



PUBLIC SAFETY COMMISSION
REGULAR CALLED MEETING
MINUTES
MONDAY September 11, 2023

The PUBLIC SAFETY COMMISSION convened in a REGULAR CALLED MEETING on September 11, 2023 at City Hall Building, Boards and Commissions Rm, 301 W. 2nd Street, AUSTIN, TEXAS

Chair Ramirez called the Public Safety Commission Meeting to order at 3:01pm.

Board Members/Commissioners in Attendance:

Nelly Ramirez, Chair	Tim Ruttan
Rebecca Bernhardt, Vice Chair	Kristy Orr
Lauren Pena	David Holmes
Yasmine Smith	

Board Members/Commissioners in Attendance Remotely:

Absent: Commisioners Kiracofe, Hall-Martin, and Nguyen

PUBLIC COMMUNICATION:

- James Russell – Item #5

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- 1. Chair Ramirez** called for the approval of the minutes for August 7, 2023 Regular Meeting. Minutes. **Commissioner Holmes** motioned to vote to approve the minutes and **Commissioner Pena** second. The minutes were approved with a unanimous vote.
Vote for August 7 2023, minutes
Yes: 6 Commissioners Ramirez, Bernhardt, Holmes, Ruttan, Orr, Smith, and Pena
No: Zero
Abstain: Zero
Absent: Commissioners Hall-Martin, Kiracofe, and Nguyen

2. STAFF BRIEFINGS:

Chair Ramirez commented there were no follow-up questions distributed from the August 7th meeting, however she recirculated her request for the Response to Resistance Report for 2021 that she requested in the July 2023 meeting. **Commissioner Bernhardt** commented her request for the amount of overtime that APD sworn officers were covering shifts in the 911 Call Center is still outstanding from the May 2023 follow up questions during the Public Safety Commission Meeting.

3. DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS

3. **Public Safety Quarterly Report** – Austin/Travis County Emergency Medical Services (Sponsors: Commissioners Ramirez, Bernhardt) –
Speaker, Wes Hopkins, Assistant Chief, Austin/Travis County Emergency Medical Services

Assistant Chief Hopkins, presented 3rd quarter data from EMS (Emergency Medical Services) starting with:

Current EMS Department Staffing

Sworn Separations

Sworn Tenure at Separation

Vacancy Rates Sworn & Civilian

EMS Turnover Rate

Opiate Overdoses – EMS Data

Opioid Rescue Kits Distributed by ATCEMS (Austin/Travis County Emergency Medical Services)

There were several questions from the commissioners at the end of the presentation from AC Hopkins:

1. Regarding the bystander and family use of Opioid Rescue Kits, is there where people can pick up the kits? – **from Commissioner Ramirez AC Hopkins** responded, currently there are no standard places where EMS drops off the kits, however we(EMS) are working to roll out a plan where kits could be dropped off.
2. The drug Xylazine, are people taking it intentionally? **Commissioner Bernhardt Assistant Chief Hopkins**, yes we believe these are intentional drug uses.
3. How do we as a city compare nationally to slide #7 (Opiate Overdoses data)? **Commissioner Smith AC Hopkins** – currently we do not have those numbers/comparisons, but we do review the National Overdose map.
4. Is the Don't Use Alone Program available/active? **Commissioner Bernhardt** I will look into this request and respond, currently I don't have any information to share right now on this program. **AC Hopkins**

AC Hopkins, introduced Gary Webber and Stephen White, EMS Division Chief to present the Collaborative Care Communication Center (C4) as an additional part of the EMS Quarterly report. Chief White began with explaining to the board exactly what the C4 does, and the type of staff trained for this unit, and ended with the benefits of C4 to the community, EMS department, and the City of Austin overall

- C4 is staffed with paramedics who provide care and alternative treatment options to low acuity patients that do not require an Emergency Department

- How has C4 changed EMS response?

 - COVID-19 in 2020 caused the introduction of C4

 - 2021 mission focus of low acuity patients

 - 2023 utilization of C4 assets as Primary Response

Chief White explained on C4 Integrates multiple healthcare disciplines to provide treat in place options for patients such as working with social workers, licensed professional counselors and physicians. In addition there are partnerships with other agencies to provide long term solutions and reduces dependency on the 911 system such as:

- Long-term Care admissions

- Wound Care

- Durable Medical Equipment

- HIV, TB treatment programs

These were a few of the ways shared on how C4 reduces the dependency on the 911 system. Information on Collaborative Care outcomes was shared along with their initiatives to become a 24hour service and to obtain outcome data from surveys. Chief White elaborated on how C4 interacts with every part of our community and was instrumental in helping residents during the large scale incidents like, the ice storms and winter events, heat waves, and power failures. C4 was able to assist with getting oxygen to individuals during the power outages. In addition, C4 tracks where they serve the most often and noticed their service decreased in the Dove Springs area, as a result they are hosting a pop-up clinic in Dove Springs to share as much information as possible with this community about the services C4 offers and the cost benefits for them. C4 has directly impacted the ambulance availability, hospital/emergency department room availability and the financial impact for patients. The next steps for C4 is striving for 24 hour operations, further integration with ATCEMS community Health Paramedics, increased goals to include more low acuity calls from 911.

Questions from Commissioners:

- What /why is the skepticism about this program (C4) from City Hall?

Commissioners Bernhardt

- Do you interact with pediatric patients, and do you use any other method of transportations for pediatrics? **Commissioner Ruttan**

What do you need from us (Public Safety Commissioners) to help you gain 24hrs service? **Commissioner Ruttan**

Is there funding in your program to ensure the necessary marketing, public relations efforts can be completed in reaching all communities, and marketed in different languages for all people to learn about the C4 program? **Commissioner Smith**

Did you get any funding to work on producing long term data? **Commissioner Smith**

Chair Ramirez, thanked the EMS Division Chiefs for their presentation on the Collaborative Care Communication Center (C4)

4. **Discussion of Austin Travis County EMS, Austin Fire Department and Austin Police Department's overtime use**

Chair Ramirez called for the presentation on overtime use and Austin Police Department information was presented first by Assistant Chief Mason. APD overtime policy can be found online in APD General Orders (section 949, Secondary Employment. APD is currently using overtime to fill more than 329 officer vacancies and to help with Dispatcher and 911 Call-taker vacancies. The APD operates 24/7 and requires the use of overtime for all three shifts. In addition to the special events across the city, parades, etc..that causes the need for overtime from APD. Currently APD is not requiring sworn or civilian staff to work overtime. APD overtime rates shown to the board for the FY23 and noted the number of sworn personnel that has worked is 1,535 approximately 95% of the sworn workforce. AC Mason presented the dollar amount of overtime pay for the department this year through pay period ending 6-17-2023, broken down by Hours of sworn overtime, sworn overtime expenditures, and civilian overtime expenditures. The overtime limits and the monitoring of overtime for APD within a work week can be found in General Order 949.7.5. Overtime logs for each employee are maintained by the employee's supervisor on a weekly basis. APD is moving forward aggressively with recruiting plans and several results are changes in staffing numbers are slightly starting to increase.

Wes Hopkins presented on how overtime use is used in EMS department. The EMS sworn overtime expenditures since FY 2018 was presented for EMS. The sworn overtime increasing approximately 16% for FY23 along with the pay scale increases. The paid double-time for extra duty at beginning of fiscal year. Currently EMS is not paying double-time for extra duty, that will begin at beginning of fiscal year. AC Hopkins presented:

- Overtime Percent of all Hours Since January 2019
- Civilian Overtime Expenses Since FY2018
- Drivers of Overtime and Extra Duty (Sworn and Civilian)
- Sworn Overtime Hours Expenditures
- Overtime policies and guidelines in details for Field and Communications staff
- Workload and Staffing Changes and Needs with details on communication vacancies and clinical specialist vacancies at Austin-Travis County EMS

Assistant Chief Tom Vocke presented Austin Fire Department's overtime status. Currently Austin Fire Department has mandatory staffing of our trucks, and that drives our department's overtime. Other variables that drive the overtime cost for Austin Fire is weather events like, extreme heat all summer, winter freeze, and or fires. Their primary cost driver for overtime is staffing. In January 2024 another cadet class is schedule to graduate and that will help with the staffing to stay under budget.

Chair Ramirez thanked the departments for their presentations and commented part of the reason the board requested this information on overtime use, is that they were concerned about the overall health of the public safety employees as well. There was much discussion on the data presented and the board had several questions regarding who in each department monitors the overtime worked and makes sure employees are following the guidelines or General Orders of APD. There were several requests from the board for clarity on how the pay is determined, and when vacation time could be used by an employee and still be able to work/be paid for overtime. **Chair Ramirez** requested Austin Fire explain the 24hour shifts and how overtime pay comes into play/pay. **Commissioner Ruttan** commented that EMS appears to be the only department that doesn't have a policy on overtime. **Commissioner Bernhardt** asked what the rate of pay for APD Sgts working overtime in the 911/Call Center. The three Public Safety Departments answered the majority of all questions from the board, and committed to follow up with the responsive information where they did not have immediate answers.

5. Discussion and action on recommendation to City Council regarding use of overtime and unsworn staff for event support

Austin Fire Department presented first to the board with their Special Events overview, and what their role was in assisting with the intake and review of event applications, site safety plans, and also meeting with event organizers. Austin Fire Department determines fire and life safety requirements, coordinates, reviews and ensures the safety plans are implemented and maintained throughout the life of the event. Austin Fire shared the common events list with the board and explained their role at such events, like SXSW, COTA, and Austin FC Soccer. Chief Vocke commented their Special Events office is staffed with nine employees and eight of those nine are sworn. Every event has been 100% staffed by AFD Special Events and all overtimes is reimbursed through the fee schedule.

Assistant Chief Mason-recognized Lt. Ken Murphy and thanked him for an excellent job of putting APD's information regarding Special Events and how APD is involved in various capacities.

-APD follows City Ordinance No 20180510-018 that governs special events in the City of Austin (effective May 21, 2018).

-Special Events are increasing in Austin each year and a Tier was drafted to explained to show the how the Teirs were covered based on the size of the event.

-A list of annual events requiring city resources was presented

-APD Event Staffing

--APD Reserve police returning to work, will be presented to council at the September 19, 2023 meeting for approval. The Reserve police target date goes into effect October 1, 2023, and they are hired to work Special Events only which will be an increase in filling the unfilled positions.

APD Special Event funding was explained on how reimbursement works and when an event is a City Co-sponsored. AC Mason, briefly reviewed the APD fee schedule for FY24, the staffing challenges, and their staffing mitigation efforts, and the staffing restrictions.

EMS, Chief Hopkins shared the role of EMS at Special Events, and what their mission was during these special events. One of their goals is to reduce the impact of event on the overall healthcare system, and to transport of patient to definitive medical care. EMS does have non-sworn assistance during events.

Chair Ramirez-the reason for this requested item was to try and determine what the impact the Special Events have on the budget in all of the Public Safety Departments. Are there any questions from the board?

-How much money is invested in Special Events overtime? **Commissioner Smith** James Russell commented- City of Austin can only charge for the cost of service. Commissioner Smith asked if that was a state law regarding the cost, and James Russell responded yes. **James Russell** commented, he was very much in favor of the police reserve being approved by council in the near future to come on board for the purpose of working Special Events. **Chair Ramirez** introduced the draft recommendation for the City Council to revisit how unsworn staff are used at the Special Events. **Commissioner Smith** offered a friendly amendment to include language “ to mitigate expense to the City of Austin” **Chair Ramirez** motioned to vote on the friendly amendment and Commissioner Smith seconded the motion.

Vote on the Friendly Amendment:

Yes: Unanimous

No: Zero

Abstain: Zero

Vote on Special Events Recommendation was unanimous



**PUBLIC SAFETY COMMISSION
RECOMMENDATION**

Date: September 11, 2023

Subject: Use of unsworn staff for special events
Motioned by: Nelly Paulina Ramírez

Seconded by: Yasmine Smith

Recommendation: The Public Safety Commission recommends

WHEREAS, the City of Austin has a designated Spring Festival Season¹ and is home to several large-scale special events year-round.

WHEREAS, events require a Public Safety Plan that addresses Personal Security, Property Security, Fire Safety, and Medical Services².

WHEREAS, the Austin Police Department, Austin Fire Department and Austin Travis County EMS utilize resources to support these events year-round.

BE IT RECOMMENDED BY THE PUBLIC SAFETY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN THAT:

- The Austin City Council review the viability of maximizing the use of unsworn staff in support of special events for as many functions as is possible to alleviate demand on our public safety agencies year-round and to mitigate expenses for the city

Vote:

For: Commissioners Bernhardt, Holmes, Orr, Peña, Ramírez, Ruttan, and Smith

Absent: Commissioners Kiracofe, Hall-Martin, and Nguyễn

Attest: *Janet Jackson*

¹ https://library.municode.com/tx/austin/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=TIT4BUREPERE_CH4-20SPEV_ART1GEPR_S4-20-1DE

² https://library.municode.com/tx/austin/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=TIT4BUREPERE_CH4-20SPEV_ART4OP_ART5PUSA_S4-20-50PUSAPL

7. Update on Commission for Women and Public Safety Commission Joint Working Group
Chair Ramirez offered a brief update the reason for this working group being formed coming out the final report of PERF Review, this was one of 119 items contained in the project scope. Things are just getting started with working on recommendations in the final review and currently 48% of the items are currently in progress. There is a briefing to council coming up on September 19, 2023.

Future Agenda Items:

- Wildfire updates semiannual report and requested expanded discussions from what other City of Austin departments are contributing to these wildfire prevention efforts. **Ramirez**
- Traffic and Vision Zero –**Ramirez**
- Update & Staffing in the 911 Call Center **Bernhardt and Smith second this item**
-

Commissioner Holmes mentioned the National Night Out (NNO) event on October 3, 2023 in our city and informed the board of the September 17, 2023 as the deadline to sign up to host an NNO event in your neighborhood.

Commissioner Smith asked if a tracking method could be established for all of the questions from the commissioners, and **Chair Ramirez** explained the current process being used for follow up questions.

Chair Ramirez adjourned the meeting at 5:00pm without objection.

The minutes were approved at the October 2, 2023 meeting on Commissioner Ruttan's motion and Commissioner Nguyen's second on a unanimous vote 7-0.