



Minutes

Citizens League City of Saint Paul Community-First Public Safety Commission

Wednesday, February 10th, 2021

9:00 am – 12:00 pm

Virtual meeting via Zoom video

Commission Members present: Co-Chair Acooa Ellis, Co-Chair John Marshall, Ramsey County Board Chair Toni Carter, Ms. Sue Abderholden, Ms. Chauntyll Allen, Mr. Ahmed Anshur, Mr. Cedrick Baker, Mr. Sami Banat, Mr. Jason Barnett, Rev. Dr. Ron Bell, Mr. Scott Burns, Ms. Chikamso Chijioke, Mrs. JoAnn Clark, Ms. Sasha Cotton, Ms. Sierra Cumberland, Ms. Natalia Davis, Mr. Julio Fesser, Ms. Anna-Marie Foster, Ms. Simone Hardeman-Jones, Ms. Suwayda Hussein, Mr. David Squier Jones, Ms. Laura Jones, Ms. Clara Junemann, Ms. Farhio Khalif, Mr. Stephen Moore, Ms. Amy Peterson, Dr. Suzanne Rivera, Mr. Mark Ross, Mr. Garaad Sahal, Hon. Nicole Starr, Mr. Mario Stokes, Ms. Olyvia Rayne Taylor, Mr. Derek Turner (designee for Ms. Suwana Kirkland), Ms. LyLy Vang Yang, Mr. Teshite Wako, Mr. Jai Winston, Ms. Heather Worthington, and Mr. Otis Zanders.

Members not present: Councilmember Mitra Jalali, Ms. Monica Bravo, Mr. Sam Clark, Mr. Ameen Ford, Ms. Suwana Kirkland, Ms. Alicia Lucio, Ms. Wintana Melekin, Mr. Amin Omar, Mr. Frank Ortiz, Ms. Maureen Perryman, and Mr. Pheng Xiong.

Special guests: Dr. Ebony Ruhland, Dr. Lily Gleicher, Mr. Pete Nelson, Ms. Ashley O'Brien, Mr. Andrew Bentley, and Mr. Elliot Karl.

Staff & staff support present: Ms. Kate Cimino, Ms. Amanda Koonjbeharry, Mr. Jacob Taintor, and Ms. Madeline McCue.

Minutes

Co-chair Ellis called the meeting to order at 9:02 am.

Opening and Approval of Minutes

Co-chair Marshall welcomed the commission and reviewed the proposed outcomes for this meeting (*see above*). He also reviewed the commission's charge, as specified by the City of Saint Paul, to make recommendations to the Mayor and the Saint Paul City Council regarding:

1. Alternative first response options to low-priority calls for service;
2. Approaches for ongoing community involvement in the City of Saint Paul's Community-First Public Safety Framework; and,
3. Consideration of the creation of a city-staffed office to integrate the initiatives and strategies of the Community-First Public Safety Framework.

Co-chair Marshall acknowledged the recent loss of D'Zondria Wallace and her children La'Porsha, and Ja'Corbie. He spoke about the human impacts of this commission's work and how domestic and sexual violence intersect with public safety. He encouraged commission members to take time in their small groups to reflect on this tragic loss.

Co-chair Marshall continued to the approval of the minutes of the previous meeting. A motion to approve the minutes as written passed with 24 votes.

Co-chair Marshall invited a commission member to lead the group in a moment of mindfulness, and then invited members to contact Ms. Amanda Koonjbeharry if they were interested in leading future mindfulness moments.

Chat and Connect

Co-chair Ellis introduced the next activity, in which members would be split into small breakout rooms to discuss what stood out to them from previous meetings and what thoughts they were bringing into this meeting.

Co-chair Ellis sent members to breakout rooms at 9:12 am.

While members were in breakout rooms, Ms. Kate Cimino greeted presenters and representatives from the city and county.

Co-chair Ellis welcomed members back at 9:33 am and invited them to share their reflections.

A commission member shared that their group discussed expertise and collaborations, gender-based violence, and the first-hand experiences of officers. They wanted to hear more from Harvard Government Performance Lab (GPL) about how an Office of Violence Prevention might be created and how it might incorporate a non-law-enforcement response. Their group also discussed recruitment and training of police officers and police unions.

Another commission member added that their group discussed how the creation of an alternative response model for low-priority calls could reduce response-times for those calls, ensure that they are addressed by better-suited personnel, and free-up officers for higher-priority calls.

A commission member expressed their group's concern about the possible effects on the community of the upcoming trial of the officers involved in the death of George Floyd. Another member of that group added their worries about further unrest and the re-traumatization of the community.

A commission member shared that their group discussed the difficulties associated with the unpredictability of calls and the challenge of keeping responders safe when weapons are involved.

Co-chair Ellis thanked the commission members for their thoughts and invited Ms. Kate Cimino to discuss community feedback.

Community Report

Ms. Cimino greeted the commission and shared four pieces of community feedback.

An anonymous commenter expressed their concern about historic levels of violent crime and suggested that understaffing of public safety was a part of the problem. They encouraged increased staffing and for the commission to examine both responsive and preventative methods to addressing violence.

John H.R. Piper asked about what kinds of programs the city will be developing in which citizens can be involved and empowered.

Catherine Marie Day offered a "Theory of Change" model about how humans feel the need to be a part of a community that cares about them. She offered herself as a resource to help the commission understand the theory of change model.

The Citizens League and the co-chairs were also cc'd on a letter addressed to Mayor Carter from the executive directors of Violence Free Minnesota and the Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MNCASA). These organizations are statewide coalitions that represent more than a hundred organizations working to end domestic and sexual violence. The executive directors expressed their concern about a lack of representation on the commission for people working to address sexual violence. They asked the commission to include sexual violence in their considerations and recommendations. They shared statistics that sexual violence affects one in three women, one in seven men, and one in two transgender people, meaning that 70,000 people in Saint Paul are impacted and depend on trauma-informed public safety. They offered their resources and knowledge to the commission about creating public policy that effectively addresses domestic and sexual violence.

Ms. Cimino noted that the Citizens League has been in touch with Violence Free Minnesota and MNCASA to provide a deeper dive into these issues for the commission.

A commission member shared their support for the commission learning from existing networks and inquired about whether the commission could actively seek out other such networks from which to learn.

Co-chair Ellis agreed and explained that this was one of the objectives of the Inclusion subcommittee.

The Citizens League will be following up on feedback.

Presentations

Co-chair Ellis introduced and welcomed representatives from the Robina Institute: Dr. Ebony Ruhland is an Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice at the University of Cincinnati and Dr. Lily Gleicher is a research scholar at the University of Minnesota.

Dr. Ruhland and Dr. Gleicher presented about the Robina Institute's initial findings and took questions. *See Addendum A for details.*

Co-chair Ellis thanked Dr. Ruhland and Dr. Gleicher for their presentation.

Co-chair Ellis next welcomed Mr. Pete Nelson from the City of Saint Paul's Office of Technology and Communications who was to discuss a document sharing site for the Commission. However, encountering technical difficulties, Mr. Nelson's presentation was concluded and Co-chair Ellis dismissed the commission for a break at 10:32 a.m.

Co-chair Marshall reconvened the commission at 10:39 a.m.

Co-Chair Marshall introduced the next set of speakers: Mr. Andrew Bentley and Mr. Elliot Karl, representatives from the Harvard Government Performance Lab (GPL), were joined by commission member Ms. Sasha Cotton, the Director of the City of Minneapolis's Office of Violence Prevention.

Mr. Bentley and Mr. Karl presented about the GPL's continued work in response to the commission's feedback. *See Addendum B for details.*

Ms. Cotton presented about the Minneapolis Office of Violence Prevention. *See Addendum C for details.*

Co-chair Marshall thanked Mr. Bentley, Mr. Karl, and Ms. Cotton for their presentation.

Subcommittees

Co-chair Marshall explained that members would be split into their subcommittees for a facilitated discussion. Members were placed into breakout rooms at 11:11 a.m.

Co-chair Marshall reconvened the commission at 11:56 a.m.

Questions and Close

Co-chair Marshall shared his appreciation for the commission and thanked those who had volunteered to chair subcommittees.

Co-chair Marshall concluded the meeting at 11:57 a.m.