - Pre-COVID, the watch met at coordinators' house; Officer Matthews would attend to give updates
 - Ward 1 is starting up now

- Officer Matthews met with them last month
 - Going to start monthly meetings, then community walks
 - Biggest problem in EYA area is package thefts
- Explore crime prevention through environmental design (e.g., better lighting, cutting down bushes, community awareness of what's going on so everybody can be on the lookout): goal is to reduce opportunity for crime
- How to start up:
 - Starts with the community, gather neighbors
 - Contact local law enforcement community action team (main liaisons are Corporal Evans and Private Matthews)
 - Develop action plan for how to mitigate problems
 - Take action: monthly meeting
- Benefits:
 - Partnership with law enforcement and neighbors
 - Reduction in crime
 - More unified community (e.g., through improved communication through social media)
 - Also improve quality of life in neighborhood
 - E.g., see someone who needs help, reach out to local faith-based orgs, authorities, to get help
- Liaison Deputy Chief Scott Dunklee neighborhood watch is part of core pillars of 21st-century community-policing
 - There can be a tendency for activity to drop off after an incident
- Questions:
 - Secretary Joel Chan: does it have to be ward-wide?
 - Corporal Evans: no rule that it has to be Ward-wide! The "Ward 1" group is really covering the EYA community
 - Committee Member Bette Dickerson: active on Ward 2 neighborhood watch, covers 4 blocks (39th and 40th, Livingston and Madison)
 - Suggest the Hyattsville/Riverdale group talk to leader from Ward 2 (Emily Strab)
 - Committee Member Mai Abdul Rahman: how to coordinate across watches?
 - Committee Member Bette Dickerson: important to foster communication amongst each group
 - Corporal Evans: also good to foster visibility through community walks
 - Emily Strab: don't really have a defined border, have opened it up. but good to keep it from being too large, for cohesion.

- They build relationships and regularly communicate with people outside the 4-block radius, through email list and community walks
- Most important part: getting to know one another!
 - Potluck for meetings. A social occasion, not just down to business.
 - Block party in September, pool party and cookout in July, to gather people
- 20 years and going strong!
- Block is extremely quiet, and they believe the watch has something to do with that
- Committee Member Bette Dickerson: sometimes could be as small as coordinating keeping lights on at night
 - Emily Strab: or set alarm at night to lock doors and car

Corporal Chris Evans presentation about SRO program

Personnel and training

- Personnel
 - Been at Northwestern for 2 years now; Private Matthews is backup for the department
 - Both are part of the HPD Community Action Team
- Selection process looks for
 - Outgoing personality, great communication skills
 - Enjoy working with children
 - Patience
 - Trust
- Training
 - Two certifications (3-hrs)
 - National level
 - Maryland level
 - Topics
 - Foundations of school-based law enforcement
 - Ethics and SRO
 - How to maintain rapport with students, parents, and staff; how to build mutual respect and trust
 - SRO as teacher an guest speaker
 - Understanding special needs students
 - SRO as informal counselor and mentor
 - Social media and cybersafety

- Understanding the teen brain
- School law: lots of things SROs cannot do as police officers - it is different inside of a school from a patrol officer (probable cause, articulate suspicion), can't interview student without administrator present
- Developing / supporting successful relationships with diverse students
- How to prevent violence
- School safety / emergency operations plans
- Crime prevention through environmental design (e.g., lighting, trees)
- Also trained with Single Officer to Active Response Threats (SORAT)

Implementation and impact

- What the day is like at school
 - Approximately 2500 students at Northwestern
 - Council Member Daniel Peabody is Assistant Principal at Northwestern
 - Roughly 10 security guards, hallway monitoring, exteriors
 - Two PGC officers, and 1 HPD officers
- Benefits:
 - Safety of students and staff
 - Role models for students
 - Give students a chance to see police officers in a positive manner - learn who they are behind the badge (shared context about music, entertainment, interests)
 - Concrete examples of benefits
 - Deter gang violence by being present; were able to stop a few incidents
 - large groups waiting for students at dismissal
 - apprehended suspects who cut through woods to lie in wait to rob students
 - was able to communicate that to school staff
 - recovered large machete knife from outsider who entered to attack a student
 - discovered gang graffiti right outside the school on Adelphi Road
 - Able to locate individual who was vandalizing the city and placing swastikas with spray paint - SRO was able to coordinate with school security to identify student and talk to him, found out he was doing it for fun, didn't charge him criminally

- Also handle threats from students of mass violence
- Sometimes also assist students with getting jobs, talk about life lessons, growing up
- DARE certified instructors; also go into elementary school to talk about drugs
- Biggest benefit: annual shop with a cop (for elementary school students in need)
 - Budget of \$100
 - They're often buying things for their siblings or parents
- Back to school drives
- Therefore prevention, not enforcement: typically incidents are handled by administration, not criminal
- Get to know children as they grow up, from elementary to high school, get to see them when out on patrol

Q&A

- Committee Member Bette Dickerson: is certification required for the whole county?
 - Corporal Chris Evans: yes, required in the state of Maryland. Also if you are the supervisor, you need to be certified.
 - Committee Member Bette Dickerson: what about ongoing certification?
 - Corporal Chris Evans: not yet, but this is on the way
- Committee Member Bette Dickerson: who are you speaking for?
 - Corporal Chris Evans: myself and Private Matthews
 - Committee Member Bette Dickerson: are you 24/7?
 - Corporal Chris Evans: yes, but on call as well
- Committee Member Mai Abdul Rahman: how will the ongoing legislation going through the state affect what's going on?
 - Corporal Chris Evans: not 100% sure yet, will have to see what comes through. Some bills requiring soft uniforms: HPD is already doing that. Some bills advocating removal: that would have larger impact.
- Upcoming Drug Buyback Day (will be run by Corporal Chris Evans)
 - Drop off unused or expired prescription drugs
 - Popup at Friendship Arms apartment

Discussion on civilian oversight committee proposal (led by Council Member Danny Schaible)

Background and overview of proposal

- Overview from Council Member Danny Schaible
 - Background: from ~7 months ago, started working group for police reform
 - About a dozen discussions since then
 - Current process: internal affairs (currently a single person) reviews the complaints and makes recommendations to the chief; chief is final arbiter for what to do
 - Basic premise: have civilians anytime there is a complaint registered against a HPD officer, the oversight group reviews the complaint. Keep internal affairs for review; once investigation is complete and recommendation is ready, civilian oversight engages.
 - Conceived of as a new committee; considered making it an additional arm of this committee;
 - 5 members, to represent 5 wards and demographic diversity
 - Will also make a recommendation, that should be considered equally with the recommendation from internal affairs.
 - Additional reporting. Civilian oversight report will be shared with council.
- Additional comments from Brian Banks
 - Interest is not punitive, but for better communication and relationship
 - Working closely with [NACOLE](#) and CCOP to learn about best practices
 - Would operate in closed session

Questions and comments

- Committee Member Mai Abdul Rahman: how does this relate to what was passed in Annapolis?
 - Brian Banks: Part 1 was repealing the Officer Bill of Rights: cleared the way for civilian oversight
 - Also created guidelines for state-wide civilian oversights, and also at the county level and potentially local
 - Probably a couple years out before they are able to take on all of the local departments as well
 - At that point, Hyattsville's civilian oversight committee's work could be subsumed by the county-wide one; but could also be input into the county body or in parallel
- Committee Member Maggie Brunner: concern is about situations where expediency is really important: to what extent can things be sped along in those

circumstances? Also, what would be included/excluded in terms of evidence?
And who will be serving as legal liaison?

- Brian Banks:
 - could imagine relatively quick turnaround. Doesn't necessarily preclude immediate action by the chief; placing someone on administrative leave doesn't need to depend on final recommendation. Not aiming for this to be a drawn out thing: starting with report and evidence (no subpoena power, can't interview people)
 - for context: last year HPD had 4 complaints
 - Council Member Danny Schaible: aiming for 30 days as the timeline
 - access to evidence will be determined by lawyer, not police department
 - HPD would determine legal liaison, whose role would be advisory in terms of what the law says, will not be voting member or shape the process (can be invited or not).
- Council Member Danny Schaible: have attorney under contract for city; would review the motion and individual reports
- Committee Member Bette Dickerson: how to balance confidentiality and transparency? there should be some consideration of community engagement. and also who will the annual report be shared with? what does all this mean for our committee?
 - Brian Banks: bill from Annapolis clearly specifies what should be in the complaint, make it easier to file complaints
 - Big role for this committee to raise community awareness about this
 - Annual report is designed to be public, shared with the community at large (won't give names, but will report trends)
- Committee Member Bette Dickerson: our committee would like to be involved, and work closely with this new committee. So be involved in training and ride-alongs.
- Chuck P: any barriers/concerns for access to records?
 - Brian Banks: no issues in Hyattsville
- Committee Member Bette Dickerson: how does this committee fit with the other committee?
 - We will encourage openness to complaints, the other committee will be on the receiving end on that
- Committee Member Maggie Brunner: why 5?
 - Brian Banks: best practices from other committees, don't want it to be too few/many, and also matches the number of wards

- Also, training will be fairly intense, with NACOLE, lawyers, and so on, so want to right-size it
- Committee Member Bette Dickerson: what is the next step?
 - Brian Banks: review by lawyers, then go to council for vote. Would love to get some indication of the committee's sentiment on the motion
- Committee Member Bette Dickerson: if we are generally supportive but are requesting some changes, how to proceed? For example, would like to have some transparent statement of relationship with this committee
 - Brian Banks: possible to approve pending these improvements?
 - With edits to that piece,
- Committee Member Mai Abdul Rahman: as this presented to any other committees?
 - Brian Banks: Race and Equity referred us to this committee because there is a reorganization in place
- Council Member Daniel Peabody: council is generally supportive

Committee's stance on proposal

- The committee was generally supportive of this pending two changes:
 - Confidentiality / non-disclosure
 - Partnership with this committee
 - Get committee to help with wording by April 21st, 2021
 - We will form an ad-hoc subcommittee to work on this via email and then call a special meeting before the council needs to consider this to approve the changes

Other / misc. Items

- Contacts referenced in meeting
 - Emily Strab: etstrab@gmail.com
 - Corporal Chris Evans: Cevans@hyattsville.org
- Committee Member Bette Dickerson: we need to decide if we are going to wrap up the items from the 2018 report
 - Committee Member Maggie Brunner and Secretary Joel Chan are in favor
 - Chairperson Patricia Page it is also on the agenda for May

Closing

- Committee Member Bette Dickerson motion to adjourn at 21:26
 - Secretary Joel Chan seconded