



***PUBLIC SAFETY COMMISSION
REGULAR CALLED MEETING
MINUTES
MONDAY November 6, 2023***

The PUBLIC SAFETY COMMISSION convened in a REGULAR CALLED MEETING on Monday, November 6, 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 4:07pm.

Board Members/Commissioners in Attendance:

Nelly Ramirez, Chair
Rebecca Bernhardt, Vice Chair
David Holmes
Pierre Nguyen

Tim Ruttan
Lauren Pena

Board Members/Commissioners in Attendance Remotely:

Yasmine Smith

Absent: Commissioners John Kiracofe, Cory Hall-Martin, and Kristy Orr

PUBLIC COMMUNICATION:

- Carlos Leon – Capital Metro driver complaint and stalking by Austin Police Department Officer

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- 1. Chair Ramirez** called for the approval of the minutes for October 2, 2023 with an amendment showing Commissioner Bernhardt listed as absent. The minutes from the meeting of October 2, 2023 were approved on Commissioner Nguyen's motion, Commissioner Ruttan second on a 7-0 vote. Commissioners Kiracofe, Orr, and Hall-Martin were absent.
- 2. Staff Briefings –**

3. Public Safety Quarterly Report for Austin Fire Department

Speaker – Chief of Staff, Rob Vires

Chief Vires commented the quarterly report from Austin Fire Department (AFD) has changed slightly since the last reporting/presentation. Currently in addition to the quarterly report, AFD is providing/adding a separate handout with detailed information on slides that are not discussed in detail during the live presentation. Chief Vires, reported Austin Fire now has a contract with City of Austin. It is an Arbitration Award, noted this award is not voted on, but an Arbitration Panel provides the award. Changes included in the award are:

- drug testing policies
- some shift changes
- includes changes to the written testing for AFD hiring

After he completed sharing the update on the on the Award he continued by reporting the usual monthly stats including:

- Investigations (Arson fires)
- Deferred Maintenance at Fire Station #1
- Auto Aid
- Special Events
- Community Events
- Vacancies
- Cadet Hiring Process
- Continued Recruiting

Chair Ramirez opened the floor for questions.

-What is the acronym CWPP? (Commissioner Bernhardt)
Response Community Wildfire Protection Plan

- How many homes (total in Austin area) are at high risk from wildfires? (Commissioner **Bernhardt**)
- How much of the 150 acres of prescribed fires in this report were high risk acres? (**Commissioner Bernhardt**)

4. Discussion of Austin Fire Department Austin Police Department and Austin-Travis County EMS language access policies

(Nguyễn, Holmes) 4:30pm-5:10pm

Austin Police Department Chief of Staff, Greenwalt, began the presentation on Language Access Policies within APD explained that the polices for all three Public Safety Departments are very similar and some of the presentations may sound like duplications.

The presentation began with the breakdown from onset of a 911 phone call, through on scene response through the follow up investigation.

- Approximately 10% of call takers are Spanish certified speakers
- For 911 calls in Spanish, the certified Spanish speaker is grab first to take the call.
- The Call Taker can transfer the caller to Spanish speaker regardless if the call is for Austin Police, Austin Fire, or EMS or Mental Health.
- If no Spanish speaking caller taker is available, the call is transferred in/to the language line and we can facilitate the communication regardless of which Public Safety Department is going to be responding.
- For deaf or hard of hearing calls every single station at 911 is going to have that capability to transfer for communication assistance.
- When an urgent call comes in a call taker will get someone to the scene asap, and makes sure the first responder knows a translation is going to be needed. In addition to notifying the responding team via phone conversation, the call is entered into a call text as well.

Non-Urgent Calls:

- If the caller can hold a little bit, we try to get the right person to them on first call
- Currently at APD we have two officers who are certified American Sign Language Interpreters
- Sometimes we can utilize a Note Pad, Electronic Devices or family members or friends to assist with the translation for us(Public Safety Departments).
- Approximately 21% of sworn staff workforce spread across various ranks are certified bilingual translators
- The most common languages outside of Spanish are Arabic, German, Korean, Vietnamese, Russian, Cantonese, and Mandarin.
- Cadets get 40 hours of basic Spanish during training
- Additional 4 hours of class to help on interacting with the deaf and hard of hearing as well as a one-hour traing module.

There were questions from the commissioners at the end of the presentation.

- Are you seeing a need to expand to other communities such as Asian Americans? (Nguyen)
- Is there any need to increased languages translation for Arabic or Chinese?
- Are there any stipend incentives for Austin Fire Department and EMS?
- Has the stipend changed recently during contract negotiations (Ruttan)
- Are the translator calls being tracked (Bernhardt)
- Can you speak a little bit to the critical incidents and how adequate are language resources? (Ramirez)

Austin Police Department was asked to confirm the percentage of Victim Services Staff that speak Spanish. In closing the discussion Chief of Staff Gardner shared, their EMS Public Information Office publishes public information in a variety of languages.

5. Discussion and overview of Victim Services, Collective Sex Crimes Response Model and potential formation of working group (Sponsors: Commissioners Hall-Martin & Holmes)
5:10pm-5:50pm

Presenters for Overview of Victim Services were:

Kachina Clark, Austin Police Department Division Manager of Victim Services

Teresa Morris, APD Victim Services

Roxanna Ortega Hard, Victim Services Supervisor

Kachina Clark kicked off the discussion by sharing a little history of when Victim Services was established in APD since 1981. An organization chart was shared with the board showing the makeup of Victim Services with 52 fulltime employees. Not only does Victim Services service APD, they also support EMS and Austin Fire Department as well when there is a need for their services. APD Victim Services is the largest Victim Services Unit in the country. Kachina turned the discussion over to Tracy Morris to share the role of the Crisis Response unit. Per Tracy Morris, the Crisis Response unit has two main types of calls, domestic violence and sexual assault calls. After responding to calls the Crisis Response unit will also work on resources to assist the victims with moving forward with their lives after their assault and violence.

The second unit within APD Victim Services is Investigative Support Team. Roxanne Orgeta, Supervisor of this unit discussed with the board how

- Cases are assigned the next day/week by the supervisor

- The counselors work to build relationships with the detectives to better understand how to serve the victim.

- Counselors follow up with victims to be sure they got the necessary information and understand the information received.

Kachina Clark shared the department also responds to large scale incidents, and in addition will also do death notifications including providing this service in Williamson County as well. Per Kachina Clark, we are finalizing policy on how we respond to officer involved shootings. The discussion moved to the collective sex crimes updated and the speakers were:

Lt. Chris Lalu, APD Sex Crimes Unit

Jenny Black, Director of Forensic Nursing, Safe Alliance

Hannah Sanko, Sexual Assault Victim in 2006, Lead Plaintiff in case against City of Austin/APD.

Ms. Sanko's case was one that was exceptionally cleared by APD Sex Crimes Unit.

Ms. Sanko shared her personal journey and her reasons for working to try and help to implement the 119 items/recommendations in the Scope of Work from PERF Consulting. Ms. Jenny Black, from SAFE Alliance commented there is a great opportunity here to make big lasting changes in how sexual assault crimes are handled. They will report updates to the Public Safety Commission on a quarterly basis.

Lt. Lula discussed the issues and risks to implementing all of the 119 items/recommendations from PERF. This is a large project and a lot of work and one main issue is Budget is a big piece of them finding the monies and having the funds transferred to Austin Police Department to start/complete the Scope of Work. With the current work that is taking place this building of a Sex Response Module will be one of the largest in the nation.

Hannah Sanko presented on the 4.4million awarded from the law suit and how it was spent over the last several years. Future spending updates will come around December 2023 timeframe.

Chair Ramirez opened the floor for questions from Commissioners:

- Will there be a process where lessons learned from this effort will be shared citywide for any other major transformational change needs? **(Bernhardt)**
- What is the sustainability of this project? **(Ramirez)**
- What is the percentage of male Victim Services Counselors? **(Ramirez)**
- Are there any LGBTQ community on the Victim Services staff? **(Nguyen)**

Future Agenda Items:

Transportation related items **(Nguyen)**

Sobering Center and how First Responders respond to the center **(Smith)**

Chief Medical Officer Update **(Ramirez)**

Status on uploading portal for Austin Police Department? Is there a contingency plan?

Alternative Transportation Companies **(Orr)**

What is the policy on arrest of civilian and sworn APD employees in terms of their employment with APD? **(Bernhardt)**

First Trauma Recovery Center Update/status **(Nguyen)**

ADJOURNED @ 6:02PM

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS – *5:50pm-6:00pm*

ADJOURNMENT

DRAFT