

Police Accountability Board Meeting

September 15, 2022

Members present were:

Quincy Shockley
Gregory Tate
John Simms III
Mary Burgess
Joe Theobald
Carol Frazier
Jerred Johnson

Staff:

Roscoe Leslie, County Attorney
Faith Coleman, Office Assistant V

Law Enforcement:

Captain James Grady, Ocean City Police Department
Captain Mike Colbert, Ocean City Police Department
Captain Shawn Jones, Ocean City Police Department
Chief Ross Buzzuro, Ocean City Police Department
Captain Shawn Jones, Ocean City Police Department
Chief Arnold Downing, Berlin Police Department
Chief Arthur Hancock, Pocomoke Police Department
Captain Brian Craven, Pocomoke Police Department
Chief Andy McGee, Snow Hill Police Department
Corporal Nate Passwaters, Worcester County Sheriff's Office
Chief Deputy, Doug Dods, Worcester County Sheriff's Office
Sheriff Matt Crisafulli, Worcester County Sheriff's Office
Kris Heiser, State's Attorney

County Attorney Roscoe Leslie, began the meeting with introductions of the Board Members and asked them to share their interest in serving on the Police Accountability Board. Members expressed an interest in serving to promote fairness for the citizens as well as the officers and agencies, to promote equality, and to give back to their community. In addition, members expressed a willingness to keep an open mind while serving on the board.

Mr. Leslie advised that the new boards are required by recent legislation and summarized the duties of the Police Accountability Board, the Charging Committee and the Trial Board. Each member of the board and law enforcement was provided a copy of Mr. Leslie's summary.

The Police Accountability Board will be tasked with:

- holding quarterly meetings with law enforcement agency representatives to suggest improvements in matters of policing

- reporting annually to the Worcester County Commissioners
- receiving complaints of police misconduct from outside citizens
- appointing two members to the PAB Charging Committee

Mr. Leslie reminded board members that the Charging Committee will be subject to an extensive background check and will be required to attend a 5-day, 8-hours per day training class. After a brief discussion and with a motion from Greg Tate, seconded by Carol Frazier, the board unanimously nominated Dr. Mark Bowen as a member of the Charging Committee.

Upon a motion by Joe Theobald and a second by Greg Tate, the board unanimously nominated John Simms, III as their second selection for the Charging committee, with Lee McClafin as an alternate.

Discussion with Law Enforcement:

- Chief Ross with Ocean City Police Department stated that he is confident his department will work well with the Police Accountability Board. He feels very fortunate with the officers that he has and has had very few disciplinary issues. The issues that he has had were easily handled with additional training. The mandated body cameras have been a great tool in addressing any complaints that he has received.
- Chief Downing with Berlin Police department advised that training is a vital tool within his department. He likes to handle complaints before they escalate into a bigger problem. Chief Downing expressed concern that officers will be reluctant to move on an issue for fear of this new process. He is optimistic about the new board and will share his positivity with his officers.
- Chief Hancock with Pocumoke City Police Department advised he has mixed feelings with all the new mandates. He fears it will be a long process for discipline. While he has very few citizen complaints he has had success in resolving them. Chief Hancock stated that he is keeping an open mind and is more than willing to do his part to work with the board.
- Chief McGee with Snow Hill Police Department advised that he is still trying to absorb the new process. He stated his biggest issue in Snow Hill is recruitment. It is hard to get anyone that wants to be a police officer with all the new mandates. Small towns struggle with the mandates due to the funding issues. He also advised that training is a priority and expressed his willingness to work with the Board.
- Sheriff Crisafulli advised that he is looking forward to working with the Board. His department has grown from just civil process and security for the courts to road patrol, SWAT, Criminal Enforcement Team, to providing school security. He feels like the extensive background checks weed out potential officers that would be controversial. Worcester County is fortunate to have an excellent working relationship with all of the municipalities and that he feels the County as a whole has excellent citizen support. Training is the key to good officers.
- State's Attorney Kris Heiser, stated that she feels Worcester County and Municipal agencies have a great group of officers. She feels it is important to be pro-active in prosecution and that all agencies work well together and hold each other accountable. Ms. Heiser advised that she would just encourage the County to continue to give adequate staffing, funding and training.

PAB member Greg Tate stated that he feels the Police Accountability Board and law enforcement agencies are here to help and advise each other. Tate stated that he recognizes the struggle of policing in these difficult times and feels fortunate that we do not have the major issues that larger cities have. He also feels confident that the members of the board and the agencies will willingly work together.

Joe Theobald stated that he feels comfortable with the board members in place to carry out the new mandates. He wants officers and citizens to know he will have a clear lense and be fair with any issues brought before him and the board.

All members expressed their main objectives as a board are to be fair and to work with the agencies on any issues that arise.

The Board set October 20, 2022 at 2:00 P.M. as their next meeting date.

With a motion from Joe Theobald, and a second from Jerred Johnson, the Board unanimously agreed to adjourn.

APPROVED