

A Police Advisory Board meeting was held on the above date via Zoom conference call, with the following members in attendance: Salahudin Bin-Yusif, Linda LaRue, Michael Harpe, Jacquelyn Burditt, Emy Diaz, Joyce Kidd, Yvette Santiago, Jason Hunt and Jelani Bryant. Police Chief William Texter and FOP Representative Mike 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 Yvette Santiago and seconded by Joyce Kidd to approve the minutes for the May meeting and move the agenda forward as presented. Approved 7-0.

Chair's Report:

Chairman Bin-Yusif said he is finalizing the quarterly report and will be sending it out soon. Please let him know if there are any comments on the report, he told the board.

New Members:

Bin-Yusif announced that John Carwell has had to resign from the board. Kristen Krenzer said Mr. Carwell was nominated by Councilman Chas and Mayor Branner has asked Mr. Chas to provide a replacement for the remainder of Mr. Carwell's term. The plan is for a nomination to be made at the next Town Council meeting to be approved and appointed by Mayor and Council.

Senate Bill 149:

Bin-Yusif said the board was asked by the legislators working on Senate Bill 149 regarding the Police Officer Bill of Rights, to provide comments on the current bill and they have done that. He said he will be sending a copy of the comments to the board members for review.

PAL PROGRAM:

Chairman Bin-Yusif reported that he and MSgt. Scott Saunders just returned from the National PAL conference and he brought back a lot of good information. He said he received support from the Mayor & Council to attend the convention.

He said he will be making a presentation under new business about what they learned.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

A. Police Report Evaluation Committee

Bin-Yusif said he was able to access the past year's worth of police reports from the Town of Middletown Website and has downloaded them into the Google Docs drive shared by the MPAB. He said he and Michael Harpe will be entering the data into the spreadsheet created by Mr. Harpe for keeping track of trends in the MPD.

To remind the board about the importance of this data, Bin-Yusif said the hope is for the board to review the monthly police reports and track the trending data to help the MPD and the Mayor & Council and the community understanding how things are trending so we know if we need to change things or keep doing things the way we are doing them.

Emy Diaz asked where all of the information, documents, recording of meetings and passwords are kept. Bin-Yusif said all of these things are kept in the Google Docs app and he will pass on the information to the next Chairperson when his term is up.

B. Community Connections Committee

With John Carwell's departure from the board, Bin-Yusif said he will be looking for a new chair for this subcommittee

Jason Hunt said he would be willing to take over being chairman of the subcommittee as he has enjoyed being a part of the committee and sees its value.

Mr. Hunt said he will, in his free time, continue to work on getting the Facebook page, the logo, Twitter and Instagram up and running and eventually have our own Website page as well. Jelani Bryant said he would also like to join this subcommittee.

Bin-Yusif said the board needs to double-down on working to help cultivate the ideas that have come up since the inception of the board, such as the creation of videos that showcase the work being done by the Middletown Police that can go on the Town of Middletown government Website and the MPD Website, like a mini-commercial or presentation to generate interest in becoming a police officer.

C. Research Committee

No report.

D. 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. He said with half of the board's term coming to an end this fall, unless members are renewed for another term, it's important for the new members coming on to understand the work that has been done and the initiatives this board would like to take from this point forward.

Police Chief Report

Chief Texter gave the Police Report for the month of May, 2022, that was issued at the June Mayor & Council meeting. The following questions were asked about the report:

Joyce Kidd said her question is not about the police report, but about a rumor she heard about an incident at the Legacy at Deep Creek. She said she heard there was an incident with people knocking on doors late at night and the resident said it took police two hours to respond.

Cpl. Hilliard said he was the responding officer to that complaint and he was training one of the new officers at the time, and they immediately went out there to the call from dispatch. He said the resident called back hours later and said there was damage to his home from the incident, but the original call was handled immediately.

Bin-Yusif asked the Chief for an update on recruiting.

Chief Texter said there is a hiring process winding down right now. Interviews will be coming up next couple of weeks and he should be able to give an update next month about where we are.

NEW BUSINESS:

National PAL Convention:

Bin-Yusif and MSgt. Scott Saunders attended the National PAL Convention at the Atlantic City Convention Center in early June.

“Every Kid Needs a PAL,” is the slogan used by one of the PAL programs in Virginia, Bin-Yusif said, and it’s the one statement that hit home for him because he learned that PAL programs should not be looked at as programs that only serve a community that may be underperforming or with a high crime rate. “No, a PAL program is for everyone, the entire community.”

All children and all communities can take advantage of having a PAL program, he said.

He said the program is also not all about athletics. He said it’s also for mentoring, learning about S.T.E.M. and also to provide a bridge between the police department and the community they serve.

It is also a great recruitment tool. To have young people be around police officers, to see them in that young person’s environment, is a great opportunity to learn about that profession, about that person. Who knows, one day, that young person could become a police officer, he said.

Some of the PAL programs highlighted at the convention included after school programs, art, financial literacy, dance, chess, summer camps, basketball leagues, wrestling and more.

Some of the other training / seminars he attended at the conference were about growing non-profits, implicit bias and community building, grant writing, social media utilization, youth in crisis and teen empowerment.

He said it was suggested to him from the Vice President at the conference was to start small with implementing programs in the community to get PAL started, then watch and see how it develops over time and possibly into a PAL Center in the future.

He said the PAL program is a community venture between the local government, the police, the community and local businesses. He said the community members drive these centers now, it’s no longer driven by the police department. He said law enforcement involvement is based on availability of staffing and that’s critical.

Benefits of PAL include a 46 percent reduction in crime, 16 percent in reduction in juvenile arrests, 6 percent reduction in crime overall and 28 percent better grade performance in schools.

Bin-Yusif said thank you again to the Mayor & Council and MPD for the support to attend this program. He looks forward to using the tools he learned to follow the “road map” to potentially starting something in the Middletown community.

BRAINSTORMING SESSION:

Emy Diaz asked if the Zoom meetings could be put on YouTube for everyone to view our past meetings. Kristen Krenzer said she would look into adding the links to the videos to the Town Website where the minutes are already located.

Bin-Yusif said during the PAL convention, he learned about how deeply the community and civilians are involved in some of the police departments across the country. He said it was amazing to learn about the involvement of the community, civilians who work to run the programs. On various levels, such as, where the community services department has a lot of civilian staff keeping track of calendar of events, reaching out to communities to set up programming, doing reach-outs meetings with the various communities, etc.

We know it's tough to get officers into the department, but perhaps it can be considered to have some more civilian staff that are not directly law-enforcement based, but can assist in the background of getting things done, he said.

Jelani Bryant thanked Bin-Yusif for the presentation and Jacqueline Burditt added that he did a wonderful job at the Mayor & Council meeting as well.

NEXT MEETING: July 18, 2021

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