



CITY OF TOPEKA

CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

SPECIAL COMMITTEE: POLICE & COMMUNITY

CITY COUNCIL
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Date: October 5, 2020

Time: 3:00pm

Location: Classroom A; Law Enforcement Center 320 S. Kansas

Committee members present: Councilmembers Karen Hiller, Sylvia Ortiz, Michael Padilla

City staff present: City Manager Brent Trout, CPT Jamey Haltom (TPD), Lisa Robertson (City Attorney)

1) Call to Order

Committee member Padilla called the meeting to order at 3:03pm.

2) Elect 2020 Committee Chair

Committee member Padilla made a motion to nominate Committee member Ortiz to serve as chair. Committee member Hiller seconded the motion. Nomination accepted. Approved 3:0.

Committee members introduced themselves.

3) Discussion: Prioritize agenda items for future meetings

The committee was formed to address concerns regarding the police department and community relations. Chairwoman Ortiz expressed the difficult nature of the items that have been tasked to the committee, and provided ground rules for public comment regarding upcoming committee meetings. Chairwoman Ortiz stated any items that are to be placed to the committee are to be placed on the agenda, and no side meetings will be held. Suggestions for the agenda or comments can be sent to Liz Toyne, City Council Assistant, at etoyne@topeka.org.

Committee member Hiller stated support for the police department as well as support for full equity for people of color within the community, and the hope to be able to bring those efforts together. She would like to have data-supported comments brought to the committee regarding agenda items. Committee member Hiller ended comments by asking "Why not, Topeka? And why not now?"

Committee member Padilla noted the committee is not taking obligations to serve lightly. He commented that each of the committee members have been involved with all aspects of the community for decades, and is looking forward to approaching any recommendations that are moved to the Governing Body from the committee with factual information.

Committee member Padilla noted Use of Force is a topic that appears to be important. There is a lot of misinformation has been brought up regarding the topic. Training would be another important area to review.

Chairwoman Ortiz stated she wanted to decide on two or three items to review more closely before moving on.

Committee member Hiller noted there are number of issues that she had gathered from the numerous comments that Council members had received and suggested grouping those items. She noted Use of Force had about eleven components under that topic. Committee member Hiller agreed that conducting as thorough of a review as possible was important, and that within each focus area, to look at levels involving training, administrative policies and procedures, state or Supreme Court law in order to identify where a problem sits. This would also allow staff and community members to become educated as to what alternative solutions might be for addressing the problem. Items under Use of Force: standard interactions, escalation/de-escalation, chokeholds, fleeing vehicles, fleeing persons, no-knock warrants, duty to intervene, car chase ban, qualified immunity, issues of hiring/discipline/DOJ reports, effectiveness of internal review process. Second category looks at deployment of officers for special needs populations such as: homeless, mental health, human trafficking, and domestic violence. The third category is prevention and what is being done in areas of youth, neighborhoods and re-entry. The fourth category is race, color and diversity. These areas would be touched on throughout the other categories, however it would be important to make sure profiling or disparate-treatment is addressed. Reviewing the department's recruitment efforts to diverse populations would be included in that category. The fifth category centers on community engagement, and ways to obtain regular feedback from youth, full community and minority groups. Review the outreach and customer service protocols. The sixth category would review the deployment of officers for the best use of tax dollars.

First Session: Committee member Padilla made a motion to discuss items under the Use of Force currently in place, and related issues such as training, practices, and procedures as the first item to review. Committee member Hiller seconded the motion. Motion approved 3:0.

The committee discussed the topics for the next meeting. Motion to approve these items made by Committee member Padilla, seconded by Committee member Hiller. Approved 3:0. Agenda will be as follows:

First item: Use of Force

Second item: Standard interaction & Bias profiling

Third item: Escalation/De-escalation

Fourth item: Duty to Intervene

Committee member Hiller added that within each of the items, they would like to learn more about the interaction and the evaluation that occurs following an incident in the categories listed above as well as the training, administrative policy/procedure, bias profiling issues that have been raised about that particular item, and the internal review process of each item.

Topeka Police Chief Cochran addressed the committee and stated he felt the list was a strong start. He also stated CPT Haltom has been assigned to attend these meetings and has been designated to speak on behalf of the police department.

Committee member Hiller inquired if the committee felt it would be important to have reports provided from previous years with regard to complaints on the department. Committee member Padilla stated those reports are provided annually to the State of Kansas. He noted he would like to see things move forward with reviewing past complaints, rather than dig into past experiences.

Chairwoman Ortiz inquired about the community relations liaison. Chief Cochran confirmed. Officer Lister is the Community Relations liaison. An email address was also set up to allow citizens to send information to the Chief's office (chiefsoffice@topeka.org) Individuals have a number of ways to voice a complaint, and are able to do so anonymously or known. The process has been in place for

over seven years. Chairwoman Ortiz would like to have all of the avenues in which citizens can report to the police brought forward as well. Committee member Hiller agreed and would also like to find out if there is an improvement that can be made to the system or is it the individual, as well as to understand the programs and how much usage the community is putting into these programs.

4) Set meeting schedule, next meeting date

Next meeting will be Monday, October 26th at 3:00pm in Classroom A of the Law Enforcement Center. Motion to approve made by Committee member Hiller, seconded by Committee member Padilla. Approved 3:0.

Committee member Hiller stated it may be useful to clarify the goals of the agenda. Chairwoman Ortiz stated there would not be any additional taskforces or sub-committees. Topics will be set by the committee, and members of the public would have the opportunity to provide comment on those items as they are presented.

Committee member Padilla announced the Census deadline has been extended through October. Topeka is within range of meeting and exceeding the goal. He asked everyone to please speak to everyone they know to make sure they have completed the census.

No additional announcements.

5) Adjourn

Chairwoman Ortiz adjourned the meeting at 4:02pm.

Meeting video can be viewed at: https://youtu.be/JOr_eR_TZS4