

A Police Advisory Board meeting was held on the above date via Zoom conference call, with the following members in attendance: Salahudin Bin-Yusif, Michael Harpe, Wanda Dean, Emy Diaz, Jelani Bryant, Jason Hunt, Sue Mitchell, Jacqueline Burditt, Linda LaRue, and Joyce Kidd. Middletown Police Captain Ron Davis, MSgt. Scott Saunders and FOP President Cpl. Michael Hilliard were also in attendance.

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m. by Chairman Bin-Yusif.

**MINUTES APPROVAL:** It was moved by Michael Harpe and seconded by Jelani Bryant to approve the minutes for the March meeting and move the agenda forward as presented. Approved 9-0.

**CHAIR’S REPORT:**

Chairman Bin-Yusif reported the PAB will have to give another report / update to Mayor & Council soon. He said he will be sending out a draft of the next report shortly and wants comments from everyone, even if it is to just tell him everything looks OK.

**CITIZEN POLICE ACADEMY:** May be pushed to the fall due to the MPD schedule right now.

**POLICE OFFICER BILL OF RIGHTS:** The MPAB had a meeting with the Senators who drafted the current Police Officer Bill of Rights and we understand there are two sides to the bill. Some folks were concerned the bill wasn’t strong enough, but the bill did clearly describe what the power of Police Advisory Boards and Police Review Boards have. He said he would like to put something in writing about how the MPAB thinks of the bill – whether we support it or not, or how we think we can improve the bill.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

**A. Community Connections Committee**

John Carwell wasn’t able to attend the meeting, but he reported in to Chairman Bin-Yusif that the Facebook page was launched but there are some problems with it, so he is going to pull it down and make some corrections to it and will report back on what is needed to upgrade the site.

**B. Research Committee**

Sue Mitchell said she didn’t have a report this month, but she wanted to ask if there were any updates on the question of doing survey.

Kristen Krenzer said Mayor Branner asked her to do research on the survey done by the City of Newark in 2016 and find out why it was done, how much it cost the City, etc. Mayor Branner said Bin-Yusif called him to request information on the possibility of doing a survey. Krenzer said she will come back with a report on that survey next month. She said the survey done by Newark was comprehensive and looked at parks, streets, trash, police and everything the City provides to residents.

**C. Strategic Planning Committee**

Bin-Yusif asked for volunteers to help with this newly-formed committee that he thinks is important to have in order to formulate a strategic plan for the MPAB.

## **Police Chief Report**

Capt. Davis reported the MPD has received some applications for full-time officers and seasonal officers in the hiring process that ends later this week. As far as recruitment, he said he is going to be leaning on the MPD's recruitment team and individuals like those on the MPD to help get the word out that we are hiring.

He reported that the City of Newark is down seven officers and they recently had a process and they only received seven applicants. He said if anyone has any ideas to please give them to him and he will take them directly back to the Chief.

Bin-Yusif showed the flyer for seasonal recruitment and he knows Sgt. Saunders has reached out to individuals he has mentored and there have been several interested parties apply thus far. The deadline has been extended to April 23 to apply.

MSgt. Saunders reported that the Movie Night on April 8 and 9 was tremendously successful. There were more than 80 cars in attendance for the drive-in movies both nights. Joyce Kidd said she volunteered at the event and was impressed by the program and it was well-attended.

After Capt. Davis read the report for March, 2022, the MPAB had the following questions:

Bin-Yusif said it looks like the Community Services Department has been very busy and please pass along our thanks for all of the hard work.

He asked Capt. Davis if he feels like the department is doing everything it can for recruitment and retention?

Capt. Davis said the MPD clearly does everything it can – we are holding our own as an up-and-coming department. He said it is difficult to compete with the Delaware State Police because they pay so much more and offer much more diverse areas of service to offer the officers.

Bin-Yusif asked if there is a certain demographic we could look for to come into the MPD? Like, is it better for a family-oriented officer to have more stability?

Cpl. Hilliard said our biggest goal is to keep people here and we are working on our FOP contract to make things most appealing to all officers and compete with DSP.

Bin-Yusif asked if the Captain feels there are diverse candidates being considered for the current hiring.

Capt. Davis said he personally talks to students at Dover Air Force Base and at Delaware State University, where his son attends, and he is just not getting people who are very willing to take a bite of the apple to join the police force. He said he believes the pendulum will swing again, where more people are interested in police work again after some time passes.

## **OLD BUSINESS:**

### **BYLAWS ADDITION:**

Bin-Yusif said the Town solicitor, through the Town Manager Morris Deputy, has supplied the approved verbiage to add to the bylaws regarding the MPAB's request regarding public events and non-partisan participation. The verbiage is as follows:

"The Middletown Police Advisory Board is a non-partisan body created by the Mayor & Council of Middletown, neither supporting nor opposing political parties, nor its candidates in any level of government. Members of the PAB shall avoid obvious appearances of support for political affiliations and or its candidates, while actively performing duties/roles of the MPAB while wearing MPAB paraphernalia."

It was moved by Joyce Kidd and seconded by Linda LaRue to approve the addition to the bylaws. Wanda Dean said she wanted to make a comment that since the Town Council went through a similar incident with a Town Councilman wearing Town of Middletown paraphernalia "to an insurrection" and "there was no action taken" and it was stated after that event that there was "no action available to be taken for themselves to hold them accountable for like actions," she said she found it ironic that they would recommend this language for the MPAB.

Jelani Bryant said perhaps the MPAB could request that the Mayor & Council implement similar verbiage in their bylaws. The motion was approved 9-1.

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

Bin-Yusif wanted to discuss the Senate Bill 149 regarding the Police Officers Bill of Rights. He said the Bill of Rights are basically bylaws for police to follow throughout the State of Delaware. However, the issue at hand is that there are folks who believe the Bill of Rights are not transparent enough and often the thought is that the small number of "bad officers" out there not following the Bill of Rights are easily covered up, because the reports about actions of these officers are not allowed to be released to the public and/or press.

Joyce Kidd said she thought the bill is "ok" as presented, but she does not like the definition of "conduct unbecoming an officer." She said in her opinion, the definition is too broad in the bill.

Bin-Yusif said he would be sending the final bill to the group and would like final comments on it that can be submitted to the sponsoring senators.

Wanda Dean said one of the main components of the bill was for transparency of police officers' past criminal history to keep them from jumping from department to department.

Cpl. Hilliard said he wanted to clear up the term "criminal history." He said police officers don't have criminal history and keep their jobs as police officers. He said if a police officer is charged with a crime, they are no longer police officers. Dean said she was discussing particular cases where officers were disciplined or charged and maybe they were released, but they still were able to jump to another police department and that department was not aware of his prior activities.

Capt. Davis said he is OK officers being investigated if they do something wrong. However, people need to keep in mind that officers, every day, get unfounded and unsubstantiated complaints against them. He used himself as an example. When he was a drug investigation officer in

Philadelphia, he had tons of complaints against him from the families of the people who were doing drugs or selling drugs. So, officers are concerned that if those complaints are made public, people will push for discipline or other adverse effects for police officers who are working hard and doing a good job.

Bin-Yusif said he looked forward to the comments on the bill from members at a later date.

**NEXT MEETING:** May 16, 2022. It was discussed whether to hold meetings in person or on Zoom. It was suggested that the group select one or the other as the “hybrid” meeting did not work so well in the past. The group voted to continue to have Zoom meetings until it was clear that COVID is gone for good and we are safe to gather once again.

Moved by Joyce Kidd and seconded by Mitchell to adjourn at 8:29 p.m. Moved unanimously.