



**PUBLIC SAFETY COMMISSION
MINUTES**

**REGULAR MEETING
Monday, August 5, 2019**

The Public Safety Commission convened a meeting Monday, August 5, 2019 at City Hall in the Boards & Commission Room, at 4:00pm, 301 West 2nd Street, Austin Texas 78701.

Ed Scruggs, Chair called the Board Meeting to order at 4:01p.m.

Board Members in Attendance:

Ed Scruggs	Noel Landuyt
Daniela Nunez	Rebecca Gonzales
Selena Alvarenga	Chris Harris
Kathleen Hausenfluck	Preston Tyree
Meaghan Hollis	

Board Member Absent: Rebecca Webber and Rebecca Gonzales

Staff in Attendance:

Troy Gay, Chief of Staff, Austin Police Department
Rob Vires, Chief of Staff, Austin Fire Department
Jasper Brown, Chief of Staff, Austin Travis County Emergency Medical Services

- **1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES** – Commissioner Scruggs asked if there were any changes/corrections to the June 3, 2019 minutes and hearing none he asked for motioned to approve. **Commissioner Kathleen Hausenfluck** motioned to approve the minutes and **Commissioner Selena Alvarenga** second the motion. Minutes were approved with a unanimous vote.

2. CITIZEN COMMUNICATIONS –

- Carlos Leon – Violation of the 1st Amendment during Citizen Communications @Special Called Meeting, Commission for Women meeting
- David Davis – tracking financial donations to Moore’s campaign from family members and attorneys
- Mario Cantu – comments on public safety (Fire, EMS and Police) models in Atlanta, and Chicago. APD and AFD could gain some new ideas and possible update areas in Austin’s Public Safety practices; observing Chicago’s experience/practice at handling of

fires at tall buildings could prove very beneficial as Austin builds more high rises. EMS is doing a great.

- Barbara Szalay - please continue to keep/work on existing safety measures and programs while exploring new programs.
- Juliana Gonzales, Senior Director of Sexual Assaults at SAFE Alliance – distributed monthly data for July 2019 and opted not to elaborate on the numbers in the interest of time (full agenda); she offered to answer any questions on the July data. Citizen (no name) – seeking assistance with an attempted eviction from her apartment

3. Hotel Occupancy Tax and Fee Waivers – this item was rescheduled for September 3, 2019 agenda as requested by the City of Austin Finance office.

4. Speed Management Program Briefing

Commissioner Scruggs welcomed Lewis Leff with Austin Transportation Department /Vision Zero Program to the Public Safety Commission meeting and invited him to begin his presentation

Lewis Leff introduced himself and started the presentation by sharing the philosophy of the Vision Zero Team and that is “we are facing a public health crisis”. Currently there are over 70 deaths per year on average in our city due to traffic crashes; and 400 people seriously injured from crashes. There are systemic changes that we have to make to reach our goal of zero deaths/injuries in our city. Speed management is one of the areas where Vision Zero feels they could make a big impact on decreasing the number of deaths and injuries from crashes. Lewis asked that we keep in mind the people we are talking about when referring to the fatality numbers. The numbers represent mothers, grandfathers, sisters, sons, daughters, and friends.

Vision Zero is tracking years of life lost this year through July 30, 2019, and the number is 1, 565 years. This is affecting friends and family; birthdays and other family celebrations lost due a traffic fatality.

The areas of the presentation on Speed Management implementation included:

-Austin Policy

- Vision Zero was able to get some language into Imagine Austin on Land Use and Transportation to promote complete street design
- Promote safer routes to schools for students of all ages
- City commits itself to eliminating transportation related deaths and serious injuries through a holistic Vision Zero approach

-Context and Data

- National Research and Guidance data was reviewed
- Speeding Increases Risk
- Data from other major cities cited (speed limits comparisons) including Boston and Seattle

-Speed Management Program Framework

- Local Area Traffic management (2012-2017)
- overview on how the program worked in the past
- Key changes from Local Area Traffic Management Program with the implementation of Speed Management Program

-Seeking Feedback/Input

-Next Steps

-- Present to Boards and Commissions

- Planned: African American Resource Advisory Commission – August 6, 2019

Report Back to Council – Late August will include

- Final Update on Proposed Speed Management Program
- Public Engagement
- Fiscal Year 2020 Budget Requests

Erin Bollich, with Austin Transportation Department Engineering Division presented on the engineering aspects of the program and explained the history Local Area Traffic Management Program and some of the changes being made to the program as a result of the Speed Management Program.

There were questions and comments from Commissioners Tyree, Hollis, Nunez and Scruggs at the end of the presentation.

5. Work Place Safety Concerns in Public Safety - Commissioner Bernhardt introduced this item and invited the speaker, Kelly Gall to come up to begin the presentation.

Ms. Gall thanked the board for giving her an opportunity to come and speak to them to share her story/experience on what happened to her in the workplace. **Bob Nicks** commented that Kelly was here at this meeting as a spokesperson of the Austin Fire Fighters association and has the full support of the association.

Kelly’s presentation included several discussion items:

Chain of Command

General Witnessed Behavior

2013 Incident/Investigation – Bob Nicks summarized this incident stating it was reported and it was concluded that he (Jim Baker) knew how to do a medical assessment. The review was handled as a clinical review rather than a misconduct investigation. EMS Management said Lt. Baker was “good to go” and he returned to work. The Battalion Chief who submitted the information to the Professional Standards Office was told to drop the investigation by an Assistant Chief or he would be investigated.

2017 Incident /Investigation –Kelly provided the timeline of her incident with Mr. Baker and the installing of a camera in her bathroom. She reported the camera installation to the PSO (Professional Standards Office) and the following day she was asked to sign a Confidentiality Order. On September 6, 2017, Lt. Jim Baker retired with no penalty and no investigation.

Revised Harassment Prevention Policy

2018 EARS Incident/Investigation (electronic anonymous reporting system) is something the Austin Firefighter Association suggested. Per Bob Nicks, this positive came out of the unfortunate incidents in 2013 and 2017.

2018 Kelly experienced another incident involving being called “Darling” and being asked for a hug. Kelly reported this incident to her direct supervisor who made a formal complaint utilizing the EARS resource. Kelly did receive a phone call from Chain of Command to discuss her complaint. Both Lieutenants were transferred permanently and the complaint is being closed. Per Kelly, no formal investigation by Professional Standards Office was conducted.

There was questions and comments from Commissioners Hollis, Harris, Alvarenga, Bernhardt and Scruggs after Pam Gall’s presentation.

- How many other complaints since the change to the Harassment Prevention Policy?
- What is the percentage of women working for the Fire Department?
- What is AFD’s retention rate for female employees?

Bob Nicks closed with comments on the recent revised harassment prevention policy; “the complaint process for Austin Fire Department would work better if the complaints were directed to someone who does not report to the City Manager, but rather to Council”.

6. Mental Health First Responder Program

Speakers:

City of Austin Auditor’s Office

Public Stakeholders – B.J. Wagner, MS, Senior Director of Smart Justice and Adult Policy, Oak Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute

Commissioner Harris introduced this item and asked the Auditor’s office to begin their presentation. Corrie Stokes, City Auditor began by inviting two staff members to present the findings of the Audit Report. The objective of the audit was to determine if the APD is effectively receiving and responding to incidents involving people with mental health or other specialized needs. The audit **APD Response to Mental Health-Related Incidents, September 2018** findings was three areas:

-APD Crisis Intervention certification training did not meet

- Cover specialized de-escalation and mental health crisis topics areas
- did not include direct interactions with community served or

-- offer refresher training to update officer knowledge and skills related to crisis mental health interventions

-Dispatch

--APD call takers should be trained to identify and assess a mental health crisis call

- Response

--APD officers were not always available to respond to calls

--Partnered with Integral Care, and EMCOT, but they were not available to all calls between 10pm-6am

Evaluation/Recommendations:

-CIT (Crisis Intervention Team) engage with the mental health stakeholders and review what solutions could work to benefit people with mental illness in the Austin Area

-Provide quarterly reports on calls received, answered, and the final outcome

Questions from PSC board members:

- Are there HIPPA concerns with sharing of data with stakeholders? (Hollis)

- Is EMOCT (Expanded Mobile Crisis Team) still relatively new? (Scruggs)

Response from Lt. Dustin Lee, EMOCT has been in existence about four years. The updates and policies on EMOCT is communicated to all APD officers via training bulletins. We also partnership with Integral Care and that is very good. There is a policy in place on when to call Integral Care. In the future maybe EMCOT and Integral Care will be available 24hours a day.

B.J. Wagner with Meadow Policy Institute was the next presenter. She presented the highlights of the Oak Meadows Report where the data covered three years (2016, 2017, & 2018).

Highlights

- Met with City of Austin stakeholders

- Learned how Integral Care interacted with Austin Police Department, Fire, and EMS as well

- EMOCT (Expanded Mobile Crisis Team) has been around since 2011 and was begun with federal funding. The federal funding ending in 2017. Their (EMOCT) work has been impressive over the seven years, per Ms. Wagner.

We began the study by asking for APD for all mental health calls within the last three years.

- What calls were mental health

- If the calls were mental health, did it end in mental health delivery?

- The same data was requested from EMS

- APD averages 10, 600 calls per year mental health related

- EMS averages a little over 4, 000 per year

The report looked at band aid responses and offered suggestions on better use of data which would help with determine where resources were being used and most needed.

The report/data identified where the highest areas for mental health calls were coming from. Those areas were downtown, East, and Northeast Austin. There was a question on who makes the determination that a call is a mental health call from **Commissioner Alvarenga**.

Response:

- Dispatcher if well trained

- Officer on the scene

- Depends on who is trained

This question opened discussion on where additional training is needed. Ms. Wagner shared more details from the report and the recommendations offered.

- Training of the dispatchers
 - this will get best resources on the scene
- 911 should be first provider to mental health responses
- APD collaborate with NAMI and Austin Integral Care
- Sustaining EMCOT with tele-help expansion, use technology
- Collaboration with NAMI to develop Spanish language material

Commissioner Harris opened the floor for questions and discussions from the Commissioners. There was discussion on the importance of culture and race being addressed to better serve certain communities.

Three people signed up to speak

Commissioner Harris motioned for a vote on resolution he presented
Commissioner Scruggs seconded

Commissioner Alvarenga had a question on holding off on the resolution until the report from the stakeholders group the Meadows report referenced is received in the 3rd quarter. Commissioner Harris offered a friendly amendment:

Item to comeback to Public Safety Commission after stakeholder group finishes their report

Vote on Amendment – motioned by Commissioner Scruggs and seconded by Commissioner Harris
Vote was unanimous

Vote on Resolution – motioned by Commissioner Harris and seconded by Commissioner Hollis
Vote was unanimous

Meeting adjourned @ 6:11pm

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**Public Safety Commission Recommendation no. 20190805-006
Regarding Mental Health Funding for Public Safety in FY 2018-2019**

Date: August 5, 2019

Subject: Recommendation to Austin City Council Regarding Mental Health First Response

Motioned by: Chris Harris

Seconded by: Daniela Nuñez

WHEREAS, providing an adequate and effective response to mental health crises is an essential component of public safety; and

WHEREAS, clinical health workers should lead first response efforts for those in mental health crises whenever possible; and

WHEREAS, a 2018 City Auditor report found the city's mental health first response is not in line with widely accepted best practices; and

WHEREAS, a 2018 City Auditor report found Austin police used deadly force during mental health first response calls more than peer cities; and

WHEREAS, a 2019 Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute (Meadows) report examining Austin's mental health first response system identified issues leading to over-incarceration and over-hospitalization; and

WHEREAS, a 2019 Meadows report noted shortcomings in identifying mental health crisis calls at the Austin 911 call center; and

WHEREAS, a 2019 Meadows report stated that the mental health stipend for Austin police officers impeded response availability of the best-trained officers; and

WHEREAS, a 2019 Meadows report found that Austin lacks clinical mental health care provider coverage during times with the highest volume of calls; and

WHEREAS, a Meadows report found that the Austin police department's Crisis Intervention Team follow-up protocols risked stigmatizing mental health needs; and

WHEREAS, a Meadows report found that Austin EMS' Community Health Paramedic Program (CHP) should be involved in crisis follow-up to streamline communications amongst providers and increase successful linkages to care;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Austin Public Safety Commission recommends the following actions to Austin City Council regarding mental health 1st response:

1. Prioritize funding for improvements to Austin's first response system in the FY 2020 budget to make sure we address mental health crises with appropriate services.
2. Improve training at the 911 call center and install clinical triage staff in the dispatch center so that mental health calls can be accurately identified and an appropriate response can be initiated.
3. Fund additional mental health clinicians to improve the City's capacity to respond effectively to people experiencing a mental health crisis via live and/or tele-health providers.
4. Expand EMS's CHP Program and incorporate it into crisis follow-up activities.
5. Require all Austin police officers to undergo mental health training to eliminate the need for a mental health stipend.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Austin Public Safety Commission:

1. Plans to revisit this issue to upon release of the Mental Health Stakeholder's Group initial quarterly report to review suggested improvements to Austin's Crisis Intervention Program.

Vote

For: Unanimous

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

Absent: 2 (Commissioners Rebecca Webber and Rebecca Gonzales)

Attest: *[Staff or board member can sign]*

Janet Jackson, Board Liaison,
Austin Police Department