



**PUBLIC SAFETY COMMISSION  
MINUTES**

**REGULAR MEETING  
April 4, 2022**

**The Public Safety Commission convened a hybrid in person and videoconferencing meeting Monday, April 4, 2022 at City Hall 301 W. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street in Austin, Texas.**

**Commissioner Nelly Ramirez** called the Board Meeting to order at 4:02 p.m.

**Board Members in Attendance:**

Kathleen Hausenfluck  
Nelly Ramirez  
Amanda Lewis  
Rebecca Webber

Cory Hall-Martin  
John Kiracofe  
Rebecca Bernhardt  
Rebecca Gonzales

**Absent:** Commissioners Lane, Sierra-Arevalo, and Queen Austin

Executive Liaison Present: Robin Henderson, and Rob Vires, Theresa Gardner

**Public Communications** - Citizens signed up to speak: none

**1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES** – Commissioner Ramirez called for any edits/corrections to the March 7, 2022 minutes and hearing none the minutes were deemed approved.

**2. OLD BUSINESS**

**a. Update from Austin Police Department on actions from the Kroll Report and potential recommendation** (sponsored by Commissioner Bernhardt and Ramirez) 4:04pm-4:31pm

**Speaker(s):**

-Joseph Chacon, Chief, Austin Police Department

Chief Chacon provided an update to changes that have been made. With regards to recruitment, he stated that the incoming 144<sup>th</sup> and 145<sup>th</sup> Cadet Class saw increased rates of black cadets and female cadets. APD has committed to trying increase female officers by 30% by 2030. They are also working with James Joyce to set diversity metrics. APD is working to modify fitness testing and qualification criteria. APD has updated their policies around use of force. This includes adding language, definitions, and clarifying language around shooting at moving vehicles, firearm discharge situations, and response to resistance, de-escalation and duty to intervene. All 20 use of

force cases flagged by Kroll were previously reviewed by APD. Chief Chacon introduced the Force Review Unit, which is outside of the officer's chain-of-command and reviews use of force cases who are trained to investigate these cases.

Commissioner Bernhardt asked if there had ever been the opportunity for an all-female cadet class with all female trainers. Chief responded no, mostly based on class size and trainer availability. Commissioner Webber asked for clarifications around the Force Review Unit. Chief Chacon provided a brief history of the review process. The Force Review Unit has nine dedicated sergeants and one lieutenant who are receiving training to review these cases in a consistent, unbiased manner. Commissioner Gonzales requested that APD continue to provide updates on these recommendations on a monthly basis.

### **3. NEW BUSINESS**

**a. Public Safety Organizations Quarterly Report – Austin Fire Department** (sponsors: Commissioner Hausenfluck and Gonzales) *4:32pm-4:52pm*

**Speaker(s):**

-Brandon Wade, Assistant Chief, Austin Fire Department

Asst. Chief Wade provided an update on the first quarter and some of the second quarter of FY2022. There has been a rise in non-emergency as well as emergency incidents from the same period in 2021. Medical calls make up about 70% of incidents. Generally, response times have decreased. He also provided a brief summary of COVID infections and vaccination efforts within AFD. Currently, there are two cadet classes in process. Chief Wade introduced new slides addressing the Office of the Fire Marshal, featuring inspections, plans reviewed, permitting and special events, and arson. The Wildfire division has done a number of prescribed burns and updated the high fire danger step plan. There were no questions.

**b. Public Safety Commission Officer Elections** (sponsors: Commissioner Gonzales and Ramirez) *4:53pm-4:57pm*

Commissioner Gonzales nominated Commissioner Bernhardt for Chair, Commissioner Webber seconded. Commissioner Bernhardt was elected unanimously.

Commissioner Ramirez nominated herself for Vice Chair and Commissioner Webber seconded. Commissioner Ramirez was elected unanimously.

Both newly elected officers will begin serving their term next month (May 2, 2022 to April 2023)

**c. Review of Employee Diversity metrics from all three organizations** (sponsors: Commissioner Bernhardt and Ramirez) *4:58pm-5:21pm*

**Speaker(s):**

-Robin Henderson Assistant Chief, Austin Police Department

-Rob Vires Assistant Chief, Austin Fire Department

-Teresa Gardner Assistant Chief, Austin-Travis County Emergency Medical Services

**Commissioner Gonzales** provided an explanation on the history of these metrics, beginning in 2014. AFD, EMS and APD each had an over representation of white employees compared to residents. In 2021 there had been strides made in Hispanic, Black and Asian employees compared to residents. All data was provided by the different Public Safety departments.

**Chief of Staff, Robin Henderson (Austin Police Department)** began by breaking down civilian personnel ethnicity demographics. Overall, civilian personnel were mostly white, then Hispanic and overwhelmingly female. For sworn, most were white, then Hispanic, and overwhelmingly male.

**Assistant Chief Gardner** (Emergency Medical Services) provided an explanation of some diversity challenges faced by EMS in Austin, and around the country. Specifically, there is a lack of representation of women and people of color. EMS is looking at changing recruitment strategies, such as looking at different communities and even local high schools.

**Assistant Chief Brandon Wade (Austin Fire Department)** credited the recruiting division for increased diversity at Austin Fire Department. AFD is facing increased retirement classes, opening up more positions for recruitment.

**Commissioner Ramirez** asked how each department works with ACC (Austin Community College). EMS (Emergency Medical Services) is very active with ACC, doing ride outs, and class participation. For Austin Fire Department, recruiters do go in, but there are also classes right next to Austin Fire Department. For Austin Police Department, they are working with ACC and Huston-Tillotson University. **Assistant Chief Johnson** (Austin Police Department) stated the recruiting teams have considered adding classes at ACC.

#### **d. Reimaging Public Safety** (sponsors: Commissioner Gonzales and Ramirez) 5:22pm-5:35pm

##### **Speaker(s):**

-Rey Arellano, Assistant City Manager

Mr. Arellano provided background on the Taskforce. In April 2021, the Taskforce delivered recommendations to the City Council. The Council put together teams to review those recommendations in nine areas. The current budget includes 36.5 million dollars to advance those recommendations. ACM Arellano has been working with APD Executive staff to implement some of those recommendations specifically related to law enforcement. Department leads will each work with Mr. Arellano on a plan to get those recommendations through. Commissioner Lewis asked about a further breakdown of the 36.5 million dollars. Mr. Arellano provided a few examples, including adding community health workers and funding for a guaranteed income pilot project. Commissioner Lewis requested seeing a full breakdown and follow up on other recommendations that were not funded. There were calls for a link to the October 1<sup>st</sup> Memo referenced by Mr. Arellano, as well as quarterly updates. Commissioner Gonzales asked if there was a way to reconnect the community folks with the City with updates and progress on these recommendations.

#### **4. Future Agenda Items** 5:37-5:44pm

An update from the Sex Crimes Dept. regarding recommendations  
Department budget updates

Lexipol – what it is, how it's involved in policy making

Office of Civil Rights – how we're going to work with that office

More understanding around how things at the City of Austin work

**Adjourn @ 5:45pm** Commissioner Lewis motioned to adjourn the meeting and Commissioner Gonzales and Bernhardt seconded the motion. **Vote: Unanimous**

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*For more information on the Public Safety Commission, please contact Robin Henderson, Chief of Staff, Austin Police Department at 512-974-5030.*