

ACC Community Police Advisory Board Development Task Force

Wednesday, June 10, 2020 at 3:00 p.m. via WebEx

Committee Members Present:

Mokah-Jasmine Johnson, Co-Chair
Shane Sims, Co-Chair
Mykeisha Ross
Dr. Sarah Shannon
Phillip Smith
Nikema Stovall
Stephanie Flores
Joan Prittie

Committee Members Absent:

Jaivious Collins
Fabian Jones

Staff:

Manager Blaine Williams, Manager's Office
Sherrie Hines, Attorney's Office
Sarah George, Manager's Office- Recorder

The meeting began at 3:04 p.m.

Mokah-Jasmine Johnson introduced the meeting and noted that the agenda item pertaining to the discussion of the recent arrest would be moved to the end of the meeting. She also noted that Chief Spruill was asked to sit out of this meeting due to the sensitive nature and concerns regarding level of comfort associated with some topics; however, he or a member of his department would be in attendance at future meetings.

A. Approval of April 30, 2020 Minutes

Phillip Smith made a motion to approve the minutes. Mykeisha Ross seconded. No official vote was taken. Motion failed due to lack of a vote.

Shane Sims advised that he believed the Task Force should take some time to reflect and define the ultimate goal of the outcome for their work. Three questions were posed to the Task Force for their consideration and feedback that were originally asked by Mayor Girtz when forming the group:

- 1) What are the community benefits that we seek through creation of an advisory board?
- 2) How can an advisory board provide "front end" guidance to ensure positive police / community relations through policy/process/budget review and input?
- 3) How can an advisory board provide effective response to specific challenging or controversial episodes (e.g. police-involved shootings, violent interactions, etc.)?

Task Force members reflected on the three questions and provided input. Responses shared by Task Force members regarding each of the questions are paraphrased below.

1) *What are the community benefits that we seek through creation of an advisory board?*

- Phillip Smith explained one benefit that he believes is front and center is fewer citizens killed or injured, particularly people of color.
- Mykeisha Ross shared that she believes that one benefit would be that the Advisory Board could be a resource for the community regarding communication about questions they have if they are uncomfortable or unable to reach out to Chief Spruill. She also expressed the importance of the Advisory Board having access to the data to guide identification of issues.

- Nikema Stovall shared it would provide first-hand accounts to the public, which in turn could give them a better outlook on a situation rather than reading it from less-trusted sources.
- Stephanie Flores stated that she sees the creation of the board as democratizing police power and democratizing power generally. She asked what the Board can do to make everyone in our community feel more empowered by police interaction, which may mean less police interaction.
- Joan Prittie could seek out best and innovative practices in community policing and work to implement them in ACCGov. The Task Force could also identify potential funding sources for those new practices, if needed.
- Mokah-Jasmine Johnson shared that the community would benefit by receiving answers and officers would be held accountable. She emphasized that she believes this Advisory Board should be an independent entity and body, not attached to the government or the Police Department to help the public feel comfortable in contacting the Board.
- Dr. Sarah Shannon expressed that trust is the biggest benefit, and there is some research evidence to support that these boards can promote trust in the community. It also could potentially decrease racial disparities in police contact.

2) *How can an advisory board provide “front end” guidance to ensure positive police / community relations through policy/process/budget review and input?*

- Phillip Smith noted that he feels it is very important for the Task Force, in forming this board, for the board to have a really good look at the budget and to help new board members that may not be as familiar with looking at budgets by offering some training or some experiential help with reviewing budgets. Budgets can help identify where the real principles and priorities lie.
- Mykeisha Ross stated that she believes the Board should first try to engage and build relationships with police department and engage with the community to help establish trust.
- Stephanie Flores explained the answer to this question would be relevant to how much power the Police Advisory Board is given. Some examples of powers that she noted included hiring / firing power, access to police records like complaints filed on specific people, a role in the interview process or in creating standards for the interview process, and the power to subpoena. She emphasized that the power has to be real and not just tokenized.
- Mokah-Jasmine Johnson shared that she believes the Board should be involved in the budgeting process and that it is important to have a mediator that is a part of this board.
- Dr. Sarah Shannon emphasized that policy review would be key, especially in light of recent events around the country. Having an independent board that is able to review those policies and make recommendations would be really important.

3) *How can an advisory board provide effective response to specific challenging or controversial episodes (e.g. police-involved shootings, violent interactions, etc.)?*

- Phillip Smith explained that one of the biggest things that stands out to him is having a strong communication line, particularly between the Mayor’s Office, Police Chief’s Office, and the Advisory Board Chair.
- Mykeisha Ross reiterated that if the Board is given access to the data, and they are communicating and engaging, then the Board should be able to have the right answers for the community regarding how to provide effective responses.
- Stephanie stated that the Board should be holding the Police accountable to a response. She does not believe the Board should act as the liaison between the Police and the

- community; however, she thinks they should be holding the Police accountable to giving the community the answers they deserve.
- Mokah-Jasmine Johnson emphasized the importance of transparency when responding to the public.
 - Dr. Sarah Shannon echoed the question Stephanie Flores posed as to what extent would we want to recommend that this board have investigatory powers. She believes this would make a difference in terms of public perception that the Task Force would want to consider.

Shane Sims noted that it is important for the Task Force to keep their scope in mind to focus their work. Manager Williams clarified that the Task Force's role is to make a recommendation to the Mayor and Commission about what this body does and how it functions. The Mayor and Commission would then make a decision about the actual structure and who would be a part of it. Mokah-Jasmine Johnson emphasized the importance of having a member or members of the Task Force still involved once the outcome of the structure of the Board is defined to help ensure consistency.

Shane Sims summarized what was discussed and noted that it seems the Board would be more in the position of conflict resolution. Mokah-Jasmine Johnson said next steps could entail taking what was said in this meeting and drafting a preliminary mission statement that could be shared with the Task Force for consideration. This mission statement could help guide in the direction that the Task Force would like the Advisory Board to accomplish.

C. Discussion on Platforms / Options for Public Input

Mokah-Jasmine Johnson shared that she believes it is important for the public to have input on this. She asked the Task Force for any ideas to reach diverse and the most vulnerable sections of the community. Mykeisha Ross shared that she thought it was important to go into the community where feedback is sought, avoiding using surveys, and, rather, having people ask the questions. Dr. Shannon agreed added that the Task Force needs to consider how to best implement this with considerations for COVID. She further elaborated that an online townhall meeting may capture certain subsets of our community, but it probably would not sufficiently capture the subsets that are most marginalized or effected. Shane Sims expressed agreement with Mykeisha and Dr. Shannon. Both Nikema Stovall and Shane Sims expressed willingness to go out into the community to seek input. Mokah-Jasmine Johnson agreed that some door knocking needs to be done, and the process should be discussed further, including which neighborhoods to visit and when.

The Task Force discussed options for collecting public input. Shane Sims noted it might be helpful to draft three questions around police-community relations. Mokah-Jasmine Johnson noted that the consensus from the Task Force seems to be around creating an online form with three questions, Zoom town hall meeting, and knocking on doors. Phillip Smith expressed interest in expediting these important functions being discussed. Mokah-Jasmine Johnson agreed and noted that the Task Force could possibly solicit interest from members of the public when receiving input by asking if they would be interested in participating on the Advisory Board. Stephanie Flores recommended asking property managers to send questions out to the residents in areas that are not canvassed.

Mykeisha Ross made a motion in agreeance with going out into the community and knocking on doors. Phillip Smith seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Phillip Smith motioned to include an online meeting and a jot form or form to where people can go and fill it out for themselves. Dr. Sarah Shannon seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mykeisha Ross inquired if the members of the Task Force would be notified of the individuals selected to serve on the Advisory Board. She expressed concern with not knowing if the members of the Advisory Board shared the same values as the Task Force. Mokah-Jasmine Johnson explained that Mykeisha's concern could possibly be alleviated by having a member of the Task Force serve as a part of the Advisory Board process as well.

D. Discussion of Survey and Questions for Feedback

Manager Williams asked how the survey would be compiled. Nikema Stovall suggested asking the public for three ways to improve community-police relations. Stephanie Flores agreed and added that an additional question could ask how people can feel safe around the police. Mokah-Jasmine Johnson asked the group to consider how to articulate the questions in a manner that would include functionality as well as safety in advance of the next meeting.

Shane Sims made a motion to adopt two questions for the survey:

- 1) Three ways in which to improve community-police relations.
- 2) Three ways to improve the feeling of safety of the community around the police.

Mokah-Jasmine Johnson seconded the motion. The motion was withdrawn without a vote, as it was thought to have been previously captured in the last vote regarding the survey.

Mokah-Jasmine Johnson suggested adding a third question to the survey asking if they would be interested in participating on the Advisory Board. If they are, they can provide their contact information. The Task Force agreed to add this question.

B. Discussion Regarding Recent Arrest

Mokah-Jasmine Johnson briefly noted that there had been an incident that had been submitted to the Athens Anti-Discrimination Movement. The image of a young man was provided, and he felt like he had been unfairly treated during an arrest. She asked the Task Force for feedback from the group about, when these instances happen, how they would want the Advisory Board to function in response to a citizen that felt like they were treated unjustly. Mokah-Jasmine Johnson also explained the Task Force was welcome to write down a paragraph about how they would like the Advisory Board to respond in these instances.

Dr. Sarah Shannon emphasized that it may be helpful for the Task Force members to revisit the materials provided by NACOLE on the type of models of the Police Advisory Board. Mokah-Jasmine Johnson asked the Task Force to revisit the NACOLE presentation and pick the model that they believe would best help address these situations. Shane Sims requested Dr. Sarah Shannon provide a brief synopsis of each of the models shared by NACOLE and suggested the Task Force vote at the next meeting on which model the Task Force thinks would be most effective for Athens-Clarke County to help expedite the process. Dr. Sarah Shannon advised that she would like for the public input to help identify which model would be most effective.

E. Schedule/Agenda Changes

The next meeting of the ACC Police Advisory Board Development Task Force is scheduled for June 17, 2020 at 3:00 p.m. and will be held virtually due to COVID-19.

The meeting concluded at 2:35 p.m.

The recording of this meeting can be accessed on YouTube at the following link:
<https://youtu.be/d1EKEwheWtc> .