

Chief's Advisory Committee

September 27, 2022, at 2:30 p.m.

Fulton Community Conference Room

Meeting Participants: Patty Blakely, Captain Braman, Chief Buttice, Sandy García, Earl Gooding Jr., Mark Higgins, Captain Knudson, Noah Leavitt, Dick Morgan, Steve Moss

Absent: Robert Dixson, Kanasha Henderson

- 1) **Chief's Welcome and Introductions**—Chief Buttice introduced Mark Higgins, the Director of Communications for the Walla Walla Public Schools District Office. Chief Buttice will check with Robert Dixson to confirm our meeting schedule works with his availability.
- 2) **Discussion—Desired Purpose of the Advisory Committee**—We want open and honest communication. Let us know of any concerns and community perceptions. Chief Buttice wants the members to be a conduit for the community's questions, then take back the reasons decisions were made here. We are looking at holding quarterly meetings unless something timely comes up.
- 3) **Transition of Chief's**—We started our “walk abouts” in under served areas to build a relationship and trust. We installed a ring doorbell to solve future security concerns for a local landowner with a broken window that was unsolved due to no witnesses observing the event. Our thanks to Ruben Hernandez of Target Zero for translating for Spanish speakers. There were three key questions asked during the walk abouts.
 - Do you feel safe walking in the neighborhood?
 - Tell us about your interactions with the police.
 - What can we do to make the WWPD better?

More lighting was consistently requested by the responders. BMAC representatives have been made aware of this request. In addition, possibly the Walla Walla Police Association can help meet this need.

We also met with the new President of Whitman College and conveyed we want to leave the past behind us and move forward. In response, Whitman College representatives gave us a tour of newly constructed buildings that we had not yet had access to. Knowledge of the buildings' layout is critical during events.

We made an open public apology to the Congregation Beth Israel Walla Walla and acknowledged that Mr. Heisman made a complaint to the city of Walla Walla Human Resources department on June 5, 2020. The Police Department looks forward to the opportunity of rebuilding his trust.

- 4) **Update—Staffing—Retirement**—Nikki Raver is taking Vicki Ruley's role as the Crime Prevention Coordinator. After 24 years, Vicki retires on September 30. This creates a Records Clerk position coming open. The Records Clerk position was offered to Julie

Loren, who starts on October 17. Julie does a similar job at the Walla Walla County Sheriff's Office. Right now, we have three officer vacancies. Currently, we are doing interviews and background checks on the police officer candidates. At least three people on the entry level civil service list are bilingual/bicultural candidates, and a female candidate also made it onto the list. While we have a strong list, eleven commissioned staff can retire at any time. Sgt. Gunner Fulmer is running for Walla Walla County Commissioner. If he gets elected, then this would create an opening.

- Assigning a specific mentor to walk each candidate through the application process helped. And we attended career fairs where we could.
- Mark Higgins recommended we talk with the SEATech Education Center, since they have a Criminal Justice program.
- The WWPDP has set a priority goal to increase the number of commissioned officers that are bilingual/bicultural and female officers.
- Chief Buttice is crafting a police department strategic plan that will align with the city's strategic plan.

- 5) Update—WWPD Budget**—Our budget is “bare bones lean” for 2023-24 so we can request body cameras for the officers and a full-time clerk to handle the disclosure requests. We did not request that any additional officer positions be funded. Steve Moss noted there are Finance Committee is almost ready to report to the full City Council soon. The City Council is waiting for the revenue projections to see how it lines up with the expenses.
- 6) Update—Body Worn Cameras**—Chief Buttice clarified if the Body Worn Cameras (BWC) and clerk position are approved, then we will sign the Axon quote that was provided in 2021. The Axon representative can only honor the quote that was issued in 2021 until December 31, 2022. Afterwards there would be a significant cost increase.
- 7) Update—Social-Media**—The Police Department has a goal to get the social media selected and running. We pushed “pause” until Nikki Raver was in place as the Crime Prevention Coordinator and the election that Sergeant Fulmer is running for office has completed the process. We plan to have the social media resolved by the year end, then we can send a consistent message through it. The focus will be on helping to serve the community, not on posting jokes and humorous events. Captain Knudson is looking at the demographics in our community and trying to select the platform(s) that will reach each demographic. This might require our utilizing several platforms to reach the citizens. Mark Higgins recommended saving the archives on the city system since social media is often difficult to archive as needed.
- 8) Update—Repairing Relationships in the Community**—Despite our best attempts, some relationships will unfortunately not be repaired. Still, many can be. Please communicate with Chief Buttice on how you see areas of possible healing in the community your recommendations on how to achieve this.
- 9) Wrap Up**—Chief Buttice gave an update on the recent local event where a Washington State Patrol officer was shot. Due to this being an officer involved shooting, the SIU in the Tri-Cities is conducting the investigation. Once the critical debrief is concluded, emergency responders will get help to process the event. Earl Gooding Jr. heard from

several people that they were pleasantly surprised the shooter was arrested without being harmed.

Regarding youth who have behavior and mental health issues, Dick Morgan would like to ask their neighbors if they believe any intervention could be done successfully. Mark Higgins would like to see more communication between students and officers, so it returns to the pre-pandemic level of communication. It would deepen the relationships to get officers on the school campus more frequently. Chief Buttice acknowledge we are good with acute crisis response; we are not good with ongoing needs.

Mark Higgins noted the poverty level in Walla Walla has risen from 50% to around 65%. Poverty makes it difficult for children and youth to participate in sports and other school programs. He recommended bringing Commitment 2 Community (C2C) to a meeting. In addition, he recommended the Chief's Advisory Committee to annually review the local crime statistics. The WWPD is already compiling and sending our monthly statistics to the City Council, so the statistics can be easily forwarded to the Chief's Advisory Committee.

Earl Gooding Jr. has been speaking with some homeless citizens. Fentanyl (a synthetic opioid) is cheap and easy to get. Chief Buttice responded the regional drug task force is aware and is working on it.

10) Next Meeting—Assuming there will be quarterly meetings going forward, the next meeting will take place on December 27, 2022, from 2:30 p.m. to 3:30 at the WWPD. Next time we will keep the meeting to one hour.

The September 27, 2022, meeting adjourned at 3:52 p.m.
Submitted by Deborah Minter