

A Police Advisory Board meeting was held on the above date via Zoom conference call, with the following members in attendance: Salahudin Bin-Yusif, Jason Hunt, Wanda Dean, Debbie Harrington, Michael Harpe, Sue Mitchell, John Carwell, Emy Diaz, Billy Warrick, Jacqueline Burditt and Joyce Kidd. Middletown Police Chief William Texter and FOP Representative Michael Hilliard were also in attendance.

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m. by Chairman Bin-Yusif.

MINUTES APPROVAL: Chairman Bin-Yusif asked if there were any corrections to the minutes. Hearing none, he said the minutes for November are approved as written.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:**A. Police Report Evaluation Committee**

Subcommittee Chair Harpe said he is still working to compile and analyze the police data that has been given him by Chief Texter. He said he will work on it over the holidays to have a report generated by the January meeting. He said he would like some help on this project from other board members. Chair Bin-Yusif said there are other members on the subcommittee, and he will look back over the minutes to get those names to Harpe so he can set up a subcommittee meeting to work on this data.

Community Connections Committee

- John Carwell reported that the Facebook page for PAB has been created. He will be sending out the access information and will be looking for some content for the page before it goes “live.” He said he needs confirmation on the logo that was selected by the group for the FB page before putting that on there. He also wants the group to send headshots and a brief bio (three to five sentences) to go on the information page until it warms up enough for a group photo.
- He thanked Cpl. Hilliard for the presentation he made on the Zoom call with the Willow Grove Mill community recently. He said the presentation was very helpful to the community.
- He also said he would like to be part of the “Courageous Conversations” if they happen in the Middletown area. Bin-Yusif asked Hilliard to explain what this event involves.
- Hilliard said the Courageous Conversations was done in Seaford recently when the police chief wanted to get individuals together to discuss issues they were having down in that Sussex County town. He said the idea of doing something similar here, even though we are not having issues like Seaford was having, may happen. He said there are interested parties in the police department who want to have a community forum like this. He said it can’t hurt to open up the dialogue with all of the key players in the town.

B. Research Committee

Sue Mitchell said she was looking forward to hearing the research done by Wanda Dean and Debbie Harrington on Smyrna and Newark 911 Call Centers. Debbie Harrington said they haven't been able to set up a time yet to meet with the departments, but they are still interested in doing so.

Police Chief Report

- Chief Texter shared the police report for the month of November that was given at the December Town Council meeting. One of the items of particular interest to the PAB was about the theft of a motor vehicle at the Wawa near the MPD headquarters. He said a woman was throwing trash away when she was pushed to the ground by an unknown male while a second unknown male drove her car away. The two suspects in this crime turned out to be two juveniles from Wilmington, Chief Texter said.
- He said vehicles continue to be stolen by juveniles all over New Castle County and into New Jersey and Delaware County, Pa. He said the cars are stolen and crimes are committed with the cars, then the cars are dumped in another area. For example, a stolen vehicle was dumped in Middletown tonight at Walmart that originated in Camden, N.J.
- Chief said to please be alert and aware of your surroundings always. These criminals are criminals of opportunity, looking for the quick and easy vehicle to get in and out of.
- Chief Texter also reported the department did ABLE training and de-escalation training in December and plan to finish it up in the beginning of 2022, along with some fair and impartial training. He said his first goal is to get officers through all of this training, but he also believes the department is interested in doing some community training on these concepts, if the PAB is interested.
- The PAB had the following questions regarding the police chief's report for the month of November: John Carwell asked for the latest status on hiring and police academy. Chief Texter said we have a recruit graduating from the NCC Police Academy on Dec. 29. The other four recruits will be finishing up at the end of March, 2022. He said we should see the new officer out on the streets the second week of January.
- Billy Warrick asked how many officers have left in the last 6 months to other departments? Chief said there have been 2 – one to the County Police and one to the State Police. Warrick asked if the officers will have to pay back the department for training. Chief said yes, the administration department pro-rates those fees and the officer is notified when they leave that they will owe the Town for the fees and are billed for that.

OLD BUSINESS:

Bylaws Review:

- Bin-Yusif said there has been a suggestion from a board member to add language in the bylaws regarding the board being “non-partisan.”
- He read the statement that was crafted by member Emy Diaz (at the request of the board chairman) that read: The Middletown Police Advisory Board is an independent and non-partisan body, neither supporting nor opposing political parties nor its candidates in any in any level of government. Members of the MPAB shall not participate in any political activities while representing the MPAB. Members of the MPAB must also avoid all appearances of support for political affiliation and or its candidates while performing duties / roles of the MPAB.
- Billy Warrick said he believes the board may want to get an opinion from an attorney on this matter because we are dealing with first and second amendment rights and it becomes “very touchy.”
- Jason Hunt said the board just has to be careful. He said no one is telling us we can’t go help out with someone’s campaign someday, it’s just don’t wear your Police Advisory Board T-shirt when you do that, he said.
- Sue Mitchell agreed and said you just have to be mindful of the situation you are in. She said when she was involved with Big Ball Marathon years ago, she changed her shirt three or four times over the course of the weekend, depending upon which political candidate she was helping, but had to put the Big Ball shirt to the side when she was being political.
- Bin-Yusif said between now and the next meeting, please come up with recommendations to amend the proposed bylaw language. He said a vote will be taken at the January meeting on this issue.

NEW BUSINESS:

Bin-Yusif opened the floor for discussions on any topics.

- John Carwell said he would really like to continue the discussion on having a community program with open dialogue like courageous conversations. “Wasn’t the MPAB created out of this type of communication?” he said. He said having the background information from Cpl. Hilliard and the police department’s interest in doing it, we should go for it.
- Bin-Yusif said at the last Mayor & Council meeting, Our Daily Bread talked about a food insecurity issue in the Middletown area. He said when there are side issues, like food insecurity, it breeches into the community and can lead to additional crimes. He said perhaps the board can work to help make connections between Our Daily Bread and people who want to let us know about crime and other problems in the community.
- Carwell said he hears what Bin-Yusif is saying about food insecurity and linking it to crimes, but is that something the MPAB should be getting involved in? He said

that is the perfect example of why the board should meet soon and do a complete diagnosis of what the board believes its mission is.

- Bin-Yusif will be sending out a request for a meeting in January, most likely Jan. 11, to have this discussion about the direction the board would like to head on the subject of solving crimes and helping the police department, deciding the role of the MPAB in these matters.
- Carwell said he would like to have Crimestoppers come make a presentation to the board. Cpl. Hilliard has had them on several community calls and the members of the board who have been on those calls said the information is invaluable to hear. He said there is a lot of misinformation about what Crimestoppers does, so it would be great to get the word out about how they can help the community and our police department.
- Debbie Harrington said she has a nomination for the open position on the board left by the Rev. Dan Betters. Bin-Yusif said he would like her to send out a bio to the group and the nomination will be reviewed and voted on at the next meeting.
- Wanda Dean announced there will be a drive for packages of hygiene products and dried goods to send to Kentucky for tornado victims. She said to reach out to her if you would like more information.

NEXT MEETING: Jan. 24, 2022