

## **POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE MINUTES**

### **JUNE 11, 2025**

**Attendees: Chairman David Thomas, Jimmy Reynolds, Carol Bright, Alan Jones, Billy Warrick, Matt Luckini, Martin Bradshaw. Staff: Capt. Ron Davis**

The June 11, 2025 Middletown Police Accountability Committee meeting was called to order by Chairman David Thomas at 6:30 p.m. MPD Accreditation Specialist Kelli Burns made a presentation about CALEA and what it means for the department to be certified. Capt. Davis then gave a tour of the MPD Headquarters. When everyone returned from the tour, a discussion was had about Use of Force and how training is facilitated at MPD. The following are some of the discussion points made throughout the meeting:

- Middletown Police Department upholds 463 CALEA standards for national accreditation; only 9 of 48 Delaware departments are CALEA certified, Middletown being one of the first.
- All Delaware police departments must achieve national or state accreditation by 2028 to enhance accountability and standardize operations.
- Full accreditation assessment occurs every 4 years, with annual computer reviews in October/November
- CALEA provides legal protection and standardization, developed by top law enforcement executives, attorneys, and judges.
- Pursuit policy restricts high-speed chases to violent felonies, emphasizing safety amid recent incidents like the King of Prussia case that resulted in fatalities.
- Use of force policies mandate immediate updates post-national incidents, requiring scenario-based de-escalation training and thorough reviews by multiple supervisory levels.
- Evidence management audited four times a year, highlighting the need for strict protocols to prevent theft and mismanagement, referencing a notable Delaware State Police case.
- Detention procedures include a streamlined processing time of around 2 hours, supported by a comprehensive video arraignment system established since 2007.
- Community concerns primarily focus on speeding and stop sign violations, with an emphasis on traffic enforcement challenges due to staffing shortages.
- Mental health crisis response training increased in importance, with officers receiving annual training to manage interactions with individuals facing mental health challenges.
- Body camera evidence has become pivotal in accountability, automatically recording crucial incidents to support transparency and verify police conduct.

#### Pursuit Policy Standards and Implementation

- Pursuit policy requires written directive covering 14 specific elements (A through N) including officer evaluation of circumstances
- Key factors for pursuit decisions: time of day, road conditions, weather, traffic conditions
- Middletown policy restricts pursuits to violent felony offenses only - no chasing for traffic violations or simple theft
- Violent felonies include: murder, manslaughter, kidnapping, assault, rape, robbery, carjacking, burglary first/second degree

- King of Prussia incident referenced where 3 kids died in 125 mph pursuit for shoplifting
- Policy reviewed annually by chief and all officers due to volatile nature

### Use of Force Policies and Training

- Use of force policy covers reasonable force, deadly force, warning shots, less lethal weapons, medical aid, neck restrictions
- Standards updated immediately after national incidents like Minneapolis case
- De-escalation techniques required when possible, with scenario-based training conducted
- Every use of force is reviewed by supervisor, Captain, and Internal Affairs with body camera footage
- Annual 6-page analysis tracks demographics, circumstances, weapons used, and outcomes
- Display of weapon (gun, taser, K9) constitutes use of force requiring documentation

### Evidence Management and Security Protocols

- Evidence locker audited 4 times per year: annual audit, chief's unannounced inspection, two chain-of-command inspections
- Guns, drugs, cash, and precious metals stored separately behind second locks within evidence room
- Cameras monitor all evidence storage areas continuously
- Evidence management identified as one of three critical areas that cause law enforcement problems (along with use of force and cash)
- Delaware State Police theft case referenced as example of why strict protocols necessary

### Facility Tour and Infrastructure Challenges

- Department grew from 20 officers in 2007 to 43 currently, expecting growth to 50-60 officers
- Facility outgrowing current space - insufficient lockers and workspace for expanding force
- Town council discussing facility expansion and additions
- Facilities include: soft interview room, detective offices, conference room, patrol room, evidence storage, detention cells, Nursing room added for female officers per federal statute requirements, Sally port with double-door security system for prisoner transport

### Detention and Court Procedures

- Delaware has 24-hour court system available even on holidays via video conferencing
- Prisoners typically processed within 2 hours through JP Court system
- Three required forms: pedigree, logbook, detention form with 20-30 minute prisoner checks
- Video arraignment system in place since 2007 with emergency alert capabilities
- Restraint chair available with 30-minute maximum use policy followed by 30-minute break
- Toxilyzer for DUI processing and fingerprinting system for booking procedures

## Current Staffing and Recruitment

- 20 candidates took fitness test on Saturday with oral interviews conducted
- Department hiring additional officers to address staffing needs
- 6 original officers from 2007 still with department after nearly 20 years
- Four patrol sergeants currently on staff
- Four detectives handle high-level shoplifting, rapes, shootings, and major investigations

## Community Concerns and Traffic Enforcement

Speeding and stop sign violations identified as biggest community concern

Fire lane and handicap parking violations at shopping centers require strict enforcement

- Seasonal officers cannot currently write tickets due to lack of appeals board
- Traffic enforcement limited by insufficient staffing to cover all areas
- Community feedback requested on police performance and areas for improvement

## Use of Force Training Scenarios

Capt. Davis showed the Board several videos depicting Use of Force scenarios to show how quickly decisions must be made during interactions with people who may or may not have a firearm on their person.

- Texas sheriff shooting case study showed unjustified use of deadly force against unarmed individual
- Officer made inappropriate comment 'I just smoked a dude' demonstrating poor judgment
- Scenario-based training puts officers in no-win situations to develop decision-making skills
- MPD has been successful with no officer injuries or shootings through de-escalation training
- Annual training covers use of force, pursuit policy, ethics, and bias-based policing

## Mental Health Crisis Response

- Mental health calls identified as major challenge for law enforcement
- 8-hour annual training provided by mental health professionals implemented in the last five years
- Officers familiar with repeat mental health clients and assign appropriate responders
- Officers trained on de-escalation techniques and available mental health resources
- Hospital committal process used but patients often released quickly

## Body Camera Evidence and Accountability

- Body cameras provide definitive evidence for complaint resolution

- Cameras automatically activate when tasers deployed or emergency lights used
- All equipment interconnected: tasers, cameras, in-car cameras, and emergency lights
- Video evidence used to disprove false complaints and verify proper procedures
- Compliance with officer commands emphasized as critical for public safety

### **Action Items**

Implement strict enforcement for fire lane and handicap parking violations at shopping centers.

Establish appeals board for traffic ticket citations to enable seasonal officers to write tickets.

**Adjourned: 8:45 p.m.**