

Oversight Committee Meeting Minutes from August 25th, 2020

Committee Members Present: P. Bradley, M. Defett, M. Ecton, T. Griffith, Chair M. Joseph, M. King, C. Maragaño, Chair B. McClain, K. Moss, R. Robinson, P. Saunders, D. Vauls, J. White, T. Wahlrab

Staff Present: J. Davis, M. Gehres, M. Schaller, L. VanderKaay

Chair McClain called the meeting to order at 5:01pm. There were no objections to the minutes from the previous meeting, and there were no additional introductions from committee members.

Chair McClain asked if any committee members had general comments. M. King requested everyone keep their cameras on to identify themselves, as this is a complex topic and since we are not in the same room together, it is critical to see everyone for the flow of meetings. C. Maragaño seconded this sentiment, and also requested that everyone's names be accurately entered under their pictures. Chair McClain confirmed both these sentiments and requested that if someone is unable to turn on their camera, and they wish to make a comment or have a question, that they should write and send remarks to the committee. He expressed his appreciation for both M. King and C. Maragano.

Chair Joseph welcomed the committee members and reflected that the flexibility in setting meetings at two different monthly times might not be the best option, as there were still committee members who were unable to make it despite the previously stated availability. He restated from the agenda that we would be discussing criteria for which an improved complaint system should follow as well as possible solutions. He opened it up to the committee for discussion what possible criteria should frame the process.

C. Maragaño said that a centralized database for complaints, as well as a phone number for people to call to file complaints should be included. She also mentioned that transparency is important, and that citizens should be able to see the status of their complaint.

P. Bradley agreed, and that competency and transparency should both be criteria. Citizens should be taken seriously, that an independent investigation was necessary, and that citizens need to know they are heard. He also said that there should be community confidence in the process, recommended that increasing trust and that reliable investigations are important.

R. Robinson said that a user-friendly system, in which people of all backgrounds & abilities can use it is critical, and mentioned that in situations like this, the Air Force aims to write so an 8th grader will understand. He that a question-based format might be easier and have a space for comments at the end. He said that people who are frustrated with systems might feel so because the system doesn't always work for everyone. He added that to increase access, we could use technology to open multiple points of entry in to a single system.

Chair Joseph and P. Saunders agreed, that a variety of entry points into a complaint system would be useful.

T. Wahlrab said that in his experience, making sure that responses to complaints are personable and respectful is important. This includes active listening & reflecting to hear not just what citizens say, but the things unsaid. People staffing a potential complaint line should be open and able to easily have empathetic conversations with the person making the complaint.

R. Robinson related a personal experience in his work and used it as a metaphor to describe that in his opinion, a small percentage of officers engage in bad behavior, and the key is to find out how best to remove those officers from the system. He urged a narrow focus on the real problem.

P. Bradley said that a process to engage with people should be rooted in systemic, structural change, such as a creation of a system that is independent, fair and honest is the key. He said that it wouldn't matter if the customer service was good if people do not trust the structure.

M. Deffet reaffirmed that having a process that is transparent is key, including clear access to what the complaints are, who they are against, etc. access to the entire community. Having the complainant have access is one thing, but he emphasized the whole community should have access to such information.

M. King said that there should be a focus on making the system not only understandable to citizens, but also make it clear that they have a stake in police operations. Making this clear empowers the community and sets up communities for success.

D. Vauls reaffirmed that transparency is key. The citizens have to have confidence in the whole process and getting results. Positive word of mouth of people from who have had results is the most important way to make the process successful. He said that the committee was off and running in the right direction, but it is critical to build confidence in the system.

T. Wahlrab confirmed an interest in how to make the Citizen Appeals' Board (which the City Commission appoints) more equitable and representative. He suggested this might include more guidelines regarding turnover/term of service.

C. Maragaño wanted to know the numbers of complaints that were made through PSB (Professional Standards Bureau).

Chair Joseph said that so far, we have not been able to parse out citizen-based complaints from all those that are filed through PSB. There are a variety of complaints that come from different sources, as well as being automatically generated. This is different than people who use the Citizen's Appeal Board, and all of those complaints are currently lumped together into the same database.

P. Saunders said that all complaints go into the IA Pro System which stores information. It does not get transferred for it get into IA Pro after the complaint is received. He said that an ideal system would be an entry-into whatever system it would be-that goes directly into a database, so that the system is not exclusively people-dependent.

C. Maragaño asked if there are some complaints that do not get resolved.

P. Saunders replied that all complaints entered into the system are resolved one way or another.

P. Bradley suggested a new criteria “Does this system offer citizens direct input into the complaint system” so they don’t have to go through others to submit a complaint.

Chair Joseph then walked through the criteria that city staff had previously brainstormed and made it clear that the new criteria and solutions offered today as feedback from the committee would be added into the document, and some criteria would be consolidated. There were no dissentions to the criteria.

Chair Joseph then moved onto possible solutions to improve the complaints process and opened it up to the research committee members had done.

P. Bradley shared through his research, as well as common changes in the complaint process nationwide, that cities like San Francisco and Newark, NJ focus on independent systems. For a community to be confident in the system, there were three key facets: that not all the board was elected by the Commission (but also by other organizations) that they had subpoena power, and that the structure was consistent to establish sustainability and trust.

Chair Joseph reminded the committee that we were discussing the complaint filing and investigation part of the process, not yet the Citizen’s Appeal Board itself, which will happen in a month

M. Schaller mentioned a system in use in Detroit in their demolition process online that regularly updates citizen on a property’s status, and a similar system could be used for citizens to see their complaint.

M. Deffet asked how long data was kept. He said that he believed the FOP contract said 2 years was the minimum amount of time that data was kept and then it could be destroyed. He emphasized that it should be kept longer.

Chair Joseph stated that the City has policies in place for data retention times, and the team should confirm what the current status is, and look to change these policies in accordance with our solutions

M. King asked to confirm that we were in the complaint review part of the process. Chairman Joseph confirmed that we were.

Chair Joseph once again went over the criteria, said that staff would do rewrites to incorporate notes, and asked for additional comments. The follow-up tasks are as listed below.

Chair McClain then adjourned the meeting at 6:27pm.

Follow-up Tasks:

1. Before the next meeting, all Working Group members should ask three to five people “who or where they would go to if they wanted to file a complaint against the Dayton Police.”
2. All members should review the alternatives and solutions discussed today and come prepared to rank them, as a group, according to the criteria discussed. An updated list of criteria and some potential solutions will be sent out to all.

Next Meeting: September 11, 2020 10:30am to noon