

A Police Advisory Board meeting was held on the above date via Zoom conference call, with the following members in attendance: Salahudin Bin-Yusif, Debbie Harrington, Billy Warrick, Emy Diaz, Michael Harpe, Linda LaRue, Joyce Kidd, Jason Hunt, Jerry Kissel, Jacqueline Burditt, and Wanda Dean. Police Chief Bill Texter and Police Union Representative Cpl. Michael Hilliard were also in attendance. The meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m. by Chairman Bin-Yusif.

**MINUTES APPROVED:** It was moved by Wanda Dean and seconded by Linda LaRue to approve the minutes from the November meeting. Motion carried unanimously. It was also moved by Debbie Harrington and seconded by Michael Harpe to accept and move forward with the proposed agenda. Motion carried unanimously.

**CHAIR AMENDS MINUTES:**

In last month's MPAB minutes, Chairman Bin-Yusif said he heard Vice-Mayor Jim Reynolds question at the November meeting whether or not there should "even be an MPAB." When Vice-Mayor Reynolds read the minutes from the meeting, he told Chair Bin-Yusif at the Dec. 5 meeting of the Mayor & Council during the MPAB report, that he didn't remember saying that at all and wanted Bin-Yusif to come into the office to listen to the meeting discussion again, so they could hear it together and have a discussion about it.

Bin-Yusif said he did in fact go to the Town Hall and listened to the tapes with Mr. Reynolds. He said he listened to it several times and he misunderstood that Mr. Reynolds was questioning discussions that had been going on during the MPAB meetings about how and why the MPAB was formed.

"I now understand his intention was not to discuss whether or not there should be an MPAB, but that it had come up several times over our two years about how and why it started, and I misunderstood that," Bin-Yusif said, adding he had a lengthy discussion with Mr. Reynolds and he indeed believes the MPAB is valuable.

**MEETING IN-PERSON AGAIN?**

Chair Bin-Yusif discussed starting to have in-person meetings again, perhaps with a hybrid version at first to allow for the few people who are not comfortable with attending in-person meetings yet. Because he knows the police conference room is already set up with the hybrid functions used for the Citizens Police Academy, he wondered if we could use the same technology for the MPAB meetings.

Five of the members (Bin-Yusif, Burditt, Kissel, Kidd and Diaz) on the call said they would be there in-person if the meetings were opened back up. Joyce Kidd asked if the police department had been asked if the conference room is available on the third Monday? Bin-Yusif said he did not ask yet, as he wanted to gauge the attendance of the group first. He said he will discuss this idea with Mayor & Council and the MPD and this hybrid meeting could happen as soon as the January meeting.

It was moved by Kidd and seconded by Harrington to go into a hybrid format for the next three meetings at the MPD, pending the OK by Chief Texter on the status of the room. Motion carried unanimously.

## **QUORUM SIZE CHANGE IN BYLAWS**

Chair Bin-Yusif said the MPAB's bylaws currently call for a quorum of 2/3 of the group, which is 10 people. He said he would like to temporarily change the bylaws to be 8 people. Debbie Harrington said we should change the bylaws to be half, plus one member, which would be 8 from now on since we have 15 members.

Bin-Yusif said one of the concerns when we put the board together was that we wanted the two-thirds quorum because it would force more members to attend the meetings and be a part of the valuable discussion. Wanda Dean agreed, stating the two-thirds vote is important because she doesn't want people to have an out, thinking they don't need to attend the meetings.

Jerry Kissel mentioned that the quorum needs to be an odd number, otherwise you will have a tie in the voting and the chairman will need to have to break it, so it probably needs to be nine members, he suggested. Chair Bin-Yusif agreed, stating the group has consistently had 9 members over its two years of meetings, so it would be fine.

It was moved by Michael Harpe to change the bylaws to have a quorum size of 9 members, seconded by Wanda Dean. Motion carried 10-1. (Kissel, nay)

## **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 she has been researching the size of police departments across the US, based on what they say is a reasonable number based on population. She said the number she comes up with when inputting the data, one police officer per every 500 citizens, is 66. She asked Chief Texter if he has a number in mind.

Chief Texter said there are a lot of different formulas out there and guidelines that many communities don't follow. There are a lot of factors, like call volume, that factor into the number.

But, he said he hates to keep coming back to the same mantra, but the MPAB can set any number, Mayor & Council could set any number, but we can't fill the spots anyway. And again, this is a national issue affecting all police departments. In fact, he said both the New Castle County and Delaware State Police academies kicking off right now are the smallest in state history. He is concerned this could become a national crisis if things don't start to turn around.

He said his main focus is spent constantly on finding members to join the police force. The focus in the next year is going to be recruitment because we need people to walk through the door before we can talk about increasing the department numbers.

Bin-Yusif said he believes the MPAB would still like to have a number to strive toward, as a goal, to help the MPD get to the staffing level it needs to be, so he would like to continue this discussion in future meetings about the national data and how we can find an accurate number for Middletown PD, working together with the Chief and staff.

#### **D. Strategic Planning Committee**

Committee Chair Jerry Kissel said the first steps to strategic planning is to decide the scope of projects the board wants to recommend to the Mayor and Council.

He said he created a form to track the strategic plans that includes the project, the scope of the project (what's involved), if any alternatives were evaluated, the justification for the project (data and projected costs to the Town and taxpayers) and the final recommendation. Kissel said the members of the board should fill out the form based on their thoughts of projects that are most important to them. Once the forms are submitted, the group can decide on the priority projects and what should be addressed foremost and move on from there.

Bin-Yusif said he will send out the form to the board so this process can begin ASAP.

#### **POLICE CHIEF REPORT**

Chief Bill Texter gave the Police Report that was delivered at the December 5 meeting of the Mayor and Council from data that occurred in the month of November. The following questions were asked following the report:

Debbie Harrington said she was talking to a neighbor about a group of young people who were acting out in Food Lion and when she asked the Food Lion employee why they didn't call the police about it. She said the neighbor said the employee told her that they don't call the police because they don't respond, and if they do, it takes forever.

Chief Texter said he finds that to be inaccurate. He said he could run a report about the number of times the MPD responds to the Food Lion, including the response times. He finds this statement to be defamatory. He said it could be possible that the Food Lion has a policy about when they call the police. He said some stores have to vet their police calls through their corporate office so there are oftentimes late reporting from them.

Harrington said she understands that one report like this does not make it true, but she found it concerning that one person in the community is hearing this and making this statement to others.

Jason Hunt, owner of Elite Feet, said he has been a business owner in Middletown for 8 years and the few times the police department have been called to his business or his colleagues' businesses, they have been there extremely fast. He said businesses like the Food Lion need to document the response times and bring it to the attention of the MPD, instead of just stating they don't call anymore.

Bin-Yusif said this discussion is exactly what the MPAB is for and it sounds like things are moving forward as the Chief is going to send MSgt. Saunders to Food Lion to discuss the relationship there and look at the data about calls and reports there and response times. He said this discussion will continue next month.

#### **OLD BUSINESS:**

##### **CITIZENS POLICE ACADEMY**

Two board members (Bin-Yusif and Joyce Kidd) attended this academy and other members have attended prior academies.

Some of the topics covered at this year's academy included "Trauma to Wellness" about how police officers go from case-to-case including high-level events like shootings or other violent situations, then they are called to a store where some teenagers are goofing off – the changing of adrenaline in situations for police was very interesting, he said.

The academy also had a visit from the Delaware State Police Trooper 4 helicopter and how drones are used by police. They learned about police-involved shootings, had a drunk driving simulator event, where Bin-Yusif admitted he “ran into a house,” so he is going to make sure he’s never in a real-life situation like that.

They also had a lesson in the 911 Center, so they could understand how the police calls are handled and how they rank them in order of severity as they come into the call center.

The most interesting portion for Bin-Yusif was the postal police, because he never knew this type of police department existed. This department acts as FBI agents and handle anything that goes through the mail and have police officers who handle these cases.

Joyce Kidd said there were several other instructors who came into the academy including a group that showed them how to clean up a crime scene, which was very graphic but interesting, she said.

### **FINAL QUESTIONS?**

An attendee on the Zoom call (Ms. Scott) asked if there was a number of officers, for safety reasons, to be on the streets. And she also wanted to know if there would be breakdowns of arrests, including demographics of those arrested, available soon?

Chief Texter said the department plans to continue having four officers on the streets at all times / shifts. He said there are more officers on those squads and staff officers, so he feels comfortable with the status. As for the demographic data, the MPD has been using a new program to track the data for some time now and he will look into whether enough has been collected to show an accurate breakdown.

**NEXT MEETING:** January 23, 2022 (MLK, Jr. Holiday on Jan. 16)