

# Chief's Advisory Committee

## July 27, 2021, at 2:30 p.m.

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**Zoom Meeting Participants:** Captain Braman, Roger Esparza, Sandy García, Earl Gooding, Noah Leavitt, Dick Morgan, Steve Moss, Roberto Rodriguez

**Absent:** Chief Bieber, Captain Buttice, Brooke Bouchey, Kanasha Henderson, Ruthell Martinez, Curtis Phillips

- 1) **City Council** —Steve Moss noted the Chief's Advisory Committee was asked to come up with recommendations by late September/early October for implementation by the City Council. He will take back the groups recommendations and present it to the City Council. Possibly two to three of the current City Council members may not be going for re-election.

Steve Moss thanked Noah Leavitt for sending the panel members a link to the ACLU of Washington article titled "Will body cameras help end police violence?" A printed copy was also provided for this morning's meeting.

The WWPD submitted a grant application to the Department of Justice (DOJ) last week for acquisition of 45 body-worn cameras (BWC). The application deadline was July 26. The grant cap was \$2,000 per camera, so our grant maximum is \$90,000 (calculated by \$2,000 per camera x 45 cameras). The total estimated cost for a five-year BWC project is \$752,738 (comprised of \$349,895 for the BWC system and \$402,842 for PDR Clerk salary). We are drafting a second application with the DOJ for body worn cameras. It is the same grant, just designed for smaller agencies that benefit from a simpler grant application process. If we somehow are awarded both DOJ grants for BWC, then we can only accept one of them. While this grant is highly competitive, our chances of getting a grant award was improved by hiring a professional grant reviewer to assist in the application process.

Although we just hired two officers who are currently in the Police Academy, we are still have five vacant officer positions. Captain Braman noted the new police reform legislation and the new model for response is creating a lot of unknowns. As of Sunday, the police reform legislation went into effect. (It outlined that law enforcement no longer responds unless there is a crime in progress, immediate threat to an adult/child, or required by statute to respond.) The WWPD can no longer respond to mental health calls unless there is an immediate threat to an adult/child.

The Walla Walla Fire Department recently partnered with Providence St. Mary Medical Center for a pilot program called the Community Paramedic Program. The goal is to

reduce mental health calls with program personnel doing outreach. Providence funded the salary of hiring Paramedic Cody Maine. He works Monday through Friday from 8am to 5pm. There was some discussion on whether Providence, the City of Walla Walla, or another funding source would fund additional staff for the Community Paramedic Program since it has so far proved successful. The program medics can administer medications and help serve the clients they serve. This also reduces expensive hospital stays and the time law enforcement interacted with those individuals.

Captain Braman stated our officers want body cameras, so they can be exonerated. This project is not opposed by the WWPDP personnel. The internal affairs investigation statistics for the WWPDP. The last sustained complaint was connected to an event that took place in 2017, and it was linked to two officers resigning.

2017 – 9 total complaints

2018 - 9 total complaints

2019 – 8 total complaints

2020 – 7 total complaints

There is a mistrust of officers on a national level. Steve Moss referenced the recent Town Hall and the local Citizen Satisfaction Surveys indicates a strong level of trust in the WWPDP.

College Place Police Department has BWC, but only has 10 officers compared to our 48. This reduces many of their expenses for implementing the project. While they have experienced an increase in records disclosure requests after implementing BWC, they are able to handle it with their previous staffing level. We would need to hire an additional Records clerk to handle the disclosure requests.

Roger Esparza stated we need more neighborhood block parties and more officer presence in the community. His perspective of the local law enforcement changed after some friends became officers.

Dick Morgan voiced concern the newly enacted police reform legislation will reduce officer presence in the community. Captain Braman replied if officers are not responding to mental health calls, then there is more time for community policing.

Several people agreed they were not worried about police violence on the local level; still they liked the idea that body-worn cameras (BWC) confirm that WWPDP officers are not hiding anything. They see the need for healing on a local level. Some people who would never complete the Citizen Satisfaction Survey have had a bad experience with law enforcement, and it takes time to rebuild trust. BWC help build trust.

The group pondered obtaining clarification from the College Place Police Department on their experience with BWC since implementing the system earlier this year. Earl Gooding pondered if the community would be more interested in having BWC if the next Police Chief does not have the same level of professionalism Chief Bieber has displayed.

Sandy García sees BWC as supporting transparency and transparency builds trust. There was a break of trust with the Officer Nat Small (tattoo) situation. There needs to be healing.

Roberto Rodriguez supports BWC, still he wonders if it is worth \$150,000 a year. Captain Braman is in favor of implementing body worn cameras. When people know they are being recorded their behavior changes. The big drawback is the expense and a single camera myopic view which can miss the full situation. Officers cannot delete recorded video because it is uploaded to the cloud. They can later watch the video and they can turn the camera on or off. However, the BWC automatically starts recording when the officer pulls out their gun or taser.

The group was curious if Providence St. Mary Medical Center was willing to fund another position for the Community Paramedic Program. Maybe there is no need to choose between supporting the Community Paramedic Program or BWC for officers.

Noah Leavitt pondered how best to build community trust with the WWPD officers. Do BWC increase the community trust in a quantitative way?

Dick Morgan preferred to have another meeting in two to three weeks to address trust. The group saw value in reaching out to the CPPD to obtain their experience since BWC were implemented.

Noah Leavitt inquired if the City of Walla Walla is to serve the calls that law enforcement cannot legally respond to anymore, can the Community Paramedic Program respond to those calls?

Steve Moss has a desire to serve the under served in our community, particularly those people with more chronic needs. We will request a funding update with Providence St. Mary Medical Center on the Community Paramedic Program.

- 2) **Next Meeting**—August 31, 2021, from 2:30 p.m. to 3:30 in-person at the WWPD. (UPDATE: An additional meeting to discuss body camera usage at the College Place Police Department was tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, August 17 from 2:30 to 3:30 at the WWPD.)

The July 27, 2021, meeting adjourned at 3:43 p.m.

Submitted by Deborah Minter