

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: In person: Salahudin Bin-Yusif, Joyce Kidd, Jerry Kissel, Billy Warrick; Via Zoom: Linda LaRue, Emy Diaz, Wanda Dean and Jason Hunt. Police Chief William Texter, Captain Ron Davis, FOP President Joseph Womer were also in attendance at the MPD HQ. The meeting was called to order at 7:06 p.m. by Chairman Bin-Yusif.

CHAIR'S REPORT:

Community meeting update: The NAACP had a Zoom “police forum” recently with four officers, two female, two male, one from New York, one from MPD, one from New Castle County and one from Wilmington Police.

Bin-Yusif said he would like to continue to work on having a community meeting like this sponsored by the MPAB.

He said since the MPAB is going to take a break in August, he would like to put some final suggestions together to give to the police department about the items the Board has been researching for quite some time, such as recruiting female officers.

Billy Warrick said he wanted to discuss further the reasons the MPAB wants to focus so much on recruiting female officers. Bin-Yusif said he understands Mr. Warrick wants to delve into that subject and he would like to get the business items out of the way on the agenda first and then the Board will come back to Warrick's concerns.

YOUTH ACADEMY: MPD will be hosting their annual youth academies – Boys will be held July 31 – Aug. 4 and Girls will be held Aug. 7 – 11.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Community Connections – Jason Hunt reported the social media accounts for the MPAB have been getting more community activity and people are following them more closely. In addition to the announcement about some public events, the MPAB Survey has also been put out there.

Research Committee – Bin-Yusif said he asked for an update from Kristen Krenzer about how the survey is going and she said there have been results steadily coming in. Wanda Dean asked if there has been a date to end the survey so the data can be reviewed to see if there are any repetitive comments for us to consider. Bin-Yusif said at the July meeting, the Board will decide on an ending date and find out how the data will be reviewed.

POLICE CHIEF REPORT

Chief Texter gave the report from the month of May distributed at the June meeting of the Mayor & Council. Texter said the “Testing Anytime” program has kicked off and MPD has already had four candidates move through the first batch of testing. He reminded the MPAB to send candidates to MPD if they know anyone who may be considering police work.

Following the report, the Board had the following questions:

Bin-Yusif asked how many cadets/recruits are in the academy right now? Texter said there are two cadets in the academy right now and graduation will be in the beginning of August. He said of the

four potential candidates that have come in recent weeks, the MPD is hoping at least two of them will be ready to go to the next academy in the fall, maybe three.

Texter added that Lt. Lancaster has recently been put in charge of taking over the social media, Website and recruiting aspects of the MPD. He is excited to report that Lancaster has taken the topics and run with them and is doing a lot of research into how we can make things better here. Already in the works is a social media expert that will be coming to Middletown in the next couple of months to give training on how to best handle our social media and possibly better recruitment tactics. He will give more information on these ideas next month as they move forward.

Bin-Yusif asked how the seasonals are doing. Texter said they are doing well and we are getting good feedback. He said they are all in college or getting ready to go to college. He said there are plans to use them in the fall and beyond, so just like the police process, if Board members or the public know of any college-aged kids who are interested in being a seasonal at any time, they can reach out to us.

Jerry Kissel asked why the youth academy age limit is 16. Texter said he will find out, but he believes it's due to SN4C's grant funding limitations. (SN4C provides much of the funding for the youth academies to target the ages of 13-16 with their educational programs that keep kids away from drugs, smoking and drinking).

OLD BUSINESS:

Take-home cars – Bin-Yusif said they have done some work and research on this topic and they are going to put a report together for Mayor & Council.

College & University Connections – Bin-Yusif said it was good to see MPD going to Temple and attending the college fairs. He said it also might be good to reach out to the Criminal Justice professors to see if they have anyone they can recommend for recruitment.

Local Incentives – Wanda Dean asked if there are incentives being offered specifically to people who live in the Town of Middletown. Texter said there is a \$5,000 signing bonus for candidates and a \$10,000 signing bonus for certified officers. She said she would like to see an additional incentive for Middletown residents only. She said it seems like a win-win for the Town because if the officer lives in Town, he would be more vested in the Town and will have an easier time getting to work and keeping his money in Town. Texter said he will have to talk to the solicitor about the legality of targeting a population like that.

NEW BUSINESS

Meeting in person – Billy Warrick said he would like to implore the Board to come back to meeting only in person, no more hybrid. He said he doesn't think it's fair that the Chief and Captain and police officers are in person and so many of the Board members continue to only attend the meetings via Zoom. He said it's been years since he's seen some of the faces of members of the Board. He said the Governor has lifted the COVID mandates and people are back to work, so this group should be back to work in person as well.

Bin-Yusif asked for comments from the Board.

Joyce Kidd said she belongs to several boards and all of them are still keeping the hybrid option because everyone cannot get to meetings and it has nothing to do with the pandemic. People work late, they travel. The important thing is meeting a quorum, so she thinks it should remain hybrid.

Jerry Kissel said other boards he is on, they control it and they have to get permission to be hybrid from the Chair and they require a certain number of in-person attendances, so you can't just be hybrid all year.

Linda LaRue said she believes the hybrid is important for the Board to be able to make quorum.

Jason Hunt said he thinks the technology is important to keep members on the Board like himself who are busy business owners who are all over the place and can multi-task and be engaged with the MPAB.

Emy Diaz agreed that hybrid be maintained because even the State Legislature continues to have a virtual option and it's important to give participants every opportunity to attend the meetings.

Warrick said he would like a letter drafted to Mayor & Council asking them to make a decision on this matter.

Bin-Yusif said he brought this matter up to Mayor & Council on the Council floor during his MPAB report once the pandemic guidelines had been lifted, and the Mayor & Council told him the MPAB should make this decision amongst themselves.

Billy Warrick said he was upset that Bin-Yusif would not draft the letter he was requesting. Bin-Yusif said he understands Mr. Warrick wants to bring this up again and he can feel free to contact the Mayor & Council himself, but he feels like this topic has been thoroughly discussed in person with the Mayor & Council.

LAST ITEMS:

Bin-Yusif asked for any other comments / topics from the Board.

- Wanda Dean said she would like to see an initiative taken on by the Middletown Police along with the Middletown Fire Company about fire extinguishers. She said she has seen some fires happening in the area because people are not fully extinguishing their cooking coals.
- Jason Hunt said he would also like to see more information being put out about Carbon Monoxide in the home as well as putting out messages to keep children from playing in the streets. He said he is seeing more and more kids playing in the streets and with people speeding, texting and not paying attention, we need to address it now.
- Bin-Yusif said we can't forget to remind people to lock their car doors.
- Joyce Kidd said October is Fire Prevention Month, so maybe we should put some reminders on our social media sites to change batteries in smoke detectors and other preventions.

Moved by Jerry Kissel and seconded by Joyce Kidd to adjourn. Motion carried unanimously.

NEXT MEETING: July 17, 2023