

Meeting called to order at 7:03 p.m. by Chair Salahudin Bin-Yusif.

In attendance: Salahudin Bin-Yusif, Emy Diaz, Michael Harpe, Billy Warrick, Debbie Harrington, Justin Faulkner, Wanda Dean, Jason Hunt, Joyce Kidd, Susan Mitchell, Yvette Santiago, Middletown Police Captain Ron Davis, and Police FOP Representative Michael Hilliard.

Moved by Susan Mitchell and seconded by Justin Faulkner to approve moving the agenda forward. Moved 10-0.

Moved by Susan Mitchell and seconded by Joyce Kidd to approve the minutes from the July meeting. Moved 10-0.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT: Chair Bin-Yusif said he has emailed the quarterly report to the group and is asking for comments. He would like comments in the next week or so before the report is given to the Mayor & Council on Sept. 13.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Police Report Evaluation Committee:

Subcommittee Chair Michael Harpe said last month he submitted a list of things to consider when the group receives the monthly report from the police chief. He said the list was not meant to be the “end all, be all,” but he was looking to put together a template of what to look for when evaluating the police reports. He welcomes comments from the board on things to be added or subtracted.

He said a lot of people talk about collecting data, but this template helps the group decide what to do with the data collected as a police advisory board.

Chair Bin-Yusif said he would like to break down the template provided by Dr. Harpe and be prepared to present it to Mayor & Council at the September meeting, to explain how the group is using the data provided by Chief Texter.

Sue Mitchell said perhaps the guidelines could be broken down into two categories – short term and long term goals.

Harpe agreed and said the goal of the guidelines is to show the advisory board is doing something tangible with the data we are asking for.

Community Connections Committee:

Subcommittee Chair John Carwell was not in attendance.

Research Committee:

Subcommittee Chair Susan Mitchell reported her research this month is on the subject of Middletown having its own 911 Center. She said the research is pointing away from the direction of having its own. She said her research has found that across the country, small police departments

who had their own 911 Center have actually been pushed into “regional” call centers due to all of the benefits available in a regional facility covering a larger area.

Mitchell said it saves money because of the ability to pool resources. She added that she researched call times in individual systems versus regional systems. She said larger call centers seem to be more able to handle a larger call volume, and they are more equipped with training and personnel on site. When local communities have their own 911 Centers, they are given a lot of grant monies to research joining the larger regional Centers.

Four states have actually mandated that small call centers consider joining the larger regional centers, she said.

She said there is 2019 data in Ohio that shows a small call center in a small suburb, where it cost \$510 per 911 call, whereas in Cleveland, it’s only \$12 per call. While people might certainly say that cost shouldn’t matter when it comes to even one person’s health, she said, cost is always going to drive something like this.

Mitchell reiterated the research she has found regarding the possibility of getting the police department help handling nuisance complaints such as animal complaints, small fender benders, assisting residents with flat tires, etc. These are all 911 calls that could be handled by a citizen brigade, which is being done across the country to help departments handle a wide variety of issues that can allow the police to focus on the tougher issues of crime and drugs and violence.

Jason Hunt said he thinks it would be a good idea to set up a survey (once the social media platform for the advisory board is set up) to find out what the people are talking about, what they want, what they expect.

Dr. Harrington said since the advisory board will be going to visit the New Castle County (regional) 911 Call Center during the upcoming police academy, it will be good to see if the Center meets our needs and how it works. She added, we also need to consider the growth of the area in the next 10-20 years and might need to have our own call center.

She also said we have to keep in mind that there is research out there in the world that is well and good, but it might not be data that really pertains to this town.

Police Report / Capt. Ron Davis:

Capt. Davis read the report that was given to the Mayor & Council on Aug. 2. The MPAB had the following questions about the report:

Bin-Yusif asked about the hiring process and if we have any officers in the police academy right now? Capt. Davis said there are two in the academy. One graduates Sept. 16 and the other is in NCC academy and graduates in January. Current numbers are at 39 officers.

He also asked what an FSR or CPC report is. Capt. Davis said an FSR (Field Service Report) and CPC (Crime Prevention Check) is like a property check or if something looks suspicious or a suspicious vehicle in the area. For example, Davis said, a resident might call in and report that a vehicle has been sitting in front of their house for an hour and the resident doesn’t recognize the vehicle, the police would check it out.

Bin-Yusif asked if this year’s numbers can be compared to last year’s numbers – are things getting worse, getting better?

Capt. Davis said he doesn’t think it’s getting worse, but there has been a large increase in apartments and people since 2019 and there’s more chances for incidents to happen with more people.

Dr. Harrington said she experienced the girls' police academy last week and she had the opportunity to talk to the girls about her career in the military. She thought the academy makes a significant impact on the community and Sgt. Saunders did a great job, and always does, on this academy because the students learn so much and grow so much in one week. She added that if Middletown had a PAL Center, this could be grown and expanded tremendously throughout the year.

Dr. Harrington also asked about a shooting that happened on Saturday night. Capt. Davis said there have been some leads brought in, promising leads, that the detectives are looking into. He said in America in general, violence is on the rise. He said he and Chief Texter met this morning to discuss the gun violence. Dr. Harrington said it does seem like the gun violence is escalating in Middletown. She said that is why the data we are collecting is so important to make sure we have solutions to how we can limit the rise of crime.

Capt. Davis reminded the group that if they want to put information out into the community to help residents, please remind them to lock their vehicles, don't leave key fobs in vehicle. If they have packages, don't leave them in the car, take them into the house. He said police have also seen an increase in loaded guns being left in vehicles, which are then stolen from the vehicles.

OLD BUSINESS:

PAL CENTER: Bin-Yusif said the group is going to continue planning for a PAL program in the area for next summer. He said it doesn't have to be a building, but a program of some kind.

Capt. Davis said he accepted the position as Captain, with the hopes of starting up the basketball program again. He said he would take help from anyone and advice on starting it again. He said last time he did the league, there were well over 600 kids involved and they needed a lot of help and he is looking forward to getting a lot of help with starting it back up. He said it doesn't just have to be basketball, either. He said last time, Karate was also introduced to the kids.

Mitchell asked how long the Middletown Athletic League was in operation. Capt. Davis said it was held from about 2008 to 2012 or so. Mitchell said she never heard about it back then and she definitely would have helped out with it had she known about it.

Bin-Yusif asked if he saw positive changes in the kids during the time of the MAL. Capt. Davis said there were a lot of success stories – they saw young men who went to college and got degrees. They came back after college and let Capt. Davis and Sgt. Saunders know the MAL was a big reason for their successes. He said he believes the program works well because you get to know the kids and their families and it becomes easy to reach out to the family if they notice something going awry with the student and it can be addressed in a timely manner.

Capt. Davis said the board should keep in mind that the Appo. School District is continuing to plan for turning Redding Middle School into a Community School that can be used by the community for activities sometime in the future. They are planning those decisions now.

HIRING: Capt. Davis reported there are two officers in the academy and potentially four more candidates being interviewed. He said all departments continue to struggle with recruiting, but it seems like there is a positive, upward swing right now.

Billy Warrick questioned the police department's standards because he has sent officers certified in other agencies to apply to MPD and they haven't made the cut. "Why can they make it into other departments, but not here?" he asked.

Davis said when it comes to certified officers from other states, sometimes the COPT standards require officers to go back into the academy or do additional training and officers don't want to do that, they would rather stay where they are.

Michael Harpe asked for the racial and gender demographics of the candidates in the academy. Capt. Davis said there is one African-American male and one white male in the academy.

911 CALL CENTER:

More research needs to be done to find out why Newark has its own call center, Wanda Dean said. Harrington said it would be good to look at Newark and Smyrna because they are smaller communities with their own 911 Centers.

Dean said in previous meetings, it was discussed rotating lieutenants on their shifts. She asked if that has been discussed further. Capt. Davis said the shifts are in continuous discussion.

Mitchell said it is normal for people who get higher in the ranks to have a more "normal" schedule. She said elsewhere in the world, like in her profession of nursing, it's a benefit to people who have been willing to work for that higher rank, to have a normal schedule, depending on the person, it could be 11-7 or 7-11, in addition to day shift.

Dean said she was looking at the idea of lieutenants rotating and working one weekend per month, not changing their regular schedule. She reiterated her feeling that the police department should never be left manned by civilians during off-hours and weekends.

NEW BUSINESS:

WORKSHOP: Bin-Yusif wants to hold a workshop with the PAB. He said perhaps a workshop meeting can be fit into the upcoming citizens police academy that is being set up for the PAB. The group agreed. He said he will talk to Sgt. Saunders and Cpl. Howard about this.

COMMUNITY EVENT: Event planned for Saturday, Sept. 11, from 11 to 2 p.m., sponsored by State Rep. Rae Moore. Mayor & Council will provide grill, hot dogs and water for the PAB to give out and perhaps do surveys of the community. Several members said they will be there to help out for the afternoon.

NEXT MEETING: Next meeting will be held on Sept. 20, at 7 p.m., via ZOOM, with plans to meet in person for the October meeting.

Moved by Harpe and seconded by Mitchell to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried.