

JOHNSTOWN CITY COUNCIL
POLICE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
WORKSHOP MINUTES
Wednesday, October 7, 2020

City Council met in a stated session for the general transaction of business. Mayor Frank Janakovic called the Workshop to order at 6:32 p.m.

The following members of Council were present in person:

Mr. Arnone, Mr. Britt, Mayor Janakovic, Reverend King (4).

Mrs. Mock (1) was present via telephone.

Absent: Mr. Capriotti, Mr. Vitovich (2).

Present via videoconference were Deacon Jeffrey Wilson, Senator Wayne Langerholc, and District Attorney Greg Neugebauer. Present via telephone were Alan Cashaw, Larry Blalock, and Felice Haselrig. Present in person were Interim Police Chief Chad Miller and Reverend Reginald Floyd.

Mayor Janakovic welcomed everyone to the workshop with the Police Advisory Committee to discuss the process of hiring a new police chief.

Reverend King noted this informal discussion would be an opportunity to hear from the public in order to make the best decision possible.

Greg Neugebauer, Cambria County District Attorney, had a question regarding staffing. Interim Chief Miller noted the department is budgeted for 38 officers, and there were currently 38 officers on staff. There were a couple officers off due to injuries, but would return. In response to a question regarding zone assignments, Interim Chief Miller explained that officers are given zones by seniority but do traditionally pick zones to build familiarity with the neighborhood and its residents. He stated two more officers would be on staff at the beginning of the year. The City's officers were invited to reach out to Mr. Neugebauer's office for assistance.

A WJAC reporter inquired about the staffing and asked Mayor Janakovic to summarize the topic of the meeting. Mayor Janakovic noted that the informal workshop was to receive public input and suggestions on how community policing could be improved.

Alan Cashaw, NAACP Johnstown Branch President, addressed some policing concerns with Mr. Neugebauer.

Larry Blalock was present via telephone but had no questions.

Deacon Jeffrey Wilson, President, Johnstown Police Advisory Board, stated the Board submitted a prioritized recommendation for policing to the Johnstown Police Department. He noted the recommendation contained a list of 16 recommendations that had been given to the Board and many questions remained unanswered, including police diversity training for all officers, the policy regarding de-escalation, and whether there was support for the HR 35 anti-lynching bill.

Senator Langerholc addressed the Bad Cop Registry by indicating that multitudes of bills recently passed dealing with hazing, some specifically outlawing chokeholds and the creation of a database of excessive force use in the Commonwealth.

Mr. Langerholc stated the George Floyd bill is a federal issue and suggested that Congressman Joyce, Congressman Thompson or Senator Toomey address the issue. He recommended speaking to as many citizens of Johnstown as possible with regard to the City's policies.

Mayor Janakovic suggested reinstatement of a Junior Council member to represent the young people of the community.

Reverend King applauded Deacon Wilson and the Police Advisory Board for working "hand-in-hand" with the Johnstown Police Department. She suggested that these question and answer type meetings continue to be held in the future, and hopefully in person.

Felice Haselrig was present via telephone but had no questions.

Interim Chief Miller addressed questions that Deacon Wilson asked previously. Chief Miller stated, with regard to the Bad Cop Registry, that Law and Justice 44 PA C.S. passed July of 2020 regarding background investigations and employment information. The State Municipal Police Officers Training and Education Commission was tracking those items.

Chief Miller had discussion with regard to Act 59 of 2020, which states that the curriculum be revised to include training on topics such as interaction with individuals of diverse racial, ethnic and economic backgrounds, interacting with individuals with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and recognizing and reporting child abuse. He also discussed mandatory annual training and the use of force de-escalation and harm reduction techniques. He invited everyone to visit cityofjohnstown.net for the list of policy and procedures.

Deacon Wilson asked Interim Chief Miller to address some of the difficulties with recruiting more minorities and women to the force under general circumstances at various academies in the area. Interim Chief Miller stated he had personally gone out and spoken to classes to draw interest to Johnstown. He stated, out of the several area academies, there were only 96 cadets in 5 classes from Harrisburg to Pittsburgh. Of those 96 cadets, 2 were African-Americans. He stated there is currently 1 African-American and 4 women in the Johnstown Police Department.

Mr. Cashaw had additional questions for Interim Chief Miller. Interim Chief Miller explained that applicants with a diverse background check would be eliminated, and those sorts of matters are covered during the annual State-mandated diversity training. Interim Chief Miller noted that Mr. Jeffers and Reverend Floyd have been involved with the interview process for years. Interim Chief Miller will research the field-training officers (FTO) to make sure they are checking officers for attitudes and microaggressions while being trained as new officers.

In response to a question by Mr. Cashaw concerning a new police chief, Mayor Janakovic commented that the best qualified person would be chosen, no matter what race or gender.

It was noted that the City's demographics have changed over the last 25 years. The department has a group of well-trained professionals. In the search for a new chief, the City can do a better job to find creative ways to attract minorities to the City of Johnstown to be employed.

Mr. Britt stated that he and Reverend King had asked Council members to be more open-minded in their search for a police chief, to open it up for minorities, and to attract applicants from other cities.

Reverend Floyd, a member of the Johnstown Ethics Commission, stated, as a former member of the Johnstown Police Department, he was tasked to recruit people of color. For whatever reason, no applicants were received.

Reverend Floyd commented on a conference call that he and Mr. Cashaw were on regarding the upcoming election and inquired if the Johnstown Police Department was aware of possible voter intimidation. Interim Chief Miller noted that unfortunately there are no extra radios for election constables but was working on a solution to ensure everybody's safety.

Mr. Neugebauer stated that members of his staff would be available if there are any type of election issues, and the Attorney General's Office would be ready to

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answer questions regarding the matter as well. He noted the DA Office phone number is 814-472-6280 and the national number is 1-866-Our Vote, which would also be monitored.

Mr. Cashaw had a question for Mr. Neugebauer regarding an incident, which occurred in another county. Reverend King noted she felt certain that DA Neugebauer and Mr. Langerholc would be glad to answer the question outside of this forum.

Reverend King thanked everyone for taking part in the workshop and especially Interim Chief Chad Miller, who had taken it upon himself to start barbershop talks. She noted the Community & Economic Development Department would hold a series of community meetings, the next being held on Monday, October 19, 2020, at the Central Park Complex at 6:30 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the Workshop concluded at 7:31 p.m.