

## **Minutes**

### **Community Advisory Team (CAT21)**

**May 24, 2018**

#### **Members in Attendance**

Pete Benavage  
Bill Blackburn  
Roy Byrd  
Yvonne Weight Callahan  
Besu Feleke

Anwar Kahn  
Jim McClellan  
Dawnielle Miller  
Judy Noritake  
Alexis Stackhouse

#### **Ex officio members in Attendance**

Detective Will Oakley  
Detective Peter Feltham

Investigator Diana Barrett

#### **Members Absent**

Julie Crawford  
Dak Hardwick  
Chris Harris

Ingris Moran  
Howard Woodson

#### **APD Staff in Attendance**

Chief Michael L. Brown  
Captain Jamie Bridgeman  
Lieutenant Bart Bailey  
Sergeant Misti Battle  
Sergeant Marcus Downey

Sergeant Jesse Meekins  
Sergeant Charlette Mitchell  
Sergeant Nick Ruggiero  
Leah C. Tolliver

#### **Guests**

None

## Minutes

### **Agenda Item: Welcome & Introductions**

**Comments:** Chief Brown welcomed the CAT21 Members and requested that each new attendee give an introduction about themselves to the group.

### **Agenda Item: Approval of minutes from last meeting**

Chief Brown asked if there were any changes that needed to be made to the previous minutes. There were no changes recommended and the minutes were approved.

- a) Roy Byrd 1<sup>st</sup>
- b) Pete Benavage 2<sup>nd</sup> the motion
- c) The minutes were unanimously approved as written.

### **Agenda Item: Review of Actions Items**

Chief Brown explained to the members that the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing Plan was endorsed by City Council.

#### **Action Items:**

- a) An update to the plan is currently being developed.

Chief Brown distributed the 2017 Annual Crime Statistics Factsheet to the members. He gave an overview of the statistics as they related to Part I and Part II Crimes in the City of Alexandria.

- a) The numbers for most Part I Crimes were slightly down between 2016 and 2017 (Homicide, Rape, Robbery, Burglary, Larceny, and Motor Vehicle Theft).
- b) Nuisance Crimes (Part II) were slightly up (Prostitution, Drug/Narcotic Offenses, DWI/DUI, Drunkenness and Liquor Law Violations). This is largely due to self-initiated activity by the increased number of patrol officers.

A CAT21 member inquired about statistics as it relates to Arrests and Convictions. Chief Brown replied by stating that the information is currently being tracked by the courts and is not captured by APD.

Chief Brown distributed the CY2017 Annual Statistical Report Memorandum prepared by the APD Office of External Affairs and Professional Responsibility. The report indicates APD investigated more cases last year than in the current year and that the majority were only minor cases involving progressive discipline.

A CAT21 member asked for a brief definition of the word "Sustained". Chief Brown explained that it relates to showing a burden of proof that the allegations were proved.

A CAT21 member asked how our department compared to others of our same size. Chief Brown responded by saying that “it is difficult to measure that because the factors involved vary by jurisdiction.”

**Agenda Item: COPS Program Update**

Chief Brown introduced Sergeant Misti Battle and Sergeant Nick Ruggiero of the COPS Unit/Program to the CAT21 Team Members. He expressed how fortunate the department is to be able to expand the program and thanked each of them for their hard work and dedication.

Sergeant Misti Battle and Sergeant Nick Ruggiero each gave detailed overviews of the program as follows:

- a) The purpose of the program is for officers to develop a rapport with citizens within the community while gaining their trust.
- b) Nine community officers and two resident officers are currently assigned throughout the City of Alexandria. Each of the officers makes it a point to greet residents while fielding any concerns that they may have.
- c) The goal is for officers to be assigned to those areas on a long-term basis.
- d) The COPS Program will also be expanded to local elementary schools.

Chief Brown stated that “because we now have more COPS Officers, we are attempting to ground them with regular assignments within the communities to become permanent fixtures.” We didn’t have that luxury previously when the COPS Unit was smaller. However, we are now able to establish that relationship piece with this expansion. In addition to that, we are working with ACPS to have the officers align themselves and visit the elementary schools periodically to establish that same type of relationship. They have opened up the doors for that and therefore we are in the process of identifying individual officers to be assigned to the schools.

A CAT21 member inquired about specific neighborhoods that the department is currently focusing on and Sergeant Nick Ruggiero cited the following:

- a) Andrew Adkins – downtown by Braddock
- b) Arlandria – Executive Avenue
- c) Foxchase – Holmes Run Park, shopping center & residential
- d) Hume Springs
- e) Inner City - Fayette
- f) Lynnhaven
- g) Northside – down Rt. 1
- h) Reynolds Street
- i) Sangor Corridor
- j) South Whiting
- k) Yale

A CAT21 member noted that those areas are within a four block radius. Sergeant Ruggiero agreed and stated that “we deeply embed our COPS Officers so that they personally get to know residents within the smaller neighborhoods to develop good partnerships.

Chief Brown stated that “as opposed to just providing general patrol this encourages officers to get out of their cars and introduce themselves.” We now have the ability to do this because we have more officers than we did a few years ago. There is also an incentive because we are given credit through our new data process.

Sgt. Ruggiero expounded by stating that those officers who are embedded in the community when there is an event or concern, will partner with Patrol Officers to meet residents and learn of their struggles and concerns. This would not be possible without having a designated officer in place.

A CAT21 member wanted to acknowledge Officer Charley Lloyd for his dedication and training efforts, while instructing over 100 citizens in the areas of safety, threats, and protection.

#### **Agenda Item: Youth Outreach Programs**

Chief Brown noted that there has been an overwhelming response from the community regarding the inception of the Alexandria Youth Police Academy.

Sergeant Nick Ruggiero stated how beneficial the program is to the city and how it may peak an interest in teens about the field of law enforcement.

Sergeant Misti Battle and Sergeant Nick Ruggiero each gave detailed overviews of the program as follows:

- a) The Youth Police Academy will commence in June for those youths who are between the ages of 14 and 18.
- b) The academy will run for a total of 12 weeks, on Thursdays for a period of one hour.
- c) Initially, there were a total of 30 students who were expected to volunteer when the program was announced. However, over 52 students have already signed up for the 1<sup>st</sup> session and therefore a 2<sup>nd</sup> session has been added.
- d) Participants will have an opportunity to interact directly with officers on who are on duty and visit specialized units.
- e) An open forum/Teen Town Hall will be held at the end of the academy at APD Community Room to discuss the lessons learned and any areas that may need improvement. This forum will be open to anyone in the community but the only provision is that teens will be the only ones permitted to voice their opinions/concerns.
- f) A one day program will take place in August (PLEE) which stands for Positive Law Enforcement Encounters and is for youth between the ages of 13 and 18. The purpose is to aid in the prevention of misunderstandings that arise between citizens and law enforcement officials.

### **Agenda Item: School Resource Officer Program**

Sergeant Jesse Meekins and Sergeant Marcus Downey were introduced to the CAT21 Team Members and gave a detailed overview of the program as follows:

- a) School Resource Officers (SRO's) are currently assigned to the junior and senior high schools. However, there are currently none assigned to the elementary schools.
- b) SRO's are in the school system to protect the students and enforce the law, rather than to enforce disciplinary or administrative policies (tardiness, dress code, etc.).
- c) SRO's are available to advise the Alexandria City Public School (ACPS) teachers regarding legal matters if needed.

A CAT21 member asked if there has been any thought given to developing an active shooter plan in light of the recent school shootings in Florida and Texas. Chief Brown responded by saying that this decision lies solely with the Alexandria City Public Schools. Additionally, he stated that if a decision was made by the school system to allow firearms on campus, then the police department would need to have knowledge of their locations and the names of personnel who are authorized to handle them. To date ACPS does not wish to allow firearms to non-police personnel.

Sergeant Jesse Meekins informed the group that the Alexandria City Public School (ACPS) teachers and staff members, are now being trained in Alert, Locate, Inform, Confront, and Evacuate procedures (ALICE). The training for junior and senior high schools will commence in the Fall of the year, but no details have been given for introducing the same training for elementary schools students. Additionally, he stated that the calls for disorderly conduct (fighting) have gone down significantly as ACPS is learning to deal with those challenges without assistance from the department.

Sergeant Marcus Downey stated that those officers who are on night patrol are conducting walk-throughs in order to become familiar with the layout of each school in the event of an emergency.

A CAT21 member inquired about any emergency procedures in place within local private schools. Sergeant Meekins stated that the police and fire departments are currently meeting with officials to determine the best and most affordable plan.

A CAT21 member stated that his community has taken the Alert, Locate, Inform, Confront, and Evaluate (ALICE) training but they will not be armed due to their religious beliefs. However, they do have exercises currently in place.

### **Agenda Item: Idea List/Survey Results**

Chief Brown distributed the CAT21 Idea Rating Matrix that listed the results of the survey. He used a value based on those things that involved transparency that are above and/or near a 4.0 value. The two areas that are interrelated are Better Relationships/Youth Immigrants and Public Help for APD New Partnerships. He stated that the department is working on the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing Plan update and we can put together a proposal to send out to members before our next meeting. This would outline our relationship with youth immigrants, education, rights, and various opportunities.

A CAT21 member wanted to thank the department for our work with young people within the immigrant community. Chief Brown agreed that his biggest fear is that immigrants, who are in crisis, don't feel comfortable in calling law enforcement officials for fear of deportation. He stressed that he wants them to feel totally comfortable in contacting us when they need APD.

A CAT21 member stated that immigrant trust in police is low in communities where they are originating from. She stated that it may be helpful to teach them about laws here in the United States, as their understanding of laws here are different in those countries where they originate from. (I.e. what is an assault?). She shared with the group that she had recently returned from Central America, where they were exploring push issues for migration (Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala,) and one of the researchers spoke on trust in Honduras. She learned that only 15% of Hondurans have trust in police and that the other 85% have trust in the church. She is recommending that the police department identify church leaders here in the local community for assistance.

Chief Brown advised the team of the department's efforts through its clergy council and the challenges APD has encountered in this area.

**Agenda Item: Closing Comments**

Chief Brown thanked all of those members who were in attendance for their input.

**Meeting Adjourned:** Chief Brown adjourned the meeting at 2045 hours

**Next Meeting: July 26, 2018**

APD meeting room 301-B

**Minutes submitted by:** Leah C. Tolliver