

ACC Community Police Advisory Board Development Task Force

Wednesday, January 6, 2021 at 3:00 p.m. via WebEx

Task Force Members Present:

Mokah-Jasmine Johnson, Co-Chair
Shane Sims, Co-Chair
Stephanie Flores
T.K. Monford
Dr. Sarah Shannon
Phillip Smith

Task Force Members Absent:

Joan Prittie
Mykeisha Ross
Nikema Stovall

Visitor:

Liana Perez, NACOLE
Camme McElhiney, NACOLE

Staff:

Mayor Kelly Girtz
Blaine Williams, Manager's Office
Captain Harrison Daniel, Police Department
Kathy Phillips, Police Department
Sherrie Hines, Attorney's Office
Sarah George, Manager's Office- Recorder

The meeting began at 3:04 p.m.

A. **Approval of the December 9, 2020 and December 14, 2020 Minutes**

Phillip Smith made a motion to approve the December 9, 2020 minutes. Dr. Sarah Shannon seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Phillip Smith made a motion to approve the December 14, 2020 minutes. Dr. Sarah Shannon seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

B. **Overview of Feedback from Survey**

Shane Sims thanked Dr. Shannon and Phil Smith for reviewing and compiling the feedback from the survey. Sims noted that he was not surprised that they received negative feedback; however, he does not believe it is indicative of whether or not the community is receptive of this work, but there were some missteps made along the way. He shared that one of his key takeaways is the importance of how the argument is framed. Sims reiterated for the Task Force to not be discouraged by the negative feedback; however, they should work to communicate to the community that this work is not meant to be antagonistic or create separation, but rather it is intended to create good will between the community and the police department.

Mokah Jasmine-Johnson echoed that the Task Force should not be discouraged, because when a drastic change is made, there will be a little pushback Johnson explained this is an opportunity for them to review the feedback and see how it can be incorporated into the summary document. She also reiterated that the intention of this group is to improve community and police relations, implement transparency and accountability, and have community involvement. Johnson asked the Task Force for any other thoughts on the feedback received and any suggestions of modifications to the recommendation document.

Stephanie Flores inquired about whether or not the survey and summary recommendation document had been translated into Spanish. Flores noted that she believes it was a misstep to not ensure that the Town Hall and the summary recommendation document was accessible to as many people in the population of Athens as possible. Mayor Girtz explained it had not been translated; however, if the presentation to the Government Operations Committee happens in February rather than January, it would provide a little window to be able to disseminate the survey in Spanish.

Shane Sims asked Liana Perez if there were any statistics about the improvement or lack thereof of community police relations of any other states that have implemented a community advisory board. How is the effectiveness of these boards measured? Liana Perez advised that this is something that they have discussed conducting research on, but there is no data to support that it does not help. She further noted she believes it is more indicative of how the community responds to situations that are either high-profile incidents or how they trust the complaint process once it is introduced. Perez explained it is very hard to gauge the impact of having one versus not having one. Camme McElhiney agreed and noted, because of the nature of civilian oversight and the lack of consistent data being collected from agency to agency, as well as the lack of consistency among agencies, their authorities, and their structure, it makes it difficult to develop research; any information they have is really just anecdotal. Shane Sims explained that his fear is, in trying to combat some of the concern or ambivalence of the community, sharing only anecdotal information may not do much to address it. Dr. Shannon shared that she had previously asked a student to conduct a literature review, and there are two studies that she can share at a future meeting; the research is limited, but there are some studies. Shane Sims noted that he believes the Task Force should consider how to come together to better frame the advisory board to not seem as antagonistic.

Mokah-Jasmine Johnson shared there were three things that stood out to her from the feedback. There is misinformation and misunderstanding, so the Task Force should try to clearly define what it is, what it does, and what it does not do. She also noted they should seek to clarify the difference between the review board and the auditor-monitor position, and why they decided to recommend that structure. She also explained she noticed one of the main concerns in the feedback was defunding the police. She reiterated this Task Force was not created to defund the police. They can make recommendations, but it is not the review board or auditor's job to seek ways to defund the police. Additionally, some clarity should be provided to clearly define the structure of authority and who the board answers to and why that model is being recommended. Stephanie Flores agreed and noted that one of the survey respondents asked for clarification on the difference between an oversight board and grand jury, which ties into the question of why this is important. Specifically answering how other functions of the government do not address what this is intended to do may be important for perception.

Dr. Shannon reiterated Joan Prittie's comments and noted that one of things she saw was a concern about the impartiality in the recommendations. She explained that, in their efforts to ensure certain groups that have been affected by policing are represented on the board, she feels the discussions neglected to consider the inclusion of people who do have expertise in policing, including former or retired law enforcement officers. Dr. Shannon asked Liana Perez and Camme McElhiney if it was typical on other police advisory boards to allow former law enforcement. Camme McElhiney advised it is very rare to have voting members of a board who are of the agency that is being overseen. More often, they find, though it is still rare, boards have law enforcement or a member of internal affairs act as ex-officio members to share pertinent information, like explanation of procedures or general orders. Former law enforcement may work in oversight as investigators and, in some cases, auditors. Blaine Williams asked for clarification if former law enforcement were permitted to participate on other advisory boards. Camme McElhiney noted that they have seen boards that allow that, but almost none that they are aware of are from

the law enforcement agency being overseen. Shane Sims noted that adding having an individual with law enforcement experience that works to advise the board on policy, procedures, and law may alleviate some concern.

Dr. Shannon noted Joan Prittie had also expressed a concern about allowing people with pending charges within the jurisdiction may be a conflict of interest. Mokah-Jasmine Johnson clarified that she does not believe it was intended to allow people with pending charges; past discussion concerned allowing people with past experience with the criminal justice system, but this could be clarified to denote people that have served their time should have an opportunity to serve as part of the board. Shane Sims agreed with adding that clarification and having a protocol in place if someone sitting on the board has an open charge within the jurisdiction. Mokah-Jasmine Johnson advised that they should take time to research and consider what they would suggest be done and which type of charges (traffic ticket versus a misdemeanor/felony) would trigger the action. Stephanie Flores agreed and noted they should also consider if people on probation would be able to participate as voting members; she would suggest yes. Flores also suggested the Task Force consider having a board member with pending charges remain on the board but be prevented from voting on their matter or in subject matters related to their particular case. Mokah-Jasmine Johnson noted this could be discussed further at the next meeting. Dr. Shannon added the broader question to consider is how members would be removed for any reason, like if there was some other kind of allegation or concern.

Stephanie Flores noted that a survey respondent expressed concern with the funding coming from the general fund; in previous meetings, she has suggested that, given the Police Department budget is one of the larger budgets in the local government, the money should come from the Police Department budget and should be included as part of the Task Force recommendations. Shane Sims strongly recommended that the Task Force stay away from discussion about where money should be reallocated from, because the perception of it feeds into the narrative about defunding the police. Mokah-Jasmine Johnson noted that this would be discussed further in the next topic of discussion.

Phillip Smith noted that one of the things he noticed when reading the survey results was the broad varying degrees of trust with the Police Department within the community. As the Task Force sought to increase that trust level, Smith explained it was natural for them to start first in places that are underserved and over-policed. He also emphasized that he did not want to leave out any part of our community from this discussion, and he is concerned that they have done that. Smith noted that in some of the discussions in meetings, they may have sounded anti-business and anti-economic development. He also shared a statement from the Chamber of Commerce, which questions whether the number of current annual complaints justify hiring an auditor-monitor and requests representation from the business community on task forces or boards of this magnitude. He noted that, while they disagree with the recommendations, they also have not been included up to this point, and we are lesser for it. Mokah-Jasmine Johnson noted that she disagrees that this has been an exclusive process. Phillip Smith agreed and noted that, though the Task Force has been meeting for about a year, there has been a substantial amount of feedback after the last public meeting, and it is important to have the Chamber's statement included. Stephanie Flores agreed and asked for the Chamber of Commerce to come up with a compelling reason as to why business leaders or business members of the community must have a spot on the board; she further explained that she thinks they should be representative of members of the community, and, if a business owner applies and is accepted, she would be supportive. Flores noted she is failing to understand why they feel they need to have representation.

Mokah-Jasmine Johnson noted that if the Task Force makes the Chamber present why they should be a part of the board, then they would have to allow others to do the same. She is expressed

concern and questioned whether or not the Task Force wants to move forward with establishing a process for that. Shane Sims agreed and advised they should avoid making someone prove why they should be a part of this process; rather, they should move forward and open the door to allow anyone who wants to provide input or be included be a part of it. T.K. Monford agreed with Stephanie Flores and noted that he was unsure why the Chamber of Commerce wanted a seat on the board; he also agrees with Shane that they should be inclusive. Mokah-Jasmine Johnson explained the Chamber of Commerce should go through the regular selection process like anyone else, and the Mayor & Commission could decide who gets appointed. T.K. Monford and Phillip Smith agreed. Shane Sims reiterated that the response to the Chamber of Commerce's statement should be that they are invited and welcome.

Mokah-Jasmine Johnson summarized what had been suggested as changes for the recommendation document and inquired if there were any other changes the Task Force would like to see. Shane Sims suggested including that the Task Force and the review board is not a political body and would not have any political leanings. Mokah-Jasmine Johnson agreed and added that if anyone is running for political office cannot serve on the review board.

C. **Discuss Budgeting (Mayor Girtz)**

Mokah-Jasmine Johnson introduced Mayor Girtz, and she explained she asked him to attend after questions around the budget came up in past Task Force meetings. Mayor Girtz thanked the Task Force for their work. He explained that the budget exists in a fluid environment within the general fund, funded by property and sales tax dollars. Some departments, like Public Utilities, are funded through an enterprise fund. Mayor Girtz further noted that they always consider the way they are going to integrate the entire range of things that they want to do each year into the budget. He advised, in terms of budgetary allocation, it would be best for the Task Force to note what outcomes are being sought and what tools are needed to have available, as well as what may be needed for proactive work or to respond to specific incidents. Once they know those things, they will be able to assign staffing levels. Shane Sims thanked Mayor Girtz for his clarification.

Stephanie Flores asked Mayor Girtz to clarify whether or not it is in the Task Force's purview to recommend where the funding would be allocated from. Mayor Girtz agreed and suggested the Task Force provide details of what they would like functionality-wise to be true about the unit they are recommending. Once that is provided, they can consider how to fund it. He also explained that he does not have any doubt in terms of being able to devote the resources necessary for police advisory support.

T.K. Monford asked Liana Perez if she had any information on the budget for advisory boards in other communities. Liana Perez noted it would be largely dependent on what was included in the department; however, she would research and provide some information on budgets for similarly-sized cities. Stephanie Flores asked if Liana Perez could also look into how the implementation of an advisory board budget has influenced the police department budget, specifically looking for trends as to whether or not the police department budget increases/decreases. Shane Sims reiterated that the Task Force is not questioning the integrity of the Mayor and Commission and expressed gratitude for Mayor Girtz explaining he did not foresee any problem with providing funding to support the police advisory board.

D. **Discuss Final Recommendations**

Mokah-Jasmine Johnson noted that she would follow up with Liana Perez and Camme McElhiney after the meeting. After the next meeting, they can review the recommendations to see if there is any additional changes needed. Then, they should be ready to present to the Government Operations Committee.

Stephanie Flores inquired about the timeline for having the materials translated into Spanish and expressed interest in partnering with a local organization to hold a town hall meeting in Spanish sooner rather than later. Mayor Girtz explained that February would be the latest he would want to push the presentation to the Government Operations Committee, but this would provide six weeks for the input to be delivered to the Government Operations Committee along with the substance of the recommendations, so they can provide final guidance to the Mayor and Commission regarding implementation.

E. **Discuss Presentation to Government Operations Committee**

Phillip Smith made a motion to extend the meeting by 10-15 minutes. Stephanie Flores seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Girtz advised that the next Government Operations Committee meeting is February 18.

F. **Schedule/Agenda Changes**

Phillip Smith made a motion to adjourn the meeting. T.K. Monford seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting concluded at 4:09 p.m.

The recording of this meeting can be accessed on YouTube at the following link:

<https://youtu.be/FHrrH4zRV2I>