

MINUTES - Community Advisory Committee

Meeting Date: February 20, 2024

Chairman: Jon Reaud

Vice-Chairman: Shawn Javed

Members:

Dwight Benoit, John Dean, Carlos Hernandez, Sohaib Jabbar, Shawn Javed, Glen Johnson, Will Landry, Roy McGrath, Brian Nepveux, Lashon Proctor, Jon Reaud, Rodney Robichau, Frances Graham, William "Bill" Sam, Thomas Sige

Call to order by Community Advisory Committee: Vice-Chair Shawn Javed

February 20, 2024 - 1:00 p.m: A normal meeting of the Police Community Advisory Committee was held in the Beaumont Police Conference Room

Members in attendance:

Dwight Benoit, Carlos Hernandez, Sohaib Jabbar, Shawn Javed, Glen Johnson, Will Landry, Brian Nepveux, Bill Sam, Rodney Robichau,

Members not in attendance: John Dean, Frances Graham, Roy McGrath, Lashon Proctor, Jon Reaud, Thomas Sige

Members of the Police Department in attendance:

Chief Ocnashek, Asst. Chief Jeffcoat, Asst. Chief Plunkett, Capt. Schuldt, Capt. Tyler, Capt. Laird, Judi Rawls, and Emma Nelson

Guests in Attendance:

City Manager Kenneth R. Williams, Mayor Roy West, Councilman Mike Getz, Dr. Shahid Rafiq, Mrs. Vicki Johnson

Pledge of Allegiance

Opening Prayer - Benoit

Moment of Silence for fallen officers

Roll Call – Vice-Chairman Javed

Mr. Javed introduced the guest speaker, Dr. Shahid Rafiq. Local muslim preacher, counselor, and pediatrician, Dr. Rafiq, spoke on challenges facing the Muslim community in SETX. Mental health issues caused by social media are impacting the youth. He stated that in his 20 years in SETX, he has never known an instance of a Muslim person mistreated or discriminated against by the Beaumont Police Department. However, he believes that there must be education about Islam and that the representation is not fair. After 9/11, the negative media coverage/references to Islam grew from 7% to 25% while positive representation remained at

1%. Fear of the unknown is the biggest threat, because most Muslims are not a part of the fringe extreme. He invited everyone for Ramadan meals and Friday prayer.

The conversation shifted to Benoit asking about “new” response to calls to service. He wanted to ensure that dispatchers were not making the call of whether a threat was active and deserved an officer. He also was concerned about dispatchers being held legally liable for these calls. He also expressed concern about elderly people who cannot file reports online.

Chief Ocnashek explained that 911 calls are all emergencies. The calls for which citizens will be asked to file reports online and officers will not respond are those that have no suspect, nothing actively occurring, and no immediate investigation is needed. These are reports that are secretarial in nature and can be completed via phone or computer. He also emphasized that if officers arrive and the situation could have been handled via phone or computer, they can still file the report at their own discretion. Police legal advisor, Judi Rawls assured that the city represents all employees and will provide defense. Mr. Sam asked if in the future the committee could be informed of announcements like this first, and Chief Ocnashek explained that sometimes that is not an option.

Chief Jeffcoat showed slides from the council presentation, emphasizing that this decision was not made recklessly. Dispatchers answer 330,000 calls every year because they also send calls to Fire. Dispatchers have a script, and after gathering information, last year they dispatched 140,000 officers to calls for service. Councilman Getz expressed concern of the word “assault” used in the initial post. Jeffcoat said that after the initial negative response by the community, Ofc. Haley Morrow has gone to great lengths to explain. Now that people understand, the department has received no complaint. Mr. Landry expressed that not everyone in the general public is getting this information. Jeffcoat emphasized his hope that the committee would help spread the message that this will allow a higher response time and more visibility – which is what the community has been asking for. Chief Plunkett explained that priority call response time has remained similar since 2019, but non priority call times have crept up. However, in places like Dallas non-priority call response time is 10-12 hours. Plunkett responded to Benoit’s original concern by emphasizing that dispatchers always err on the side of caution. He wants to encourage people to stop saying “call 911” because oftentimes it is not a 911 issue, but a non-emergency line or 311 issue. Mr. Hernandez asked if there were Hispanic dispatchers. Chief said that he did not have that info at the moment, but he assured Mr. Hernandez that there

were bilingual dispatchers. Mr. Benoit said the reason he began this conversation was that he wants the community to know that BPD made these shifts in response because they care and want the best for the community.

Javed brought up chairman Reaud's interest in Zoom as an option for committee members who could not always attend in person. He asked the department to look into the legality of it. Mr. Sam ended the meeting by saying that he would like more departmental updates at committee meetings. He would specifically like to be informed of how things have progressed with situations that received local attention: the Lil Woodrow's injury of the officer, specific negative press, etc.

Meeting Ended: 2:30

Next Meeting: March 20, 2024 at 1:00 pm in the BPD Training Classroom

Minutes Taken by: Emma Nelson/Community Outreach Specialist/Beaumont Police Department/Administration Division