



City of Richmond

Meeting Minutes

Public Safety Standing Committee

Tuesday, October 26, 2021

5:00 PM

Council Chamber, 2nd Floor

Committee Members and Staff in Attendance

The Honorable Reva Trammell – Chair
The Honorable Ann-Frances Lambert – Vice Chair
Jamie Isley, Boards and Commissions Administrator
Greg Lukanuski, Deputy City Attorney
Pamela Nichols, Senior Assistant City Clerk
Steven Taylor, Council Policy Analyst
RJ Warren, Deputy City Clerk

Absent

The Honorable Ellen Robertson – Member

Call to Order

Chairwoman Reva Trammell called the meeting to order at 5:07 p.m., and presided.

Evacuation Announcement and Citizen Speaker Guidelines

Senior Assistant City Clerk Pamela Nichols provided information on the appropriate manner in which the Council Chamber is to be evacuated in the event of an emergency along with citizen speaker guidelines.

Public Comment Period

Teenora Thurston, Richmond Transparency and Accountability Project (RTAP) member, urged the Committee to support recommendations provided by the Task Force on the Establishment of a Civilian Review Board (CRB). Ms. Thurston stated that the CRB will provide an assurance for city residents that their concerns would be addressed and improve relationships between the police and the community.

Shanice Jackson addressed the Committee regarding her concerns of police misconduct. Ms. Jackson alleged that she was a target of retaliation by the police because she had publicly expressed disapproval of actions of the police.

Maisie Osteen, Legal Aid Justice Center attorney, RTAP member, addressed the Committee regarding a need for transparency within the police department. Ms. Osteen urged the Committee to support recommendations presented by the Task Force on the Establishment of a CRB.

As-Saddique Abdul-Rahman, RTAP member, addressed the Committee regarding his support of the creation of a CRB with authority to discipline the police. Mr. Abdul-Rahman stated that the Richmond Police Department (RPD) has failed to investigate matters regarding police misconduct.

Sarah Oakes addressed the Committee regarding citizen participation in the preparation of the annual police department's budget. Ms. Oakes stated that citizens, along with a CRB, should be allowed to determine how tax dollars would be allocated within the police department.

Keisha Cummings, 2Love LLC founder and CEO and RTAP member, urged the Committee to support funding for and the creation of a CRB. Ms. Cummings stated that the CRB's membership should consist of the city's underserved communities.

Allan-Charles Chipman urged the Committee to support the recommendations from the Task Force on the Establishment of a CRB. Mr. Chipman stated that the CRB will safeguard citizens' civil rights.

Portnoy Johnson, RTAP member, addressed the Committee regarding the creation of a CRB with subpoena powers. Ms. Johnson remarked that when people think about the RPD, they should think about a trustworthy guardian of the people.

Yohance Whitaker, Legal Aid Justice Center organizer and RTAP member, urged the Committee to support recommendations of the Task Force on the Establishment of a CRB. Mr. Whitaker stated the CRB would create an effective and comprehensive mechanism for police oversight in the city.

Chelsea Higgs-Wise, Marijuana Justice executive director and RTAP member, urged the Committee to accept recommendations for the establishment of a CRB. Ms. Higgs-Wise stated that certain policing of specific areas and people has caused a disproportionate enforcement of certain laws.

Edwuan Whitehead, RTAP member, addressed the Committee regarding the need of an oversight of the RPD, and urged the Committee to adopt participatory budgeting guidelines.

Approval of Minutes

There were no amendments or corrections to the meeting minutes of Tuesday, July 27, 2021, and the committee approved the minutes as presented.

Presentation(s)

Police Staffing and Morale

Police Chief Gerald Smith presented an overview of the staff report for the Richmond Police Department (RPD). Chief Smith reported on the number of current vacancies and sworn hires. Chief Smith noted that there were a number of factors contributing to an increase in vacancies and that nationally, police departments were experiencing similar challenges. Chief Smith further reported that recruiting has been low; however, the police department was making efforts to obtain new officers, such as relaxing the department's standards on tattoos and facial hair.

Vice Chair Anne-Frances Lambert asked about the impact on services resulting from the level of vacancies and inquired about reasons why officers were separating from RPD.

Chief Smith reported that some officers left RPD to pursue career advancement with other agencies; however, a large number of vacancies resulted from officers leaving law enforcement. Chief Smith further reported that other jurisdictions and agencies were aggressive in their recruitment efforts, and that it is the desire of the city to be as competitive as other agencies.

Vice Chair Lambert stated that restoring community trust was a priority and that she was concerned about police officers' mental health and the intake process at the city's regional jail.

Chief Smith reported that, along with the hiring of additional staff, the police department routinely evaluates the mental health status of its officers. Chief Smith stated the officers are mentally and physically

exhausted but it is the goal of the city to address the needs of all officers and to adopt more competitive wages to retain and attract officers.

Chairwoman Reva Trammell asked for a breakdown of the number of vacancies, and she commented that some citizens were concerned about a lack of police presence in their neighborhoods. Chairwoman Trammell remarked that she heard reports that police morale was down because of a lack of support from city leaders and a competitive pay scale.

Chief Smith responded to questions from the Committee regarding the police department's processing of relocation requests from officers under investigation by the department's internal affairs division.

The Committee expressed appreciation to Chief Smith and individuals who addressed the Committee regarding the establishment of a CRB.

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Board Vacancies

Boards and Commissions Administrator Jamie Isley reviewed board applications for consideration by the committee.

Vice Chair Ann-Frances Lambert moved to forward the following board appointment applications to Council with the recommendation to approve and to continue consideration of the appointment applications for the Citizen Advisory Commission on Alternatives to Incarceration and the Community Criminal Justice Board to the November 23, 2021 Public Safety Standing Committee meeting.

Board Name	Criteria for Appointment	Applicant Name
Richmond Ambulance Authority (11 members)	Reside or work in the city	DeWitt Baldwin, III 2nd District Employment (reappointment)
		Carlos Hopkins 6th District Employment (reappointment)
		Marilyn West 2nd District Employment (appointment)
	(3 vacancies)	

The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Civilian Review Board (CRB) Task Force Recommendations

Dr. Eli Coston and Angela Fontaine, CRB Task Force Co-Chairs, presented task force's recommendations for the establishment of a CRB. The recommendations included independent investigation of all complaints, subpoena power, review of previous complaints, making binding disciplinary decisions, review of the police department's policies and authority to make policy recommendations, auditing police data and access to the department's records, review of the budget and ability to make budgetary recommendations, and the creation of a Department of Community Oversight and Police Accountability. Ms. Fontaine remarked that the city of Richmond could serve as beacon for other jurisdictions.

Vice Chair Ann-Frances Lambert inquired about certain recommendations such as subpoena power and proposed staffing.

Chairwoman Reva Trammell asked that recommendations be sent to city administration and the Office of City Attorney for review, and asked Dr. Coston and Ms. Fontaine to contact her to discuss recommendations.

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

Paper(s) for Consideration

There were no papers for consideration.

Discussion Item(s)

There were no discussion items.

Staff Report

Steve Taylor, Council policy analyst, provided the committee with the October staff report.

A copy of the material provided has been filed.

The Committee requested an update from the Sherriff's Department regarding staffing levels and the intake process at its next committee next.

Adjournment

There being no further business before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 6:28 p.m.