

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, Emy Diaz, Michael Harpe, Wanda Dean, Debbie Harrington; Via Zoom: Linda LaRue. 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 7:05 p.m. by Chairman Bin-Yusif.

AGENDA APPROVED: It was moved by Debbie Harrington and seconded by Jerry Kissel to approve moving the agenda forward. Motion carried unanimously.

CHAIR'S REPORT:

COMMUNITY MEETING: Chair Bin-Yusif said he would like to plan a special meeting with the community, so he would like to pin down the date for the meeting. He said between this workshop and next month's workshop meeting, they should be able to come up with a date in September for the meeting.

"Yes, we do have monthly meetings every month, but sometimes when you put out that you're having a special meeting, you can get more participation from the community," he said, adding this is when we can get input from the community on what they are looking for from the MPAB.

NEXT PHASE OF THE MPAB:

There is a considerable amount of members of the original MPAB Board whose terms are ending this October, so this is the time to gather potential members to fill the board, Bin-Yusif said. He said this may also be a good time of transition and perhaps "reset" the board if necessary.

Bin-Yusif said at the last NAACP meeting, it was discussed about having a meeting with the Mayor & Council, the NAACP and anyone on the current MPAB who is planning to remain on the board, to discuss how to proceed as far as their suggestions and recommendations (Mayor & Council's) on moving forward.

He said this meeting will give us the chance "to give our opinions about how things have gone and how we would like them to go as we continue to move forward," he said.

He said an August meeting makes the most sense, perhaps late August, where we can report out about it at the next Mayor & Council meeting in September.

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. He said Instagram seems to be getting the most traction these days. He has been working to circulate all of the summer community events that he hears about on all of the sites.

Research Committee – Wanda Dean said the committee's next big project will be to look at and assess the survey data. As soon as that cuts off, they look forward to analyzing the responses. Kristen Krenzer asked if the Board would like a short report on where it stands today. After a resounding yes, Krenzer reported that there have been 173 surveys completed.

She said almost every neighborhood in Middletown have submitted at least one survey. She said St. Anne's had 63 responses of the 173.

She said she wasn't able to show them the breakdown of the questions at this point, but when she looked at the responses, most of them were about traffic issues – running stop signs and speeding, for example.

It was moved by Debbie Harrington to run the survey through the end of August so the data could be reviewed at the Board's September meeting. Although there was no vote, all members were in agreement with this plan.

Wanda Dean asked if Krenzer would send the MPAB a breakdown of the neighborhoods that have responded, so the group could send out a last-ditch effort to the neighborhoods that are lacking, to see if they could get more participation before the survey is shut down.

Jason Hunt said if everyone does what he did at St. Anne's – push out the survey link on the neighborhood's Facebook page and the neighborhood's Next Door page – and let them know he is on the Police Advisory Board and is looking for feedback. He said he sent out the messages twice.

"I'm telling you, if you put it on their Facebook page, they will respond," Hunt said.

Police Chief Texter said he is not surprised that traffic is being most commented upon, because that is what he is hearing as well. He said that is the reason the department will be implementing a traffic services officer in the department by September, so hopefully that will help.

Wanda Dean said she spoke to State Rep. Moore about the problem with the intersection at Family Dollar (N. Broad and Lake Street) because there have been many terrible accidents at that intersection since the traffic light was removed.

Chief Texter said she spoke to the correct party, because it was DelDOT that removed that light, even against the MPD's recommendation.

Linda LaRue said she is concerned with people parking near stop signs, in the yellow marked curbs area. Krenzer told her if the curb is yellow, and someone is parked there, residents can call police to have that handled.

Emy Diaz said in her work at Legislative Hall, constituents call in all the time about these traffic issues and they don't know who they can call to ask for help to get more stop signs or other signs. Krenzer said if they are calling about streets in Middletown other than Main Street, Broad Street or U.S. 301, the Town will address those questions on a case-by-case basis.

Joyce Kidd agreed, stating the Town just helped Willow Grove Mill's speeding problem along Gloucester Boulevard by adding several stop signs after MPD researched it with the speed trailer and found it was a problem – people were clocked going 60 and over sometimes, she said.

Krenzer said Mayor & Council take a look at all suggestions for these safety concerns – stop signs were just added in Middletown Village and S. Cox Street in recent months, thanks to suggestions from residents.

Jason Hunt asked if there has been any discussion in the MPD about ramping up ticket writing, especially in areas where things are getting out of control.

Chief Texter said just like everything else, it's about manpower. He said the Mayor & Council have authorized using Public Safety Aides year-round, so the MPD is going to try to utilize them for these traffic issues. He said to keep in mind that when these ticket-writing events happen, it's always the residents who live in the neighborhood who are caught – and then they're not happy about that.

Also, he believes once the traffic officer gets going in the fall, he will be able to address the areas of concern on a daily basis with the squads out in the field, based on the data that comes from the speed trailer and speed sign used by MPD.

POLICE CHIEF REPORT

Chief Texter gave the report from the month of June distributed at the July meeting of the Mayor & Council. The following questions were asked following the report:

Billy Warrick asked if it was true that cars are being stolen by juveniles in the area. Chief Texter said yes, this is an ongoing problem with a group or groups of juveniles coming down here from northern New Castle County and walking the streets in neighborhoods looking for open vehicles and sometimes people have left their key fobs in the vehicle and the vehicle is able to be stolen from right in front of the home.

AUGUST MEETING RE-INSTATED

At the close of the meeting, Wanda Dean said she didn't understand why Chair Bin-Yusif keeps talking about a workshop meeting in August because the Board has voted in recent meetings to suspend the August meeting. She said she didn't understand why he was going to have a workshop meeting, when it's been decided to cancel.

Bin-Yusif said his proposed workshop meeting would not be mandatory, but he needs help putting together a report for Mayor & Council, setting up a community meeting and other things that need to get done before the board runs out of time to do these things.

Jason Hunt said if there is such a concern about not having a meeting, let's take a poll and see how many are truly going to be on vacation.

Debbie Harrington said the Board has already made this decision, several months ago, that this would be a break for Board members to spend time with their families and have a break during the summer months. She added that it was brought up several times throughout the year that this was something that was going to be done.

Bin-Yusif said he doesn't like the term "meeting" and that he just wants to have a "planning session" and get some help on the things that need to get done.

"I want everyone to feel free to say things, not worry about Roberts Rules of Order and have us just talk and work through it with open discussion," he said.

Debbie Harrington asked if the public would be invited to this workshop earlier in the discussion and Bin-Yusif said yes.

Harrington said if people attend this workshop and you're just having open discussion, there won't be anything voted and nothing will get approved, so what's the point of having it and getting the public involved too, so the Board members who are not here will miss out on valuable information brought up during this forum.

Emy Diaz agreed that the Board members who are not able to attend the workshop may miss out on valuable discussion that they normally would be a part of.

Billy Warrick switched gears and asked Bin-Yusif how he knows who is coming back onto the Board in October. Bin-Yusif said he asked each member if they are interested in coming back. Warrick said that doesn't mean those people will definitely be invited to come back by Mayor & Council. Bin-Yusif said his numbers are only based on who "wants to come back" at this time. Jerry Kissel said it looks like we need to get the names to Mayor & Council by September if they are supposed to vote on them in October.

Wanda Dean said there needs to be a discussion with Mayor & Council. Do they have a plan?, she asked. They have a part to play in this as well and both sides need to do their parts and everything will work out, she said.

Warrick asked for an update on the numbers again. Bin-Yusif said as of right now, out of the 15 people, he has 6 total members who are staying because there are in the second year of their second term, or they want to be re-nominated for another term. Warrick asked if there's been any discussion about going to 7 members. Bin-Yusif said that hasn't been discussed, nothing's been changed in the number of the Board.

Bin-Yusif then asked for the OK to move forward with closing the meeting and opening the night's workshop, but said he could tell that everyone was still upset with him.

Wanda Dean said no, everything is not alright, people are opposed to having a meeting and it still seems like a meeting is going to happen.

Bin-Yusif again said he was going to need help with a report, strategic plan and more.

Jerry Kissel said if the Board doesn't prepare for the community meeting in August, it's going to have to be pushed to October, instead of its planned September date. But, if the nominations aren't even ready for September, we might have to push it even later, he said.

Joyce Kidd asked if it was possible to vote again to rescind the cancellation of the meeting. Jason Hunt agreed and said why don't we just take a poll to see if there would be a quorum on Aug. 21 and re-vote.

After 30 minutes of discussion on this topic, it was moved by Kissel and seconded by Hunt to rescind the former vote to cancel the meeting and hold the meeting on Aug. 21. Vote passed 6-3.

Moved by Jason Hunt and seconded by Joyce Kidd to adjourn. Motion carried unanimously.

NEXT MEETING: August 21, 2023