

A Police Advisory Board meeting was held on the above date live and via Zoom conference call, with the following members in attendance: Salahudin Bin-Yusif, Jacqueline Burditt, John Carwell, Wanda Dean, Felicita “Emy” Diaz, Justin Faulkner, J. Michael Harpe, Jason Hunt, Joyce Kidd, Charles “Billy” Warrick and Yvette Santiago. Middletown Police Chief Robert Kracyla and FOP Lodge #20 representative Michael Hilliard were also in attendance.

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by acting moderator Bin-Yusif. The executive board positions will be created at a later date.

Bin-Yusif said the board’s main goals for the evening were to continue to edit and discuss some the mission statements and guidelines for the board to follow during its meetings. He reminded the members of the group to stay vigilant during this pandemic of Covid-19 and to stay safe and to do all of the things that are best to do to keep safe.

As the board began working on the remaining paragraphs of the bylaws document, the issue of residency was discussed. Bin-Yusif said when the idea of the PAB was discussed with the Mayor and Council, it was discussed that there could be “waivers” of Town residency allowed for business people, members of the clergy and perhaps others, like members of fraternities and sororities.

Justin Faulkner said he believed it was fair to have a few board members on the initial board as its charter members be non-residents, but from this point forward, they should probably be residents. He said since the Town of Middletown Police Department only provides services for residents, it seems logical that the board should only include residents. He said in a Town with nearly 23,000 residents, it seems as though we could find business owners, clergy and fraternity/sorority members who are also residents of Middletown, to serve on the board. It was decided that all of the initial board members, no matter their residency, would be grandfathered on the board for their number of terms. But when their seats are to be filled for any reason, it should be by someone in town limits.

Wanda Dean said she wanted to explain the reason for the residency waiver for the original board is because there were members on the NAACP’s Criminal Justice Reform Committee, which initiated the creation of the PAB and wanted representation on the PAB. Therefore, residency is waived as a founding member for several members.

Bin-Yusif said this residency question was already coming into play, as he received resignation letters from Bishop Jeffrey Broughton and Andy Nhan. Broughton cited school

obligations and Nhan said he would be moving outside of Town. Bin-Yusif said he believed the current sitting board would be charged with selecting new members for both members.

However, Billy Warrick said he was under the understanding that the Mayor and Council would continue to fill the seats they appointed. Bin-Yusif said he thought the Mayor had handed over all decisions to the board to make from this point forward. Bin-Yusif said he would contact the Mayor to clarify this matter.

{Mayor Branner was contacted by Bin-Yusif and they discussed that the Mayor and Council would each be responsible for replacing their appointees whenever one stepped down for any reason. The Board would appoint the other 8 members.}

The board then discussed what would happen if members missed an abundance of meetings. The proposed guideline was for missing 3 or more consecutive meetings and no more than 4 in a calendar year. The board decided not to use the term “excused” absence because you’re either in attendance or you’re not. The calendar year starts from the date the member is appointed.

There was extensive discussion about one of the items regarding the responsibilities of the PAB. (#4. The PAB may request access to review documents of individual citizen complaints against individual officers and be made aware of any officer involved in the use and complaint of excessive force. The board should also be made aware of any criminal activity charged against an MPD Officer as well as any Officer with a history of any of the above actions on his or her record.)

Warrick said he didn’t think the board would have access to this information due to the Policeman’s Bill of Rights. To answer this question, Chief Kracyla recommended the board members read Title 11, Chapter 92 in the Delaware Code. He said this chapter explains what information can be given out regarding this issue.

#6 on the PAB list included “Review Police Academy, and in-service training as required to make recommendations if as necessary.” Chief Kracyla explained that the police academies are overseen by the COPT (Council on Police Training) and that even the police department has no say over the academies. He said the PAB, if they felt strongly enough about something they wanted to see in the training, could appeal to the COPT and/or the General Assembly.

Dean said she would also like to see the PAB review the specialized training each officer receives. Chief Kracyla said officers request their own training based on their interests.

Dean said she thinks if extra training is warranted by something happening in the community, the Board should be able to recommend such training.

John Carwell agreed with Dean. He said he believes we can sit down each month at this meeting and go over data of crime statistics with the Chief and make this a collaborative effort – not micro-managing the department, but working together.

It was requested that the police report is emailed to the board each month. Bin-Yusif said he would start sending those out each month so the data can be discussed.

He also said he would like to set up a quick phone call the week before each meeting to help establish the agenda. He said next month he will send out a draft agenda, then set up a conference call for everyone to call in and contribute to the items on the agenda.

To close the meeting, Chief Kracyla and Officer Hilliard gave updates on some key things happening at the police department like “No Shave November” where they are raising funds for the MOT Senior Center this year.

Joyce Kidd asked how the recent hiring process went to fill a couple of officer positions. Chief Kracyla said there were no applicants, unfortunately.

Warrick said the department might want to think about changing the requirements necessary to become a Middletown Police Officer because they might be too stringent in this day and age. He said the Town requires too much education and the fact that the officers can never have smoked marijuana is awfully strict.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:52 p.m.

The next meeting will be held on Monday, Dec. 21.