

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, Jerry Kissel, Debbie Harrington, Jelani Bryant, Joyce Kidd, Charles Warrick, Jason Hunt, and Wanda Dean. Police Chief William Texter, Captain Ron Davis and FOP Representative Mike Hilliard were also in attendance. The meeting was called to order at 7:15 p.m. by Chairman Bin-Yusif.

Chair's Report:

Chairman Bin-Yusif said the meeting reminder and Zoom link did not get sent out for this meeting, so he believes this is why attendance is down for the meeting and there is no quorum. Kristen Krenzer apologized and said the Zoom program sends the link automatically when she sets up the meeting and the system said the invites were sent out to 19 people. She said she will look into what happened for this meeting since it has worked well the previous 22 meetings.

MEMBERS MISSING MEETINGS: Bin-Yusif reminded members that the bylaws state that board members cannot miss three meetings in a row or four in one year. He asked that members who are not able to continue on the board, for whatever reason, to please reach out to the entity who nominated them to ask for a replacement in the next month to be approved in October.

QUARTERLY REPORT: Bin-Yusif gave an update on the Quarterly Report. He said the report gives an update on the progress of what the board is all about and what it has been working on for two years.

He said the report includes the board's recommendations and requests, and includes items such as: having community input in the selection of the Police Chief when the time comes; diversity in hiring and promotions; increasing the number of police officers on the force; putting more investment in the Community Services Department; and providing more opportunities for the community to engage with the MPD and Mayor and Council.

He said he understands there are monthly council meetings, but it's nice to have a "state of the town" meeting without an agenda to be able to discuss how things are going with area elected officials and community officials in attendance.

He said he will be sending out this final draft to the group and wants comments by the Sept. 12 Mayor & Council meeting so he is able to submit the report to them at that time.

BYLAWS: He reminded the board that the bylaws are fluid and can be changed and amended when necessary, so please let him know if anyone has suggestions for changes or additions to the bylaws.

PAL CENTER: Bin-Yusif said the PAL Center is going to continue to be discussed as there is a lot of interest for a center in our area, and is being considered by many community members and public officials all around, but there needs to be a separate board or group organized to flesh out the details of bringing it to life.

YOUTH POLICE ACADEMY KUDOS: Bin-Yusif said he wanted to congratulate MSgt. Saunders and the MPD on having another successful girls and boys youth police academies this summer. He said he has heard from parents and children who were part of it and it is a wonderful program and well-received.

RECRUITMENT: Every police department in the country is dealing with police recruitment right now. He said the Quarterly Report includes a lot of suggestions for recruitment such as: rolling applications; bringing in civilians as support in the MPD until they get into the academy; online applications with frequently asked questions for recruits; a website just for recruitment; and

information sessions for women in particular. He said there is a common misperception that police departments are male dominated, but that has really changed over the last 20 years.

Bin-Yusif said he would send a copy of the list of recruitment ideas to Chief Texter so they could sit down and discuss the items and about what items the police department already does because he knows there might be some of those.

COUNCIL COMMENTS: Debbie Harrington said she wanted to bring up some comments that were made by Councilman Jim Royston at the August meeting of the Mayor & Council. She said she attended the meeting on behalf of the MPAB and Councilman Royston expressed four concerns. First, he pointed out the number of people who attended the last meeting – 9 out of 15 – so he pointed that out, she said. Also, only one of our subcommittees reported last month, which was concerning to him, she said. He also felt the board should begin meeting in person, so we could better do the work of the advisory board. And finally, he said we have not submitted, or demonstrated “the work” that we are doing as a board.

Jason Hunt asked how many meetings of the MPAB Councilman Royston has attended? He said he didn’t understand why he brought up the July meeting because people tend to miss meetings due to vacations in the summer.

Bin-Yusif said Mr. Royston obviously read his minutes from the July meeting because he himself discussed the attendance and possibly canceling the July meeting next year due to summer vacations. He said “any criticism is good criticism” and we will take it all into advisement.

Billy Warrick asked how Mr. Royston knows who is at each meeting. And why is he concerned about that? Bin-Yusif said the names of members is listed on the minutes that are printed from each meeting. He said he’s sure the comments were made to try to improve the MPAB, so we have to take it as helpful information.

Wanda Dean asked if Councilman Royston’s point was about attendance or reporting? Harrington said it was about both items. Do we have full participation on one hand and is the work being done? He was asking if the work is not being done because we don’t have full participation, she said.

Dean asked how many times the MPAB has met in the past two years without having a quorum. Bin-Yusif said two or three times. Dean then asked how many meetings of the MPAB has Councilman Royston attended. Harrington said none. Dean then said she “takes it with a bitter pill that someone who is over the police department has not seen fit to make an attempt to attend a meeting himself” criticize the board members for attendance.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

A. Police Report Evaluation Committee

Bin-Yusif presented the document being used by this subcommittee to input the monthly data that has been given to us from the MPD such as traffic summons, criminal arrest warrants and other reports written. He said he grabbed all of the police reports from the past year from the Town’s website and has input the information up through August. He said they will continue to input the data and over time, it should help the MPAB distinguish whether there are trends developing.

B. Community Connections Committee

Jason Hunt reported that the Middletown PAB now has an Instagram, Twitter and Facebook page on social media. For familiarity, they are all the same “Middletown PAB” name so people become used to seeing the same name.

He said he’s started following people and asking people to follow us. He would like to start putting content on the sites, so he asked members to give him ideas of things to post. He asked members to go on the sites and follow it and ask friends to follow them as well.

Bin-Yusif asked Hunt to attempt to link to the various neighborhoods in Middletown who have Facebook pages so we can see questions they have in the communities and connect them to MPD if necessary.

Hunt said he expects to be fully ready by the next meeting and we’ll make a huge announcement by going onto the MOT Residents page on Facebook and the Nextdoor app to reach out to all of the neighborhoods in the area.

He said he’s also looking for others to serve on this subcommittee to help with keeping up with all of the posting.

C. Research Committee

Debbie said due to the summer, the committee has not been able to connect, but hopes they will be able to meet next month. She asked Ms. Krenzer where the survey stands. Krenzer said she is still working on the draft survey that she plans to hand over to the MPAB to take over and make their own, but she should be able to email a draft to them by the next MPAB meeting.

D. Strategic Planning Committee

Jerry Kissel said he is willing to take over as chair of either the report evaluation committee or strategic planning. Bin-Yusif said he is putting him down as the chair of the strategic planning. Jelani Bryant said he would also like to be on the strategic planning committee.

Police Chief Report

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

Debbie Harrington asked about a shooting on Cole Boulevard. Chief Texter said there was a shooting last week and the victim is recovering. He said the MPD has received some information on the shooter and he hopes to have good news at the next meeting. Harrington asked if this means the MPD got good cooperation from residents. Chief said not really, it’s amazing to him that at 7 p.m. on a summer evening when a lot of people were outside, but still can’t find someone who will admit to seeing anything ... but it’s certainly not a dead end case by any means, he said.

PAL Program Update:

Bin-Yusif said we are going to have a meeting to put together our suggestions on putting together a board for the PAL program. The idea is for the board to take this idea of having a PAL program in the area and get it rolling.

There are four things needed to get the program running: a 501c3, a letter from the Police Chief showing support for the center, some sort of vision on how it’s going to play out and a strategic plan.

TERM LIMITS ENDING: Bin-Yusif said there are seven (7) members whose terms are going to end in October, so we need to discuss the process for finding new members for those who are

not interested in continuing to serve and having the members who want to return for another term to contact the person or entity who nominated them to see if they would like them to return.

Harrington said the board should go through the minutes and find those members who have missed more than 4 meetings in a year or in a row and point them out. This is our time to scrub that list, she said.

Jerry Kissel asked how the process works for nominating people to the MPAB. He said he knows how he got on, by reaching out to the Mayor and Council, but is there a formal process? Bin-Yusif said there really isn't a formal process, but perhaps the board should consider an application, or at least have a procedure.

Billy Warrick asked how the NAACP selected the members. Bin-Yusif said he would have to defer to the President of the NAACP Middletown Chapter to discuss that, or perhaps he could get something in writing.

Harrington said the NAACP had criteria – they wanted someone from clergy, they wanted Greek organizations who serve the community. Bin-Yusif said he would have someone from the organization on next month's call to discuss this issue.

Kissel said perhaps a representative from the NAACP should be on the call each month so they can answer questions like this.

BRAINSTORMING IDEAS:

Kissel asked if the board knows the demographic breakdown of the police force. He said someone mentioned recruiting more women earlier in the meeting and that there are about 8 women now – out of how many?

Bin-Yusif said we have been trying to figure out for two years what that number is. We know we need more officers, but to what level? We don't know what that outside number is – is it 50 or 60? We don't know, we are struggling to keep the numbers that we have now and increasing it a little each year, Bin-Yusif said.

Chief Texter said he's not sure of the exact numbers of each male and female breakdown, but he just hired two women in the recent process and one male. He also had one male hired in another recent process and we have one minority recruit that's headed into the academy in October.

He said historically, there is a lower number of women in forces, but we are doing better than that, fortunately. He said the goal is always to represent the community with all types of diversity.

He said the entire country is facing a dire need for public service – and this includes medics and fire personnel as well. Everyone is facing a hiring problem.

Joyce Kidd said she heard that police are retiring at an alarming rate in New York. She wondered if we could reach out to those officers because although they are forced to retire at a certain age, but perhaps they aren't ready to retire and would be willing to work in another state.

Chief Texter said we do target other states already and he would look into whether we have targeted New York.

CITIZENS POLICE ACADEMY: MSgt. Saunders is finalizing the Citizens Police Academy for September and will be sending information to the MPAB shortly.

NEXT MEETING: September 19, 2022