



MEETING MINUTES

Chief's Advisory Panel: Public Meeting
San Marcos Activity Center, 501 E. Hopkins
December 21, 2020 @ 6:00 P.M.

1. WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Authentic relationship is what we need more than anything. The issues that we are facing are both chronic and complex. They are also societal. It will take all of us working together to address these issues. Chief wants to broaden scope of the Panel. Cite & Release is such a small component of what we do, so our vision needs to be expanded.

2. DISCUSSION OF GEORGE FLOYD RESPONSE

Truth: Every one of us come from different backgrounds, yet somehow we are supposed to speak with a unified voice. How does that happen?

If you watched the video of the George Floyd incident, what is the one word that would best describe your feelings? *(Each person described, in one word, their reaction)*

Truth: We all experienced the same type of intensity and emotion from the situation. We have more in common than we do in differences, and we are starting from the same vantage point when it comes to police abuses.

3. WHAT DOES COMPREHENSIVE POLICE REFORM LOOK LIKE?

As it relates to police reform, for months the nation fixated itself on choke holds to stop abuses of force. This is not the be all, end all, of force abuse. Comprehensive police reform has to be about much more than just policy revision.

Per Chief, Police in the United States need to own the historical injustices and the present injustices and say I'm sorry. We may not be responsible for the injustices, but we are responsible to it.

Panel member James Bryant, Jr notes that he believes the issue goes back to training. No one ever starts out intending to be abusers of force, but along the way they are influenced by "big heads" in his opinion. He thinks police need a little more training.

Chief agrees, but wants to note that police need a LOT more training vs. a little more, and that both policy and training need to be addressed, specifically with the roles of Field Training Officers.

A.B.L.E. – "Active Bystandership for Law Enforcement" – is a national program with policy that mandates accountability when misconduct is observed that it shall immediately be addressed. This program was initially implemented by New Orleans

police as **E.P.I.C.** – “Ethical Policing Is Courageous” - when the FBI tasked them with developing a program that would stop systemic misconduct. The program was so successful that Georgetown Law University decided to take it to a national level and renamed it ABLE. Chief wants to bring ABLE to SMPD. In this program, there will be an expectation that when someone sees misconduct that it is addressed immediately, it is reported, and it is remediated.

Pursue accreditation – There are 2,786 police agencies in Texas. Only 170 of them are accredited. San Marcos is already on its way to become an accredited agency through TPCA with previous work done by Chief Klett. Process involves independent auditors spending two days at SMPD to review documents and policies to confirm that we are meeting 170 best practice standards. Chief’s goal is that next year we will become accredited.

Panel Member Bucky Couch commented that it’s one thing to say it’s mandated in terms of training, but you take any group that has put their lives on the line and they’re going to look out for each other. How do you make that accountability happen?

Per Chief, this is the same issue that New Orleans had when they rolled out their program. The citizens are going to have to provide endorsements of support. The Mayor and City Council will also have to support the initiative. Internally, we are going to identify a couple of people within the force who go to specialized training to unpack how to change culture from within. We have to also commit to train other surrounding agencies once we are trained. More information can be found here: <https://www.law.georgetown.edu/innovative-policing-program/active-bystandership-for-law-enforcement/>.

Wellness – health, wellness and resilience – your police department has experienced remarkable trauma for several years now, both acute and chronic. In 2017, you experienced your first line of duty death and then lost another officer in 2020. Additionally, two officers were shot and two officers have been catastrophically injured on the interstate.

To date, we have still not had a memorial for Officer Justin Putnam. Recently, in an effort to move forward with closure, Command Staff chose a date in the near future to honor Justin, which has now been communicated to staff. This is just one thing that will address wellness and resiliency of this agency.

We must inspect what we expect through regular reviews and audits of bodycam and dashboard videos. Examine behavior and identify good behavior, while identifying trends requiring training and potential abuses to be dealt with.

4. BUILDING LEGITIMACY AND TRUST THROUGH PROCEDURAL JUSTICE AND ITS FOUR TENETS

How do we build legitimacy? Procedurally just behavior is based on 4 principles:

1. We must give citizens a voice. The riot is the voice of the unheard. We need University present at the Chief's Advisory Panel for a comprehensive community dialogue.
2. We must treat people with dignity, courtesy and respect.
3. We must be neutral and transparent in decision making.
4. We must convey trustworthy motives.

4. BUILDING HOW CAN THE CHIEFS ADVISORY PANEL IDENTIFY BLIND SPOTS IN PROFESSIONAL POLICING?

What does different look like for San Marcos? In Abilene, Chief introduced the program now known as "Threshold," which is the concept of the Police department leaving the building, crossing the threshold into the City where we make ourselves available to the community. The Threshold policy document was provided to each panel member and homework assigned to review and come prepared to discuss at the next regularly scheduled meeting.

5. FORGING A PATH AHEAD...OUR COLLECTIVE FUTURE

Police paradox: we are in a time when law enforcement is better educated, better paid, better trained and equipped, and actually more effective. If you actually look at statistics, you will see that crime numbers have consistently gone down. However, we're less respected than ever. That is the paradox. What is motivating that? Don't put on national hat. Put on your local hat. Do your local officers, dispatchers, records employee provide you good services? Do they treat you with respect, fairness? We can tolerate the ebb and flow of crime, but we cannot tolerate a police department that treats citizens with disrespect or unfairness. That is the purpose of the Chief's Advisory Panel. The vision is how to make San Marcos a better city through partnership and through authentic relationship.

6. CITE AND RELEASE UPDATE

4th Quarter Cite & Release Numbers (also available on San Marcos PD web page on the Cite & Release Dashboard):

456 arrests, 28% included C&R eligible offenses (118). Arrested only 39 people. Sometimes you still have to make an arrest. Almost all of them were released.

Those Cite & Release eligible offenders who were arrested included:

3 who had outstanding warrants were arrested pursuant to the code of criminal conduct.

8 had no Hays county connection. They were not residents or working in San Marcos.

In 23 instances, they committed other crimes.

2 were imminent danger

3 demanded a magistrate

The most common reason that we cited and released: possession of marijuana under 2 ounces.

Although there is no formal program for street diversion with no charged crime, SMPD officers have used their discretion 44 times in the 4th quarter.

In 2nd quarter they had 13 diversions

In 3rd quarter they had 22 diversions

Numbers are low in 2nd and 3rd quarters due to pandemic when we were not proactively enforcing. When enforcement went up, street diversions also went up.

7. QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

One citizen was in attendance at the in-person meeting for the question and answer portion of the meeting. Rodrigo Amaya expressed that the City needs the culture change. Very concerning to him that organizations that are voicing concerns/approvals of some of the candidates. Believes it is a requirement that officers act ethically and professionally in all situations.

Chief addressed the concern Mr. Amaya alluded to over the political activism of the SMPOA in the meeting by stating that in a mud fight, everyone gets mud on them. The responsibility for the fall out was on both sides. SMPOA has been asked to allow Chief to take political hits and have SMPOA return to being the benevolent institution it's designed and proven to be. Chief encourages that we start with recognizing our goal and moving forward, not backwards.

Panel member Bucky Couch stated that he hopes council will support their police department tomorrow and moving forward. If you are going to have a vibrant city, you will have to have strong and healthy public safety components.

Panel member James Bryant, Jr. confirmed that San Marcos Police Department has his sheer, unadulterated support. He further noted to Chief that, from the looks of things, if you are prepared to talk the talk and walk the walk we are in good hands. Wants to see this City remain a safe place to live. Noted to Chief that he is coming in to an outstanding department and he sits on this committee hoping he can make some kind of contribution to the City he loves.

Panel member Gary Pack stated that he appreciates the focus for moving forward. It will be a tremendous responsibility on officers to teach others how to buck the thin blue line. Going to be hard to get over that hump. Nationwide, that's what needs to happen.

Chief noted that he will soon be introducing **V.I.T.A.L.** – “Voices Interacting to Achieve Legacy” – to the police department. This will be an internal group tasked with building greater levels of continuous improvement and accountability from the inside out.

Panel member Nathaniel Kindred shared his belief that the biggest problem is with Council not providing police resources to keep up with the rapid growth of this City. We must expand to meet the growth.

Chief has been tasked by City Manager Lumbreras to develop a comprehensive staffing plan, which he is currently working on to achieve that goal.

In closing, Chief reminded virtual attendees of their opportunity to submit questions/concerns via email to policeinfo@sanmarcostx.gov. All questions related to this particular meeting will be answered within 3 business days. He also recognized the contributions of Assistant Chief Bob Klett during his 15 months of Acting Chief during a remarkably difficult time for the agency.

Action Items for Panel Members:

1. Unpack Threshold document
2. Research ABLE
3. Look at historical crime trends before next meeting