

Chief's Advisory Committee
June 27, 2023, at 2:30 p.m.
Administrative Conference Room

Meeting Participants: Chief Buttice, Sergeant Bayne, Earl Gooding Jr., Kaneshia Johnson, Steve Moss

Absent: Captain Knudson, Noah Leavitt, Robert Dixson, Mark Higgins, Sandy García, Dick Morgan

Chief's Welcome

Body Worn Camera Update

The Walla Walla Police Department (WWPD) went live with body worn cameras (BWC) on June 5, which was close to the June 1 goal date. Chief Buttice has watched a few of the BWC recordings taken by WWPD officers since the implementation. There is a learning curve on using the cameras. Other agencies have reported the BWC can come off during a physical altercation.

This morning we participated in an active shooter exercise that was held at Prospect Point Elementary School.

The Records Clerk who was selected to do the BWC redaction has submitted her resignation effective June 30. Now we need to fill this Records Clerk position.

Chief Buttice was pleased with our deployment of the body cameras. He believes our implementation of the BWC program was partially due to the Advisory Committee and the City Council's involvement in the process. This program will bring more transparency to the community and build trust.

Two disclosure requests have been submitted for incidents where there is BWC footage; we are waiting to get clarification on whether the requestors want the body camera footage. There is a fee to get the body camera footage.

Active Shooter Training Overview

As mentioned earlier, we participated in an active shooter training today. It included representatives from each emergency responder that operates in the valley. Today's exercise consisted of several school shooting scenarios. People trained like the scenarios were real.

Captain Bayne noted the participating agencies are working on identifying our failure points and addressing them. School administration will be adding additional Knox boxes to assist fire and law enforcement responders to reach important locations if ever needed. Prior to this training

the WWPB purchased breaching tools for our police vehicles to aid in access to locked or barricaded locations.

WWPD Hosting Strangulation Training

We are hosting a training this October to learn additional ways to investigate cases that involve strangulation. This training is being given by nationally recognized experts. The Walla Walla Police Foundation is paying for this expensive but important training. The training will be opened to outside agencies to participate.

Any Reactions to the DOJ's Findings in Minneapolis?

While Noah Leavitt was unable to attend today's meeting, he asked if we had any reactions to the Department of Justice's (DOJ) findings that the Minneapolis Police Department had violated the civil rights of citizens. Chief Buttice noted while the WWPB can look from a far, we do not operate like that. The WWPB will continue to only hire candidates that pass an intense background investigation and then provide our officers with training so this does not happen here.

Steve Moss was glad that Chief Buttice completed the eleven weeks of FBINAA training. Chief Buttice responded while attending the FBI academy in Quantico, he observed disparate handling and accountability among the agencies. There are significant issues out there. Additionally, there are some great people doing great things out there. The FBINAA training is offered four times a year and approximately 250 people are selected to attend each class. If Chief Buttice has a question, he can send his class members a question to ask for guidance. Cultural shifts are most effective coming from the top downwards.

The WWPB will have an opportunity to send another employee to attend the FBI academy again. Still, it is a long commitment and officers with young families are hesitant to be away that long. And those nearing retirement are often not interested.

There are some significant flaws in the culture of many law enforcement agencies operating around the country and we cannot defend that behavior. Chief Buttice promised to continue to hire the right people to avoid this type of situation from happening here.

Update on Recruitment/Outreach/Hiring to Increase Diversity

Chief Buttice recently spoke with former officer Ari Lopez. Soon after starting the police academy, Ari realized law enforcement was not where he wanted to be. Having another bilingual/bicultural officer was a huge asset for the department, so this was disappointing news. As a follow-up, recently Chief Buttice had an opportunity to speak with Ari—he remains happy with his decision.

Officer Sierra Roberts is currently attending the newly opened Pasco police academy.

Currently, the entry level officer list includes the names of fifteen candidates. We lost nine candidates to the written and physical fitness test. The fitness test requires candidates to complete 20 pushups, 25 sit ups, and 35 squat thrusts.

The background investigation has begun on the top eight candidates listed on our entry level police officer list. It usually takes six to eight weeks from handing the candidate the background packet to fill out until we complete the background investigation. If the candidate fails any step in the process, then they are disqualified. Candidates must be clean from marijuana for at least six months and clean from using hard drugs for at least two years. Statistically, only one out of ten applicants make it through the hiring process. If the current entry level police officer list is exhausted before the three positions are filled, then we start the process over again.

Sergio Hernandez asked what we are doing to increase diversity in the WWPD officers. Sergio recommended assigning a mentor to assist candidates with the application process. We began implementing this recommendation, and found it worked well. We will continue to do this going forward.

Update on WWPD Social Media

Nikki Raver took over the Crime Prevention Coordinator role when Vicki Ruley retired. Nikki put together a report that includes the social media report summary. The public is not allowed to post comments, because we want to put out the positive message. Also, people are trying to use our new Facebook page to report crimes, so these people are being redirected to the Citizen Reporting tab on the city's webpage.

How are the Wellness Initiatives Going with the Team

We sent several of our officers to peer support training. However, we are understaffed so the wellness initiative is slow in getting started. Like most people, it is hard to get officers to acknowledge they need help.

Wrap Up

Steve Moss noted the new police vehicles are painted the same color as their vehicle identification. Chief Buttice and Captain Bayne have heard mixed feedback on the subdued logo symbol and the police name. When the vehicle's flashing lights turn on, it is still clearly a law enforcement vehicle.

Steve Moss recently received a robo call asking for funds to "support the local police." Chief Buttice stated the WWPD has never received any funds from those donations. Chief Buttice will do a continued push to notify people to be aware of this.

Next Meeting

The next Chief's Advisory Meeting is scheduled for September 26 at 2:30pm.

The June 27, 2023, meeting adjourned at 3:37 p.m.

Submitted by Deborah Minter