

TOWN OF WEST HARTFORD

MINUTES

SPECIAL MEETING

CIVILIAN POLICE REVIEW BOARD

June 23, 2021 6:00 PM

WEST HARTFORD TOWN HALL, LEGISLATIVE CHAMBER

I. Meeting Opening – 6:00 PM:

A. Call to Order

B. Commissioner Morales welcomed everyone and started the meeting at 6:00 pm. Conducted in hybrid format. All board members are in person. Public can be in either person or by watching on-line or calling in to the numbers provided. Commissioner Morales read the numbers for calling-in, which had been listed on the Agenda.

C. Pledge of Allegiance

D. Roll Call: Veronica Badiola, Robin Kallor, Adrienne Billings-Smith, Alberto Cortex, Bjorn Burke, Nabin Chettri and Olinda Morales were present. A quorum of members were present.

Alternates were also present: Matthew Horowitz, Kathleen Costello Hindman and Gabriella Downey.

II. Approval of Meeting Minutes

Motion made by: Veronica Badiola

Motion seconded by: Adrienne Billings-Smith

Vote: Unanimous in favor

III. Training

A. Town Manager, Matt Hart, reviewed the purpose and function of CPRB, the Town of West Hartford Organizational Chart.

B. Assistant Corporation Council, Cynthia Lauture, reviewed the Freedom of Information Act, meetings and records provisions. She also reviewed the Town of West Hartford Code of Ordinances Code of Ethics. She

discussed the need to ensure that only the four corners of the complaints/investigations are discussed at Board meetings. Members should not conduct outside research. Moreover, Board members should not discuss the complaints or internal affairs investigations with others or outside the confines of a meeting.

- C. Police Chief Vernon L. Riddick discussed the responsibilities of the various police divisions and specialized units. He also reviewed the chain of command and supervisory responsibilities, rank structure and organizational chart. Chief Riddick discussed that he intends to be open and transparent to the CRB. He also stated that he has significant experience in police administration. If he believes that disciplinary action is warranted, he takes appropriate action as necessary. He is happy that the Board has been created.

In 2020, they have 1,267 reported Town Ordinance Violations, 6,057 Medical Calls, 2,247 Motor Vehicle Accidents, 5,476 Number of Motor Vehicle Stops, 49,440 Total Calls for Service, 1,303 Number of Criminal Arrests, 5,030 Number of Motor Vehicle Arrests, 77 DUI Arrests.

Chairman Morales asked for the racial compensation of stops. Chief Riddick responded that we submit this information to the state. Statistics might be over population people travel through West Hartford to go to the mall, restaurants and vibrant center.

Bjorn Burke asked for the racial breakdown of the Police Department. Chief Riddick responded: 88% White, 6% Black, 2% Hispanic and 4% Asian. Adrienne Billings-Smith asked whether licensed social workers assist on calls. Police Chief Riddick responded that they work with social services for certain appropriate external issues. For internal issues, they have peer support and EAP.

- D. Assistant Chief Lawrence A. Terra discussed Professional Standards Procedures and Practices for Misconduct Investigations. POST governs Police Departments in the state and have standardized the complaint process through Public Act 14-166. The Police Department will take civilian complaints in writing, by mail or TDD (hearing impaired). They will also take them by fax, email, in person, anonymous or by a third party. There shall be no retaliation for making a complaint; and if it is determined that a member of the police department so retaliated, they will be disciplined. The Department will not ask for immigration status of the individual filing a complaint. After a complaint comes in, officers are required to notify a supervisor. If they withhold information, they will be

disciplined. When complaints come in, they are assigned a number and are either Class A or Class B, depending upon seriousness. When people delay in bringing forward a complaint, it will still be investigated, but evidence may not be available. The Police Department notifies complainants that the investigations have begun, within five days after the receipt of their complaints. Once the investigation is completed, the findings are communicated to the complainants.

Following investigation, the investigation can result in one of the following dispositions: exonerated, unfounded, not sustained, partially sustained, sustained, misconduct not based upon original complaint, withdrawn or a summary action.

Department members are regularly trained in how to take complaints, how to process them. Front line supervisors are trained in how to process complaints, the CRB, Loudermill and discipline.

Alvin Penn Act (Racial profiling). Police give notification at every police stop. The notification contains instructions for filing complaints. They can either complain internally or file a complaint with the Commission on Human Right and Opportunities (“CHRO”).

Kathleen Castello-Hindman asked how many complaints were filed with the CHRO; Chief Riddick responded that he is aware of only one that has been filed with the CHRO.

Alberto Cortes asked, of the 11 complaints, how many were Class A and how many were class B? Assistant Chief Terra did not know, but will provide a breakdown.

Nabin Chettri asked what the trend was for citizen complaints in previous 3 years. Chief Riddick stated that last year, they received 11 complaints. The year before they received 10. So far, in 2021, they received four complaints.

Olinda Morales asked how long investigations take until reports are issued. Assistant Chief Terra stated that it could take a few weeks or months depending upon the nature of the investigation.

Chairperson Morales: Will the CRB provide a verbal or written recommendation? Chief Riddick: The CRB will either sustain the investigation or remand it to the Chief and will need to explain why.

Chairperson Morales: Will there be a meeting if we have no investigation reports before us? Assistant Corporation Council Lauture: You will have no meeting if you do not have investigations to discuss.

Next meeting will be in person and the training will continue. State is reviewing recommendations for future hybrid meetings. Next meeting will be 7/21/21 at 6:30 pm.

In terms of the ride along, that should be after the use of force simulator. We should coordinate a day for the simulator (Monday through Friday).

IV. New Business: None.

V. Adjournment

Motion to Adjourn

Motion made by: Olinda Morales
Motion seconded by: Alberto Cortes
Unanimous - in favor

Meeting ended: 9:03