



Minutes

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

Wednesday, March 10th, 2021

9:00 am – 12:00 pm

Virtual meeting via Zoom video

Commission Members present: Co-Chair John Marshall, Co-Chair Acooa Ellis, Councilmember Mitra Jalali, Ramsey County Board Chair Toni Carter, Ms. Chauntyll Allen, Mr. Ahmed Anshur, Mr. Cedrick Baker, Mr. Sami Banat, Mr. Jason Barnett, Rev. Dr. Ron Bell, Ms. Monica Bravo, Mr. Scott Burns, Ms. Chikamso Chijioke, Mrs. JoAnn Clark, Mr. Sam Clark, Ms. Sasha Cotton, Ms. Sierra Cumberland, Ms. Natalia Davis, Mr. Julio Fesser, Mr. Ameen Ford, Ms. Anna-Marie Foster, Ms. Simone Hardeman-Jones, Ms. Suwayda Hussein, Mr. David Squier Jones, Ms. Laura Jones, Ms. Clara Juneman, Ms. Farhio Khalif, Ms. Suwana Kirkland, Ms. Alicia Lucio, Ms. Wintana Melekin, Mr. Stephen Moore, Mr. Amin Omar, Mr. Frank Ortiz, Ms. Maureen Perryman, Ms. Amy Peterson, Dr. Suzanne Rivera, Mr. Mark Ross, Mr. Garaad Sahal, the Honorable Nikki Starr, Mr. Mario Stokes, Ms. Olyvia Rayne Taylor, Ms. LyLy Vang Yang, Mr. Teshite Wako, Mr. Jai Winston, Ms. Heather Worthington, Mr. Pheng Xiong, and Mr. Otis Zanders.

Elliott Butay (designee for Ms. Sue Abderholden)

Members not present: Ms. Sue Abderholden

Special guests: Mr. Kenneth Adams and Mr. Matthew Simpson, SPFD, Dr. Raymond Moss

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

Minutes

Co-chair Marshall called the meeting to order at 9:01 am.

Opening and Approval of Minutes

Co-chair Marshall welcomed the commission and outlined the plan for the meeting: a review of the survey results, an assessment of types of Priority 4 & 5 situations, initial frameworks for recommendations, and a presentation from the Saint Paul Fire Department.

Co-chair Marshall 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 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 began the meeting by reviewing the Commission timeline.

Ms. Kate Cimino clarified that the final report will include concerns expressed by the commission members that fall outside the defined scope of the commission.

Co-chair Marshall invited a commission member to lead the group in a moment of mindfulness.

Chat and Connect

Co-chair Ellis introduced the next activity, in which members would be split into small breakout rooms to discuss what thoughts they were bringing into this meeting and their thoughts on the timeline.

Co-chair Ellis sent members to breakout rooms at 9:21 am.

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

Co-chair Ellis welcomed members back at 9:31 am and invited them to share their reflections.

A commission member shared a personal story about how the tensions between the police and the community have affected them personally. Other members voiced their support for the member and their desire to rebuild trust between the community and public safety systems.

A commission member stated that their group expressed concerns about the Chauvin trial and their desire to prioritize the care of persons in crisis. Other commission members agreed.

A commission member shared their group's eagerness to work on recommendations. They also noted that the upcoming town hall events could be influential on how the commission's recommendations are received by the community.

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

Community Report

Ms. Koonjbeharry greeted the commission and encouraged members to continue sharing the links to provide feedback. She explained that the commission would hold two series of public Town Hall meetings. The first series in mid-March would serve to introduce the commission, explain its work to date, and to receive community feedback. The second series would take place in mid-April and would serve to share the commission's drafted recommendations and to receive community feedback.

Ms. Koonjbeharry noted that the Robina Institute would be presenting further findings at the next meeting.

Co-chair Marshall dismissed the commission for a break at 9:46 am.

Co-chair Marshall reconvened the commission at 9:53 am.

Survey Results, Discussion, and Recommendation Ideation

Ms. Cimino reviewed the results of the survey in which commission members were asked about their priorities. Survey results indicated eight types of calls for service that were of the highest interest to the commission:

- Juvenile: Curfew violation, statutory offense, general problems
- Welfare Check
- Disorderly Conduct
- Persons in Crisis
- Assist Citizen: General assistance
- Child Abuse: Child injured by an adult with authority over the child
- Civil Problem: No Crime Occurred
- Vehicles and Parking: Anything vehicle related

Ms. Cimino reminded the commission that they would be addressing these types of calls as they manifest in Priority 4 and 5: these situations are understood to be non-violent and non-urgent.

Ms. Cimino, along with Ms. Nancie Pass from the Ramsey County Emergency Communications Center (RCECC), Deputy Chief Matt Toupal (SPPD), and Juvenile Detention Alternatives

Coordinator Dr. Raymond Moss, discussed situations that results in Priority 4 & 5 calls of each of the eight call types. Ms. Cimino invited the commission to discuss how the response to these calls could be altered.

Ms. Cimino began with the Juvenile call type, in which the main concern of the call is that the subject is a young person. Ms. Pass provided details on a sample of 15 randomly selected Priority 4 Juvenile calls from February 2021:

- Six calls were about children acting out of control.
- One was about a child locked out of their residence.
- One was about a child talking to gang members.
- One was about a group of children yelling in public.
- One was about a child looking into windows.
- One was about parents refusing pick up their child from juvenile detention.
- One was a hospital-initiated hold on newborn.
- One was about a child left in a vehicle.
- One was about a child left at school whose parents were unreachable.

Mr. Toupal provided further context. He explained that responses to Juvenile calls can vary dramatically. Based on the above sample of calls, the average time spent responding to these calls was 34 minutes, with a range of four minutes to three hours. Mr. Toupal also noted that these calls can escalate when older children are aggressive. During the school year, the SPPD receives many calls about high-schoolers not wanting to go to school; for those cases, the SPPD generally contacts the school.

Ms. Pass explained that some juvenile calls can be dispatched to the Mobile Crisis Units and to county-level social services, depending on how the caller reports the situation and what services are open when the call is made.

A commission member proposed that incorporating mental health professionals into the call dispatch system could improve the RCECC's ability to triage calls to the most suitable agency.

Dr. Moss referred to a system-wide effort to keep juveniles out of the criminal justice system. He also noted that the SPPD has disbanded their juvenile-specific unit. Mr. Toupal explained that the work has been shifted to other departments. Fewer children are being sent to the Juvenile Detention Center compared to five years ago. The SPPD no longer has a holding facility for juveniles and few are brought to police departments.

Ms. Cimino next moved to Welfare Checks. Ms. Pass provided details on a sample of 15 randomly selected Priority 4 Welfare Check calls:

- Nine calls were about situations in which the caller was unable to reach someone.
 - Three were about people who did not show up for work, which was abnormal.
 - Two were about family members not answering their phones, which was abnormal.
 - Two were about significant others not answering their phones, which was abnormal.
 - Two were about family members not answering their phones in the aftermath of a volatile incident.
- Three calls were for welfare checks on juveniles, possibly involving drug use or a

juvenile in a dangerous situation.

- One call was about a woman in distress in another apartment.
- One call about a panhandler outside in the cold.
- One caller was calling many agencies in an attempt to pass information to the CIA.

Mr. Toupal provided further context. Based on the above sample of calls, the average time spent responding to these calls was 20 minutes, with a range of one minute to an hour. Mr. Toupal also noted that welfare checks can escalate, particularly in domestic violence situations. He clarified that welfare checks that refer to incidents that are happening in the moment may be a higher priority level.

Ms. Pass explained that call priorities can change before an officer arrives, but that call priorities generally do not change once an officer arrives—instead, it is much more common for call types (situations) to change once an officer arrives on the scene.

A commission member who was a member of the SPPD shared a story about a Priority 4 welfare check that escalated into a domestic violence incident. Another police officer on the commission expressed their belief that a police first-response to these calls is always appropriate due to the uncertainty of safety in these situations, and that alternative responses should be a secondary response.

Another commission member expressed their concern that the commission has not concretely identified the problem it is trying to solve, the problem being the harm caused by over-policing of communities for low-level issues like mental health, poverty, and substance abuse. They also noted that the commission should recognize the historical role of policing as a tool of white supremacy and that successful alternatives to police-based public safety systems do exist and should be examined in further depth. Many commission members voiced their support for these ideas and expressed their belief in the fundamental importance of systemic change to address systemic problems with the public safety system.

A commission member agreed and added their concerns about how the lack of comprehensive data and inadequate data collection processes could impede the decision-making capabilities of the commission. They noted that there is no data being collected about call escalations or racial demographics. Many commissioners also voiced their support for these ideas, one adding that many of those most impacted are left out of the current data collection structure entirely.

Ms. Cimino next asked the commission to envision what, in their opinion, an ideal response to some of these types of calls for service could look like. Commission members would discuss their findings in small groups and then share their ideas with the larger groups.

Ms. Cimino sent commission members into breakout rooms at 10:50am.

Ms. Cimino reconvened the commission at 11:11 am.

Commission members shared their ideas for alternative responses, the values they wanted to guide those changes, and any concerns they had about the process. *See Addendum A, "Ideas Generated by Commission – Phase 1" for details.*

Ms. Cimino thanked the commission for their participation and encouraged them to contact the Citizens League if they had further questions or ideas.

Presentation

Co-chair Ellis introduced and welcomed Chief Kenneth Adams of the Saint Paul Fire Department.

Chief Adams presented about the Saint Paul Fire Department's Basic Life Support program as an existing alternative response model. *See Addendum B for details.*

Co-chair Ellis thanked Chief Adams for his presentation.

Questions and Close

Co-chair Ellis thanked the commission and concluded the meeting at 12:02 p.m.