

A Police Advisory Board meeting was held on the above date at the MPD Headquarters and via Zoom conference call, with the following members in attendance: Salahudin Bin-Yusif (in person), Debbie Harrington (in person), Billy Warrick (in person), Emy Diaz, Linda LaRue, Joyce Kidd (in person), Jason Hunt, Jerry Kissel (in person), Jacqueline Burditt (in person), and Wanda Dean. Police Chief Bill Texter, Capt. Ron Davis and Police Union Representative Cpl. Michael Hilliard were also in attendance. The meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m. by Chairman Bin-Yusif.

**MINUTES APPROVED:** It was moved by Jerry Kissel and seconded by Debbie Harrington to approve the minutes from the December meeting and move forward with the proposed agenda. Motion carried unanimously.

**CHAIR’S REPORT:**

Chair Salahudin Bin-Yusif thanked everyone for attending the meeting and said it was great to be meeting in person again, as several members gathered at the Middletown Police Station for the first meeting since COVID pandemic. There were some members utilizing the hybrid format of the meeting via Zoom as well.

Bin-Yusif said the group’s charge is to continue to work on its focus, as this is a great opportunity to share our ideas to work with the community and gather ideas to help the Middletown Police Department.

“Let’s work to not only be present at the meetings, but also to do the work after and between the meetings. And that’s really important. The work that we do doesn’t just end in an hour and a half. We have to do research. We have to come up with ideas, come up with ways to improve our police department and our community,” he said.

**COMMUNITY MEETINGS:**

Bin-Yusif said he was just at a community meeting where MSgt. Saunders and Cpl. West met in person with several communities at the new library (and also on Zoom) to discuss issues in the area. He said there were about 25 people in person and 40 people on Zoom. He said it was a great meeting, with a lot of discussion and rapport with the community.

He said he would really like to host meetings like this as the Police Advisory Board. He said the board meeting is more of a “report out to the community and brainstorming meeting” and he’d like to have an open community session where people could come out to discuss whatever they want.

Joyce Kidd said a public meeting to discuss the results of the upcoming survey would be a great idea.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

**A. Police Report Evaluation Committee**

No report.

## **B. Community Connections Committee**

Jason Hunt reported there have been several followers joining the MPAB Twitter, Facebook and Instagram social media pages. He reminded the group that he will accept any flyers from the community to help promote any events happening to engage the community.

## **C. Research Committee**

Wanda Dean said doesn't have a report this month, but is looking forward to hear what Kristen Krenzer has to say about the survey she has been working on, utilizing the questions submitted by the research committee.

### **SURVEY UPDATE:**

Krenzer reported that she recently shared the submitted questions with the Mayor & Council before it can be sent out and she wanted to share their concerns. She said the concerns weren't about the questions themselves, but about how the survey was going to be implemented.

She said the first concern was about how we could make sure the surveys were targeted to only Town of Middletown incorporated residents. She said it was discussed to only put the survey on the Town of Middletown website, the MPD website and MPAB social media sites and Middletown HOAs. She asked how the board would feel about adding wording ahead of the survey stating: Attention, Town of Middletown residents, we want to hear from you! She said she also added Question #1 to be: "In what Middletown neighborhood do you live?"

Jacqueline Burditt asked how residents who live in the downtown area and not in a particular neighborhood, could respond to that? Krenzer suggested putting a "Downtown" option – perhaps even listing all of the neighborhoods in a drop-down menu. The committee seemed to like that idea, so if a certain number of concerns were coming from a certain neighborhood, that would be evident right away.

Bin-Yusif said he thought there should also be a place for Middletown business owners to be able to chime in on the survey.

Krenzer also shared Mayor & Council's concern about how to limit bias on the survey, meaning, for example, how can we weed out the surveys from those who just don't like police in general; or who have had many interactions with police of their own accord, and want to flood the survey with negative comments.

Krenzer said she had the idea to put a question toward the top of the survey, asking if the surveyor has had "police contact in the past five years." A drop-down menu can be added following that with the questions 1. How many times? Also, nature of the call (speeding ticket, traffic accident, neighborhood complaint, other).

The board seemed to like adding some questions about the surveyor's "real-time" police contact in the survey.

Wanda Dean said the MPAB has to know going into this that there is going to be some bias, because that's just how the world is today. "We are just going to have to take each response on its own merit," she said, adding the MPAB should be able to decipher, based upon their sincerity and openness of answers to the questions, whether or not there is bias. "We should be expecting that, we'd be foolish not to," she said.

She added that a question should even be added regarding recruitment – perhaps ask them if they, or someone they know, want to join the MPD. Chief Texter agreed that would be a great way to end the survey.

Billy Warrick said he didn't understand why the MPAB is doing this survey. He said if the community was upset, or really had problems with the MPD, they would be coming out to meetings and expressing their concerns. "We wouldn't need to be going out asking them on surveys, if something was really wrong, we would know," he said.

Dean said she would like to add a place on the survey to allow the resident to ask for followup if they would like to be contacted by MPD for whatever situation they are upset about and also make sure the MPAB's meeting information is put on the survey for residents to attend meetings if they want to get involved.

Krenzer said she would send out the list of questions and wording to the MPAB so it can be "red-lined" with suggestions, and further discussion can be had next month.

## **POLICE CHIEF REPORT**

Chief Bill Texter gave the Police Report that was delivered at the January 2 meeting of the Mayor and Council from data that occurred in the month of December. The following questions were asked following the report:

Joyce Kidd said it came up at a community meeting she attended, that a resident came to the Police Station over the weekend and with no one at the front desk, they didn't know how to get help. She said she saw the phone located in the vestibule area of the station when she arrived at the meeting tonight, but she wondered if a sign could be added at the front door about the call box, so someone would be directed to use the phone. Chief Texter said that is a great idea and he would look into it.

Kidd also said it has come up that the neighborhood parks, specifically in Willow Grove Mill, are too dark and could lights be added to the park? Krenzer said none of the Town's parks are lighted because studies have shown that if lights are added to parks, it will actually draw teenagers and young adults to use the parks at night and that may lead to more issues, also with lights shining into residents' homes. However, she said she will let Mayor & Council know this concern has been raised again, particularly in Willow Grove Mill's playgrounds.

Chief Texter also announced the Citizens Police Academy has concluded and he thanked Joyce Kidd and Salahudin Bin-Yusif for being graduates of this class. He said the MPD is definitely going to have one in 2023, perhaps in spring, but most likely in the fall after MSgt. Saunders concludes the boys and girls youth academies.

Krenzer announced that MSgt. Saunders said he is also planning to do “National Night Out” this year as well, so the MPAB should be prepared to get involved and help bring out the community to the event.

Chief Texter said the MPD recently pinned 30 student safety patrol officers at the Bunker Hill Elementary. He said he loves being able to do community events like that, especially kids, so they can see the positive side to policing, and may be future recruits.

#### UPDATE ON FOOD LION:

Chief Texter said at last month’s meeting, it was brought up that Food Lion employees have stated that they don’t call MPD because they take too long to get there. He said he would come back with data from the store to see what’s going on there.

He said there were 25 calls for service to Food Lion last year. He said it was almost dead even between the number of “in progress” and “not in progress” calls.

He said the average time for an “in progress” call was 3 minutes; and average time for “not in progress” call was 8 minutes. He said these are pretty good times for response. He said there were two calls that seemed exceptionally long and he is digging into the background for what happened during those times, what was going on in Town at the same time?

He said he also sent MSgt. Saunders to the store to talk to management there. He said Sarge found a couple of things: 1. They definitely have room for improvement internally because they need to have a discussion on how to call the police based on company policies. He said they were “all over the place” as to when a call to police would be warranted inside the business. 2. One of the employees stated they don’t like to call police because they don’t like having to answer all of the questions from 9-1-1 when they call. Overall, the followup was positive and they will continue to work on things with them.

**OTHER GOOD NEWS:** Chief Texter announced two hires have been made for officers to enter the next Delaware State Police Academy at the end of March. One officer will be graduating on March 9 so we are really excited about having some new officers coming on board, he said.

He also announced that the MPD is going to be going into an ongoing hiring strategy, where potential recruits will be able to take an online test and application, and if they pass those tests, they can begin the physical fitness testing and other evaluations, regardless of whether or not there is an upcoming academy.

He said if they have recruits who pass everything and need to wait for an academy, they can come on board at the police station as a “cadet” and help out and work on memorizing the Code and doing training they will need to help get them through the academy.

**TRAX:** Joyce Kidd commended the department on getting a grant for the Trax scooters. She said the community is really going to love seeing them around Town. Chief agreed and said the department has 6 of the scooters and they are training on them now and the community will see them out and about this spring and summer.

## **NEW BUSINESS / BRAINSTORMING**

Jerry Kissel asked if there are ways we could back the police department and show support. He said he has seen some communities get blue lights for their front porch to show support.

Chief Texter said National Police Week is in May, and May 15 is a special bike ride to honor police officers who were killed in the line of duty. He said Sgt. Julia Fabbroni has done this ride for several years and will be doing it again this year, if the MPAB would like to help work on something regarding that fundraiser. He said the ride starts up in northern NCC and travels all through Delaware and into Washington, D.C., to raise money for survivors of those who have fallen.

Billy Warrick asked if the MPD and its lodge would consider doing a Beef & Beer perhaps to continue to benefit Sgt. Mark Miller? Cpl. Hilliard said beef and beers are very expensive at the front to purchase all of the goods and they also take a lot of manpower and it's tough with police officers' schedules to be able to pull off a successful event. He said they are considering other fundraisers such as a 5K, which could have a company help manage the details.

Jason Hunt told the group about "Double Good Popcorn" fundraiser where a lot of funds can be raised in just a few days. He said people love this popcorn and the company gives most of the proceeds to whatever cause is behind it. Hilliard thanked Hunt for the idea.

**NEXT MEETING:** February 27, 2023