



PUBLIC SAFETY COMMISSION
REGULAR CALLED MEETING
MINUTES
MONDAY, *November 7, 2022*

The PUBLIC SAFETY COMMISSION convened in a REGULAR CALLED MEETING on 7th of November, 2022 at 301 WEST 2nd STREET – Boards and Commissions Room in Austin, Texas

Chair Bernhardt called the Public Safety Commission Meeting to order at 4:07p.m.

Board Members/Commissioners in Attendance:

Rebecca Bernhardt, Chair

Board Members/Commissioners in Attendance Remotely:

Nelly Ramirez, Vice Chair
Michael Sierra-Arevalo
Cory Hall-Martin
Rebecca Gonzales
Rebecca Webber

Absent: Commissioners John Kiracofe and Kathleen Hausenfluck

PUBLIC COMMUNICATION: GENERAL

- Wendy Price Todd, President South River City Citizens Neighborhood Association speaking on St. Edwards University and private fireworks displays

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Approve the minutes of the PUBLIC SAFETY COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING on October 3, 2022. The minutes were approved with a unanimous vote.

Vote:

Yes – Commissioners Webber, Gonzales, Sierra-Arevalo, Hall-Martin, Ramirez, Bernhardt

No- Zero

Abstain – Zero

Absent: Commissioners Kiracofe and Hausenfluck

DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS

2. Austin Fire Department Public Safety 3rd Quarterly Report – Austin Fire Department Chief Rob Vires presented the AFD data:

- Vehicle Collisions (included date for the last 5ys starting with 2018)
- Request for Service Q3 Comparison (slight uptick post COVID)
- Emergency Incident Comparison
- Response Times Comparison (breakdown by Council Districts)
- AFD Maps of all Districts and the calls helping AFD to determine where new Fire Stations will be built
- Auto Aid- the interlocal agreement to help dispatch the closest unit to a 911 call regardless of fire department or jurisdiction (recent changes to the Auto Aid contract to include ESD 2 for Priority 1 Medical calls only and with ESD 12 for Priority 1 Medical calls and vehicle rescues). Also Tellus Hub Software implemented to connect Travis County and Williamson County Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) systems, and some technical issues are being resolved.
- Overdoses Responses
- Investigations – Arson Fires and clearance
- Austin Wildfire Division (focus on preventing dangers fires)
- Office of the Fire Marshal: participation in all Special Events for City of Austin (mainly inspections to maintain fire safety)
- Community Outreach (helping with smoke alarms installations)
- COVID-19 and impact on AFD staff
- AFD sworn separations stats and reasons
- Cadet Hiring and Recruiting Efforts (Passing the Torch program ages 18-35yrs, and Fire Explorers Post 370 ages 14-20yrs)

3. Discussion and possible action on the gun violence prevention efforts by Travis County and the City of Austin

- Assistant Chief Greenwalt, presented on behalf of Austin Police Department

Assistant Chief Greenwalt covered the firearm statistics for 2017-10/2022, 2021 Austin PD Violence Intervention Program and Gun Surrender Operation on 10-25-2022. The stats for were 7,500 violent crimes committed using firearms since 2017 and the number is trending upwards each year.

Data was presented on Gun Theft from Vehicle vs. Residence and on Gun Lost/Stolen by Year citywide. Next the data showed the total guns recovered by year citywide and the goals of the Violence Intervention Program (VIP), which the Travis County DA's office is also engaging in discussion to work with the Violence Intervention Program. AC Greenwalt shared information on the Gun Surrender Program which took place on October 25, 2022 .

Total Guns Surrendered – 11 Firearms

There were questions from the commissioners:

1. Are the guns surrendered researched/investigated to determine if they were used in a crime (Commissioner Sierra-Arevalo)
2. How much funding does APD allocate for the Gun Surrender Program (Commissioner Ramirez)

District Attorney Jose Garza presented to the commission all of the steps his office is taking to have an impact on stopping violent crimes. Since taking office, Jose shared his office indicted over 4,218 violent cases, secured 2583 convictions for violent acts, and has a 94% prosecution reate for all firearm related offenses. He continued with information since taking office accountability, prevention and intervention and focusing on domestic violence were main points for his office to address. In an effort to decrease gun violence, his office held the first ever in the COA Violence prevention summit in June 2022. This summit brought in local law enforcement, elected officials and community advocates and crime victim advocates to the table. In addition they learned from national experts about evidence-based methods for reducing gun violence locally. In closing, Mr. Garza touched on his plans to help with decreasing the gun violence in COA by increasing resources for victims of gun crime, increased resources to stop future gun violence, and to strengthen ability of law—enforcement to solve gun crimes and a resolution with this tree pronged approach was approved by Travis County Commissioners on November 1, 2022.

4. Discussion and possible action Opioid Use Disorder Support Program and/or the Buprenorphine Bridge Program Chief of Staff Teresa Gardner introduced Commander Blake Hardy and Captain Sayers to present on this topic.

The presentation began with a little background on Opioid use in Travis County and how opioid addiction works and it's effects and how it's unique from other substances. The reason Emergency Medical Services is 30% of Opioid users who die of an overdose, interact with EMS in the 12 months prior to their death. Opiates kill more people nationwide than gun violence and car crashes.

The Opioid Use Disorder (OUD) Support Program began in July of 2018. The Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) is significantly more successful than older, more traditional forms of “rehab”

The goals and objectives of the program were presented to the commission and it was noted that Opioid Overdose Rescue Kits are provided to anyone who feels they have a potential to be around a person who may overdose on an opioid.

The Buprenorphine Bridge Program (BBP) was presented. Buprenorphine is a MAT medication, different than Methadone. Buprenorphine does not get the patient “high” and a you cannot overdose on buprenorphine. With this drug use it can eliminate withdrawal symptoms quickly and prevent the patient from overdosing until the patient enters Medicine Assisted Treatment (MAT). The goal of the BBP is treatment for 7 days or less (averaging 4 days right now). The BBP program began at the end of November 2020 and the program grew rapidly due to word of mouth between users. There has been great success with this programs per the people who have benefited from receiving help from the participating in the program.

5. Discussion and possible action on a comparison of first responder salaries and benefits between Austin Police Department, Austin Fire Department and Austin-Travis County Emergency Medical Services

Rebecca Webber introduced this item and mentioned pay quality is an issue and she will be introducing/offering a recommendation on this item.

Assistant Chief Staniszewski presented APD's salary and benefits, Rob Vires presented AFD's salary/benefit information and Teresa Gardner presented ATCEMS salary and benefits. Selena Xie, President, EMS Associations and Jordan Malone, Medic with ATCEMS weighed in with comments on the impact of meeting the cost of living in the City of Austin with the lower salaries for EMS in comparison to other public safety agencies. Jordan shared that he started working for EMS at 20yrs of age, and will have to work 40yrs on a ambulance truck before he can retire. The amount of time he has to work to meet retirement eligibility in comparison to the other public safety retirement plans is longer. Selena commented on the educational requirements and certifications that EMS medics have to meet for employment and the disparities between the public safety agencies.

Commissioner Webber motioned to vote for recommendation and Vice Chair Ramirez seconded. Commissioner Gonzales and Webber to work together with the language of "Whereas" in requesting equal pay, benefits and retirement for the EMS employees.

BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

Public Safety Commission

Recommendation Number: 20221107-005

Motioned by Commissioner Rebecca Webber

Seconded by Commissioner Rebecca Gonzales

Subject: Austin should provide sworn personnel at Austin-Travis County EMS with pay and benefits equal to sworn staff at the Austin Fire Department and the Austin Police Department.

Recommendation: The Public Safety Commission recommends that the City Council direct the City Manager's Office to provide ATCEMS medics with pay equality compared to the other sworn public safety agencies. The City Council should also direct the City Manager's Office to look for ways to compensate their pension so it comes closer to aligning with the other sworn public safety agencies. Finally, the City Council should direct the City Manager's Office to provide pay for paramedic school since it is a promotion requirement.

WHEREAS, EMS continues to be short staffed. EMS is 23% short staffed, APD is 10% short staffed, and AFD is 8% short staffed.

WHEREAS, the difference in salary increases between medics and firefighters and police officers throughout the pay scale. Medics are paid an average of 30% less than police officers and 22% less than firefighters throughout their first ten years.

	<u>ATCEMS</u>	<u>AFD</u>	<u>APD</u>
<u>Salary Year 1</u>	<u>\$51,480</u>	<u>\$60,053</u>	<u>\$62,895</u>
<u>Salary Year 5</u>	<u>\$56,207</u>	<u>\$71,125</u>	<u>\$77,900</u>
<u>Salary Year 10</u>	<u>\$64,373</u>	<u>\$78,414</u>	<u>\$83,351</u>

WHEREAS, medics are required to work up to 44 years before retiring while firefighters and police officers can retire after 25 years of service.

WHEREAS, the police department and fire department pay their sworn personnel for all requirements for promotion and only in the EMS department do medics have to volunteer their time to go to paramedic school which is required for promotion.

WHEREAS, one of the justifications for compensating police and firefighters at a higher rate than EMS, that police and fire fighters face substantially higher risks of injury and death on the job, has never been accurate. Historically, EMS workers die at a rate of 12.7 fatalities per 100,000, police at a rate of 14.2 per 100,000, and firefighters at a rate of 16.5 per 100,000;

WHEREAS Austin paramedics have increased their responsibilities in the last three years through opioid epidemic response; homelessness response; mental health response; advanced clinical practice including whole blood in the field, finger thoracotomies; in addition to COVID19 response.

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

- The Public Safety Commission recommends that the City Council direct the City Manager’s Office to provide ATCEMS medics with pay equality compared to the other sworn public safety agencies. The City

Council should also direct the City Manager’s Office to look for ways to compensate their pension so it comes closer to aligning with the other sworn public safety agencies. Finally, the City Council should direct the City Manager’s Office to provide pay for paramedic school since it is a promotion requirement.

Date of Approval: November 7, 2022

Record of the vote: Unanimous on a 6-0

Attest: _____

(Staff or board member can sign)

Future Agenda Items:

-Follow up fireworks permits (Bernhardt)

Adjourned at 6:55pm

The minutes were deemed approved hearing no edits by Chair Bernhardt at the March 6, 2023 meeting.