

A Police Advisory Board meeting was held on the above date via Zoom conference call, with the following members in attendance: Salahudin Bin-Yusif, Michael Harpe, Debbie Harrington, John Carwell, Wanda Dean, Charles “Billy” Warrick, Justin Faulkner, and Joyce Kidd. Middletown Police Chief William Texter, FOP Representative Michael Hilliard, and New Castle County Executive Matt Meyer were also in attendance.

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m. by Chairman Bin-Yusif.

**MINUTES APPROVAL:** It was moved by Michael Harpe and seconded by Joyce Kidd to approve the minutes for the April 15, 2021 minutes. Approved 8-0.

**UPDATE ON MEETING WITH MAYOR & COUNCIL:**

Chairman Bin-Yusif met with the Mayor & Council prior to last month’s monthly Town Council meeting for about 20 minutes. He said it was an opportunity to touch on some issues such as: PAL Center in Middletown; providing a quarterly report to Mayor & Council starting with the July meeting; doing a Citizens Police Academy made up of MPAB members; how to increase the amount of officers and keep officers – as well as focus on diversity of officers (up and down the ranks) in the MPD.

It was also discussed about having public meetings throughout the year with the community to discuss and reach out to the community and get a better understanding of the direction of Middletown, ask questions and level concerns to political leaders and leadership of the MPD. All of these ideas were well accepted by the Mayor and Council and of course the ideas need to have some meat on their bones before moving forward with them, but these are important discussions to be having as we continue to work on them, Bin-Yusif said.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

**A. Community Connections Committee**

John Carwell reported that he attended the University of Miami Law School forum regarding police reform and he said it was very informative. He said he is looking into getting a copy of the forum information to share with the rest of the MPAB because he felt it was really valuable.

He also said the committee would like to establish a social media identity and a logo for the MPAB. He said the committee would like to develop a marketing plan.

MSgt. Saunders updated the committee on the things he is doing in the community for community relations.

The committee talked about various ways to get information to the community – through the youth, barber shops, HOAs, etc. They are also interested in a Website for the MPAB.

They would like to review how other Police Advisory Boards operate and best practices for groups like this in the state and nearby states.

He said a goal of the connections committee is to make sure a member or several members of the MPAB can start attending local HOA meetings to see what the needs are in the community for information and outreach.

The group also discussed the size of the department and whether it is staffed appropriately to handle the growth of the area.

He said the committee also touched on extremist groups infiltrating police departments and what's being done in MPD by in the state to safeguard against this problem.

## **B. Police Chief Report**

Chief Texter shared the police report for the month of April that was given at the May Town Council meeting. He said the theft of motor vehicles continues and again, he can't emphasize enough that it's because people are leaving key fobs in their cars and a large group of juveniles and young adults comes down to our neighborhoods and tries door handles along the streets until they find an unlocked car. This is happening all over New Castle County right now.

He said the stolen cars are being recovered out of state in Maryland and New Jersey. He said another alarming report he's hearing is that people are leaving firearms in their vehicles, which have now been stolen.

Carwell asked if the Chief has any particular concerns about the upcoming summer based upon what happened last summer (George Floyd protests and rallies). Chief Texter said he is hoping that Middletown is going to be quiet this summer as families take much-needed vacations after being cooped up for the pandemic. He said based upon what he is reading and through talking to other police officials, with the COVID restrictions coming down now, and once school lets out, things should go back to pre-COVID with families traveling and doing summertime events.

Debbie Harrington said it seems like District One has a bigger call volume than other areas. She asked if there are more officers in that district. Chief said there's primarily one officer per district, then an assistant shift leader, who is a floater throughout the Town, then there's a sergeant on duty who floats around and helps in each district.

Wanda Dean asked if the Chief knows the population of the Town. Chief said the population is around 25,000, but that doesn't include the number of visitors and employees at the various businesses in town limits.

Dean then asked about the response time during the recent shots fired complaint at the Legends community. She said she lives across the street from the shooting and from the time she heard the three gunshots, it was 15 minutes before MPD arrived. The Chief said he knows with absolute certainty, it was not that long of a response. He said he will bring a breakdown of the data next month with video surveillance of when the incident happened, when the 911 calls were received and further data that will document what happened. Dean added that only one officer responded to the incident. Texter said there were more than one officer sent to the scene and he would bring that data as well next month.

Dean also asked how many officers we have at this time. Texter said 40. She asked if that number is their target? Chief said the department needs to expand and Mayor and Council support this but the biggest challenge right now is recruiting people. He said the department will be putting out advertisements in the next few weeks for recruits and for certified

officers from other states. Police are also looking to put officers into the fall police academy.

Billy Warrick asked the Chief to consider having three districts instead of four, since we don't have the manpower. Chief reminded Warrick that there are 6 officers assigned to each squad and the assistant supervisors and sergeants are working officers – they're not just sitting behind a desk.

Warrick also suggested the MPD offer bonuses, maybe up to \$15,000 or \$20,000 instead of the \$10,000.

He also asked if the Town has a good relationship with New Castle County police. Texter said MPD has great support from New Castle County and Del. State Police. He said the County has been known to send a car even when they're not dispatched if they hear it's a priority call.

Michael Harpe asked why the MPD doesn't have its own 911 Call Center.

Texter said the biggest challenge in the delay at the 911 Center is not because of the people or the equipment or the officers – it's the delay in the first person actually making the call to 911. He said to have our own 911 Call Center, there needs to be two (2) people in the call center at all times, we would have to purchase the equipment, you have to have oversight and compliance to Federal guidelines – we're talking about millions of dollars. Our focus right now is getting officers on the streets, Texter said, adding he doesn't disagree with Dr. Harpe's suggestion about having our own Call Center, but the priority right now as he sees it, is more police.

Justin Faulkner asked if burglaries usually pick up in the summertime months. Chief Texter said it's usually more often alcohol impairment, disorderly conduct type events.

Dean asked Chief Texter for the MPD's annual budget for overtime.

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

Bin-Yusif said MPD would like to offer a 7-week program, an abbreviated Citizens Police Academy, for the MPAB. Some of the topics would include criminal investigations, traffic service, victim services, evidence detection, canine operations, NCC emergency communications, use of force, and tactical response.

He said MSgt. Saunders was looking for a commitment of a Tuesday or Thursday, or both, for the 7 weeks.

John Carwell said he would like to attend, but he thinks the fall would be a better time to start, due to what Chief Texter was talking about – the number of vacations that will be happening this summer.

The rest of the board members agreed and suggested starting Sept. 7, from 6-8 p.m. Moved by Justin Faulkner and seconded by John Carwell. Motion carried.

Debbie Harrington asked if internal affairs could be added to the citizen police academy. Chief said he would talk to MSgt. Saunders about adding a component about how the internal affairs process operates. She said it would be good for the MPAB to understand how the Union operates and contributes as well. Chief said it would probably be a whole night to put those two things in there and he certainly thinks that can be arranged.

Union Lodge President Mike Hilliard said he plans to always be at the MPAB meetings and they are welcome to ask him any questions anytime during the meeting. He said he would also look into having MPAB members join in on a Union meeting sometime so everyone can meet. He said the Union meets the first Tuesday of each month at the Fire Hall. Once the meetings are opened up again, he will work to arrange a meeting.

Dean asked if the Union includes rank and file. Hilliard said the Union included line officers up to the rank of Captain. He said LTs and Captain were just incorporated in the last year.

PAL CENTER: Bin-Yusif said the community has been talking for several years about forming a PAL Center in this area. County Exec. Matt Meyer was asked to attend the meeting to talk about the various PAL Centers in the County.

Meyer said he was glad to be a part of the call and he is impressed with the MPAB and thanked the group for their service. He said the County has talked about having an Advisory Board and he thinks it's wonderful that Middletown has such a great resource up and running and they should be really proud of the work they are doing.

He also said he heard the discussion about MPD working in the community with NCC Police, and he said he wants to continue to see the two agencies always have each other's backs – and if anyone ever hears differently, to let him know, because it's a priority of his to have the County Police work well with the municipalities in New Castle County.

As for PAL Centers, he said there are two different PAL organizations in New Castle County. One is New Castle County PAL and one is Wilmington PAL. He said as a former math teacher in Wilmington, most of his students used the Wilmington PAL and you will find no bigger fan of the Wilmington PAL's activities as an alternative to violence – “I believe whatever the investment it takes, it's almost always worth it,” he said.

He said if the PAL center is in a municipality, like the Wilmington PAL – it gets a lot of funding from private donations and gets some of its funding from the state, but it gets quite a bit of funding from the City of Wilmington.

He said there is a PAL Center in Hockessin, Garfield Park and Delaware City that are run by NCC. He said he is willing to be a partner in helping get something up and running in Middletown, and in fact, there's \$1.36 billion in stimulus money coming to Delaware, with \$10 million coming to Middletown, he said, “So we're all looking for ways to invest in communities,” he said.

He said the trick to this is developing some sustainability plan so that there's operational money to continue the facility after 2024.

He said the instructions for the County's stimulus money is that it has to be used for “unincorporated” NCC – However, he said the County knows that if a PAL Center is constructed in Middletown, just like the Middletown Library, it will be used by Municipal residents and unincorporated residents alike – so he would be happy to be part of the

discussions to potentially help with the funding something like that, although the County would not be able to be the sole funder.

POSSIBLE INTERN: Bin-Yusif asked Mayor & Council about having an intern. He said the MPAB can come up with the requirements and structure for the work we would like them to do. They need to be at least 16. He said between now and the next meeting, they will work on the email chain to come up with ideas for the intern.

MEETING IN PERSON?: Kristen Krenzer asked the group if they were thinking about getting together in person again. Several of the members said they are not ready to meet in person yet. Joyce Kidd suggested we have our meeting on Zoom in June and make a decision at that time with any further information ready to discuss at that time.

WORKSHOP MEETING: Bin-Yusif said he would like the board to think about having a workshop meeting sometime this summer where we can meet and discuss all kinds of things. He will bring this up again at the June meeting.

NEXT MEETING: June 21, 2021

Moved by Faulkner and seconded by Carwell to adjourn. Moved unanimously.