

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, Michael Harpe, Billy Warrick (in person), Emy Diaz, Linda LaRue, Joyce Kidd, Jason Hunt, Jerry Kissel (in person), and Wanda Dean. Police Capt. Ron Davis and Police Union Representative Cpl. Michael Hilliard were also in attendance. The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by Chairman Bin-Yusif.

MINUTES APPROVED: It was moved by Michael Harpe and seconded by Jerry Kissel to move the agenda forward and approve the minutes from January, 2023. Motion carried unanimously.

CHAIR'S REPORT:

Chair Salahudin Bin-Yusif said he is looking forward to talking about the community survey. He sent out the revised survey and would like to really spend some time tonight talking about it and get it out to the community.

Bin-Yusif said the group has been doing some of the community outreach programs like "Coffee with a Cop" and he would like to see those attendances keep going as the year goes on.

He asked Jerry Kissel to give an update of any concerns the Mayor and Council had at the February meeting, as Kissel stood in for him to give the report for the month as he was unable to attend. Kissel said he reported that the last MPAB meeting was well attended in person, with 6 of the 10 attendees meeting in person; he also reported that the MPAB's social media accounts are starting to pick up steam and we will continue to work to get information out to the community; he talked about an update on the community survey, said the MPAB will be reviewing the draft and making comments and reporting back to Mayor and Council hopefully at their next meeting; and that the group was able to tour the police station after the last meeting, which was fantastic.

He said the Mayor & Council didn't have any concerns and the Mayor said he was looking forward to working with the MPAB to get the survey out to the community.

Bin-Yusif said the MPAB needs to make another report to the Mayor & Council soon and he would like to do that after we get the community survey out and can include that in this quarter's report.

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.

He said he was excited to see the participation of the community at the recent Coffee with a Cop events and a political event that was held at the NCC Library, sort of a meet-and-greet of political figures in the Middletown area and it was good for the MPAB to be a part of that to see how we can work together to get information out to the community.

C. Research Committee

Wanda Dean said she doesn't have a report this month as her research is not complete.

POLICE CHIEF REPORT

Police Capt. Ron Davis gave the Police Report that was delivered at the Feb. 6 meeting of the Mayor and Council from data that occurred in the month of January. MSgt. Scott Saunders gave a report on the Community Services events for the month.

He said he wanted to give more detail to the MPAB about the HUB meeting that occurred on Feb. 17. He said this meeting is near and dear to him because this was our first HUB meeting and something he has wanted to have for a long time.

He said there are some calls the MPD gets, such as calls for mental wellness, that the department repeatedly gets and it can really bog them down sometimes. The HUB meetings help bring everyone in the area together to discuss handling situations together.

He said during the HUB meeting, agencies involved included Townsend PD, Delaware State Police, Probation & Parole, Animal Services, the Attorney General's Office and social services from the Appo. School District. He said he is also hoping to get Veteran's Affairs involved because issues come up periodically where their help is needed.

He said the HUB meetings are just one more way the MPD is working to deal with all of the different aspects of the community. The meetings will be held every two months.

Saunders said they also hosted a religious leader meeting in January with local pastors and agencies such as Neighborhood House, Our Daily Bread, the school district and Friendship House – so they could make their congregants aware of local agencies that help get people food, housing and other support. He said this helps the leaders know how to work with MPD as well, but know how to get in touch with what they need in the community as well.

The following questions were asked following the report:

Billy Warrick asked if the MPD goes into the City of Wilmington, the inner city, to try to recruit for police officers in Middletown.

MSgt. Saunders said he will go anywhere the department tells him to go to recruit. Capt. Davis asked if Warrick has a specific location in Wilmington in mind. Warrick said he was thinking about the DelTech campus.

Saunders said the department is scheduled right now to attend job fairs and events at: Cheyney University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Goldey-Beacom Community College, Cecil County

College in nearby Maryland. Saunders said he is in contact with DelTech to get out to all of the campuses as well as Wilmington University.

SURVEY UPDATE:

Kristen Krenzer presented the updated community survey. She said based on last month's comments, she added a listing of all of the Middletown neighborhoods and will add a separate question about whether or not the responder is a Middletown business owner.

She said after sending out the draft survey two weeks ago, she has only heard from one board member, Billy Warrick, who questioned whether five years would be too far back to ask whether someone has had police contact with one of our Middletown police officers. She said she told Mr. Warrick that the time limit was not generated by the MPAB, but was just a suggestion she made as she was drafting the survey.

Chair Bin-Yusif asked Warrick to explain his reasoning to lessen the number of years. Warrick said he just feels two to three years' worth of experiences is enough to get a sense of how the community feels about the MPD. Emy Diaz agreed.

Wanda Dean disagreed, saying she thinks five years would give a more accurate depiction of resident interaction with police, as there probably isn't too much interaction and you want people to have been here long enough. Joyce Kidd said she thinks five years is adequate. Jerry Kissel said the time frame isn't going to be that impactful until we see the results of all of the questions.

Linda LaRue said five years is a good length of time because when people first move here, it takes a little time to get acclimated to the area and know their surroundings.

It was moved by Debbie Harrington and seconded by Linda LaRue to ask for a five-year lookback on interactions with MPD officers. Moved 7-2.

Jerry Kissel said he wanted to make sure business owners were added to the survey. Billy Warrick said he didn't think business owners should be included as he believes all the businesses in Middletown are happy with MPD and its officers or we would hear about it. Bin-Yusif said he would have to disagree because we just had a long discussion last month about a business in Middletown (Food Lion) that has raised some concerns recently about police response, and through the MPAB discussion, further discussions between Food Lion and MPD happened and problems are being resolved. So, unless we ask them, we are not going to know there are issues, he said.

There was discussion about how the questions are going to be approved before disseminating the survey. It was decided the group has had enough time to make comments at this point and Chair Bin-Yusif suggested the next steps be for Ms. Krenzer to finalize the survey and send out a "test" of the final product to the Mayor & Council and all of the MPAB members to take the survey to see how it works and make sure there are no "bugs" with it.

After its test phase, final amendments and changes can be made to the survey before it is sent out.

There was discussion about the methods to get the survey delivered to the most Middletown residents. She said she will look into the cost for the survey and how long it can remain up online. Bin-Yusif said it might mean the MPAB has to do some work to push the survey to get people to take the survey.

Debbie Harrington said an idea might be to offer an incentive or prize of some kind to get people to take the survey.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Ashley Tylanda attended the meeting and waited until the end of the meeting to ask about something that happened to her the day before. She said her vehicle's window was smashed and her diaper bag was rummaged through at the Levels Road Park on Sunday afternoon at 2 p.m. She said she was concerned because she posted about the event on Facebook and others commented that it happened to them before and she wondered what the MPD was doing about this problem.

Capt. Davis said he was not aware of this particular event, but there have been issues in the past at local parks, but most time cars are broken into are because items like purses are left in plain sight and the windows are smashed in, things are taken quickly (smash-and-grab) and the thieves are out of there, he said.

Bin-Yusif asked if cameras can be installed over there? Capt. Davis said he will look into it.

NEXT MEETING: March 20, 2023