



## Minutes

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

Wednesday, April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021

9:00 am – 12:00 pm

Virtual meeting via Zoom video

*As this was the commission's final meeting, these minutes were not approved by the commission, but were presented via email for review and edits. No substantive edits were submitted.*

**Commission Members present:** Co-Chair John Marshall, Co-Chair Acooa Ellis, Councilmember Mitra Jalali, Ramsey County Board Chair Toni Carter, Ms. Sue Abderholden, Mr. Cedrick Baker, Mr. Sami Banat, Mr. Jason Barnett, Rev. Dr. Ron Bell, Ms. Monica Bravo, Ms. Chikamso Chijioke, Mrs. JoAnn Clark, Mr. Sam Clark, 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, Ms. Alicia Lucio, Ms. Wintana Melekin, Mr. Stephen Moore, Mr. Amin Omar, Mr. Frank Ortiz, Ms. Amy Peterson, Dr. Suzanne Rivera, Mr. Mark Ross, the Honorable Nikki Starr, Mr. Mario Stokes, Ms. LyLy Vang Yang, Mr. Teshite Wako, Mr. Jai Winston, Ms. Heather Worthington, and Mr. Otis Zanders.

**Members not present:** Ms. Chauntyll Allen, Mr. Ahmed Anshur, Mr. Scott Burns, Ms. Sasha Cotton, Mr. Ameen Ford, Ms. Suwana Kirkland, Ms. Maureen Perryman, Mr. Garaad Sahal, Ms. Olyvia Rayne Taylor, and Mr. Pheng Xiong.

**Special guests:** Mayor Melvin Carter, Mr. Andrew Bentley, and Mr. Elliot Karl.

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

## **Minutes**

Co-chair Ellis called the meeting to order at 9:04 am.

### **Opening and Approval of Minutes**

Co-chair Ellis welcomed the commission and acknowledged the guilty verdicts in the trial of Derek Chauvin and also the recent deaths of Daunte Wright, Adam Toledo, and Ma'Khia Bryant at the hands of police. She expressed her gratitude for the continued work of the commission in this space and encouraged members to practice grace for themselves and others.

Co-chair Ellis 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 Ellis reviewed the agenda: following an address by Mayor Melvin Carter, the commission would converse in small groups. The Harvard GPL would present their results and a group of commission members deliver a report on traffic stops. Finally, the commission would review their work thus far and then finalize the development of recommendations regarding alternative responses to Priority 4 and 5 calls.

Co-chair Ellis welcomed Mayor Melvin Carter.

Mayor Carter thanked the commission for their continued work through heavy days. He conveyed his belief that this commission's work to change the future would help to prevent cycles of crisis. He expressed his gratitude that Saint Paul was actively working on these national problems and that this commission was a place where the hard, messy, data-driven work of public policy could be done. He thanked Co-chairs Ellis and Marshall, the Citizens League, the Robina Institute, and the Harvard GPL. He assured the commission that their work will be reflected in the future path of Saint Paul and that it will show the people of Saint Paul that the government is dedicated to creating a better, brighter, and more resilient community.

Co-chair Ellis continued to the approval of the minutes of the previous meeting. A motion to approve the minutes as written passed with 25 votes.

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

### **Chat and Connect**

Co-chair Marshall 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 they hope results from the work the commission has completed.

Co-chair Marshall sent members to breakout rooms at 9:31 am.

Co-chair Marshall welcomed members back at 9:42 am and invited them to share their reflections.

A commission member shared their conflicting feelings of gratitude for the verdict and frustration about the lack of any measures to prevent similar events from happening. They were grateful to their group for offering a space to express complicated feelings without fear of retribution or judgement.

Co-chair Marshall shared his experience of trying to explain current events to his young children. His group shared their thoughts regarding their communities' preparation for the verdict.

A commission member shared that while they were happy with the verdict, their joy was tempered by the understanding that laws would have to be changed in order to address structural problems.

A commission member shared their own anxiety and that of their community throughout the trial, and how it was aggravated by the presence of the National Guard. The commission member had fearfully expected a different verdict and was proud of their community for the verdict that was delivered. They looked forward to moving beyond accountability and toward justice.

A commission member expressed their gratitude for the elected officials who have made this work possible.

A commission member shared their feelings of relief and gratitude as a Black immigrant.

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

## **Community Report**

Ms. Koonjbeharry greeted the commission and thanked commission members who had helped to lead the Town Hall meetings for their time, energy, expertise, and support.

Ms. Koonjbeharry noted that the commission had received a few emails from community members offering suggestions and that those would be included in the final report.

## **Presentations**

Co-chair Marshall introduced and welcomed Mr. Andrew Bentley and Mr. Elliot Karl from the Harvard GPL.

Mr. Bentley and Mr. Karl presented the results of the commission's final survey regarding the proposed creation of an Office of Neighborhood Safety in Saint Paul. *Results shown in separate document.*

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

Co-chair Ellis introduced and welcomed a workgroup of commission members to present their recent work on pretextual traffic stops.

Mr. Sami Banat, Ms. Laura Jones, and Ms. Heather Worthington, presented their analysis on racial disparities in the SPPD's traffic stops. *See Addendum A for details.*

Co-chair Ellis thanked Mr. Banat, Ms. Jones, and Ms. Worthington for their presentation.

Co-chair Ellis dismissed the commission for a break at 10:31 am.

### **Summary of CFPSC Process (including further discussion of pretextual traffic stops)**

Co-chair Marshall reconvened the commission at 10:37 am.

Co-chair Marshall welcomed Ms. Cimino to speak.

Ms. Cimino presented a review of the commission's progress thus far and movement toward developing final recommendations. She then explained how members would complete the final survey to produce their recommendations.

At the request of a few commission members and with the approval of approximately a dozen members, Ms. Koonjbeharry and Ms. Cimino re-opened the floor for further discussion about the previous presenters' proposal to address pretextual traffic stops.

A commission member who was part of the workgroup organizing the earlier presentation on pretextual traffic stops objected to the commission's adherence to the agenda of the meeting vs. making space for this discussion. The member said the commission should make time to address the policies and concerns brought up by current events. They beseeched the facilitators to slow down and allow the commission time to discuss the information from the traffic stop presentation as they themselves were overwhelmed by it.

A commission member asked about how ideas from the presentation about pretextual traffic stops would be included in the survey. Ms. Cimino suggested that the survey could ask: "Do you support the further exploration of the issue of pretextual traffic stops by the City Council and the Mayor?" Commission members would not be asked for their opinions on the recommendations proposed by the presenters, but just whether they supported further investigation of the idea.

A commission member voiced their support for the earlier request to slow down and consider ideas that were outside the scope of the commission.

In response to these conversations, Co-chair Ellis shifted the meeting's agenda to give the commission more time to discuss these issues.

One of the presenters noted that there is a legal definition of "pretextual" traffic stops and that this group of commissioners was more concerned with traffic stops following non-serious driving or vehicle violations. This category includes pretextual traffic stops but also includes other situations. They re-emphasized their earlier points that traffic stops and particularly vehicle searches disproportionately affect Black drivers, that these stops can have serious and lasting consequences, and that stops and searches are increasing. They also clarified that this data has not been disaggregated by gender.

One of the organizers of this workgroup noted that there is existing work in Ramsey County to understand the dangers of pretextual stops. The Ramsey County Attorney is concerned about this issue and discussions about policy to address this issue are underway at the county and state level.

A presenter disagreed with Ms. Cimino's earlier clarification that the commission would not be voting on the recommendations proposed by this workgroup; they explained that the workgroup felt strongly that their recommendations are urgently needed and should be included in the commission's final recommendations. The workgroup recommended the City of Saint Paul should 1) cease traffic stops except in the case of flagrant moving violations, 2) move to the utilization of mailed citations, and 3) explore other road safety methods that emphasize the prioritization of resource toward the most dangerous behaviors. The presenter apologized for bringing this issue to the commission during the final meeting.

Ms. Cimino explained that the Co-chairs and the Citizens League had chosen not to include those recommendations in the survey because they felt that the commission did not have nearly enough information about this issue to make a recommendation (as compared to the other topics that had emerged throughout the process); the survey would instead ask whether members would support further investigation into this topic.

A commission member agreed that they did not know enough about this topic to be able to comfortably make a recommendation.

Co-chair Ellis clarified that the commission *was* limited in scope and that it wouldn't be right to include this out-of-scope issue while not including the many other out-of-scope areas of concern that had been raised by other members of commission over the past five months. She voiced her support for the survey question to further investigate the issue.

Co-chair Marshall agreed, voicing his support for including the survey question on whether to further explore the issue. He noted that there appeared to be a substantial degree of support for this idea in the commission and that this would be the best way to address this complicated topic within the available timeframe.

One of the presenters from the workgroup suggested that the survey include a question about how the commission members would prioritize the further exploration of traffic stops (e.g.

immediate, secondary, or longer-term). Co-chair Marshall and Ms. Cimino agreed that this was entirely possible.

A commission member voiced their support for the commission including the workgroup's three recommendations in their final recommendations and encouraged their fellow members to vote to do so.

One of the organizers of the workgroup suggested that the commission hold additional meeting to discuss traffic stops. A few members agreed. A member expressed their frustration with how the commission adhered to an agenda.

Co-chair Ellis explained that it would not be possible for the organizers to host further meetings but that the commission could continue to work on the recommendations outside of meetings.

One of the presenters expressed their hope that the recommendation, if the commission voted to include it, would include languages about reducing dangerous traffic stops.

In response to these discussions, Ms. Cimino, Ms. Koonjbeharry, Co-chair Ellis, and Co-chair Marshall adjusted the agenda so that edits to the survey could be made before distribution, and commission members would be able to take the survey *after* the conclusion of the meeting, rather than during the meeting.

Ms. Cimino walked the commission members through the survey. For each of the commission's eight call types of particular concern, the commission would be able to indicate whether they supported each recommendation, the priority of implementation if affirmative, and how well that recommendation aligns the commission's self-determined goals. The question about the recommendation of further exploration into pretextual traffic stops would also be included.

Co-chair Ellis acknowledged the tensions of democracy in action: navigating the urgency of the issue, the desire to keep the process moving to create an actionable product, the time constraints, and the density of this information is challenging and the commission is doing it in real time, together.

Ms. Cimino agreed and thanked the commission for their honesty and transparency.

Ms. Koonjbeharry thanked the commission for their work. She invited any commission members struggling with the survey to reach out to the Citizens League and she and Ms. Cimino would be happy to help them navigate it.

In response to a question, Ms. Cimino clarified that the issue of traffic stops would be handled as follows: the final recommendations survey would include a question written with some of the specific language provided by the subgroup. It would ask members whether they support further exploration of this idea and if so, how urgently they felt it should be explored. An open comment box would also be available.

One of the presenters thanked the commission for their consideration of this issue and acknowledged the difficulty of pushing on these ideas. They felt that the inclusion of a survey

question regarding future exploration of traffic stops, while not ideal, was an acceptable arrangement.

Another presenter expressed their concern that a recommendation to further explore traffic stops would be redundant as they expect city government to consider this issue regardless. They felt that such a recommendation would be inadequate and hoped that the final survey would ask commissioners to vote on the inclusion of the workgroup's recommendations in the commission's final recommendation.

Co-chair Ellis clarified that the question on the survey would inquire about the members' support for further exploration of the topic, and that commissioners would also be asked for their sense of urgency for this exploration and would have a place to write their comments. Ms. Cimino agreed, noting that this question would have the same sub-questions as all other recommendations.

A commission member worried that the inclusion of the workgroup's ideas was hasty, especially compared to the five months of research and discussion that the commission had carried out in order to make recommendations about Priority 4 and 5 calls. They noted the lack of a diverse array of perspectives, thorough research, and future considerations, and did not feel that the commission had adequate information to weigh in on such a complex and consequential topic.

One of the organizers of the workgroup noted that while traffic stops had not been investigated by the commission, the topic had come up in the town hall discussions. This commission member felt that the commission had enough information from the workgroup's presentation earlier in this meeting (*see Addendum A*) to make a decision and to act.

Ms. Cimino again clarified how the question would appear in the survey.

Ms. Cimino added that commission members who were interested in further refining the recommendations were welcome to work the Citizens League to help finalize the report.

## **Closing**

Co-chair Marshall thanked the commission for their flexibility. He asked that the commission complete the survey by Friday.

Co-chair Marshall thanked Co-chair Ellis, the Citizens League, and the commission for their engagement and for the investment of their time. He acknowledged the challenges of doing this work virtually but felt that the commission overcame this obstacle and completed impressive and important work.

Co-chair Ellis agreed with Co-chair Marshall. She added her thanks for the people following the commission's work and for the staff of the Citizens League.

Ms. Cimino thanked the members of the commission for rising to this important and challenging task. She thanked them for their time and energy throughout this process. She thanked Co-

chairs Ellis and Marshall for their leadership and thanked Ms. Koonjeharry for her exceptional work on this project.

Ms. Koonjeharry thanked everyone for their work and assured the commission that the final report would be true to the commission's work and to their words.

Co-chair Marshall suggested that the commission should hold an in-person reunion once it is safe to do so, and several members agreed.

Co-chair Marshall thanked the commission and concluded the meeting at 11:49 a.m.