

**POLICE AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES**

Bethel A.M.E. Church Ardmore  
163 Sheldon Lane, Ardmore, PA 19003  
February 27, 2017  
6:30 p.m.

The Police and Community Relations Committee meeting was held on Monday, February 27, 2017, at Bethel A.M.E. Church Ardmore, Ardmore, PA.

In attendance:

<u>Committee and Police Staff:</u>	<u>Members of the public in attendance:</u>
Superintendent Michael McGrath Captain Frank Thomas Captain Gene Pasternak Christine Dixon-Anderson Rev. Carolyn Cavaness Rev. Albert G. Davis, Jr. Rev. Carlos Bounds Linda Jackson Rose Johnson Tom McDaniel Maryam Phillips Marie Thornton Robin Thomas	Commissioner Scott Zelov Crystal Blunt Marifa Winfree Heidi Scheer Adrian Seltzer Carl Watson Mike Hays Joanne and Sturgio Poolman Nick Tabor

**Call to Order:**

The meeting was called to order by Christine Dixon-Anderson. Christine went over the agenda and format for the meeting.

**Minutes of the January 23, 2017 Meeting**

The minutes from the January 23, 2017 meeting were approved, on motion by Linda Jackson and second by Reverend Davis. So moved.

## **Superintendent's Report**

Police and Community Relations Consultant - Superintendent McGrath gave an update to the last meeting saying that Major Ben met with Police on January 25, 2017 and had two meetings with Commissioners, February 1 and February 8, 2017. He is continuing with the process, having information gatherings and follow-up meetings. No date has been set for the next public meeting.

Race for Peace Summit - Superintendent McGrath reported that the "Race for Peace" forum was held last Saturday at the Sister Clara Muhammad School Philadelphia MASJID at 4700 Wyalusing Avenue, Philadelphia. It was not as big of a crowd as hoped. It followed the same format as the one in October with group interaction and role playing, showing what occurs when someone is stopped by the police. Some of who attended were: Police officials from Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Philadelphia Counties; and various faith leaders.

Citizens' Police Academy - Starts March 2 and runs through April 20, 2017. There are still a few spots open. If interested, one can contact the Lower Merion Police. Additional information is also available on the police Facebook page and website.

Police Recruitment - Superintendent McGrath stated that there were two hires in January. Their race and gender were: one (1) Black Male and one (1) White Male. There were four additional hires in February: four (4) White Males. Further hiring of Officers should take place in the Spring (late May/June).

## **Public Comment**

Christine Dixon-Anderson commented on the recent NOBLE presentation, *The Law and Your Community*, which was held at the Ardmore Community Center. The turnout was excellent, and she hopes that in the future we can do more. Linda Jackson added that the kids had asked good questions and they got a lot out of it. Crystal Blunt said she would like to have seen a role play between a youth and a bad cop. She also asked if there was any training for the Officers in regards to the Autistic population. Superintendent McGrath said that Lower Merion Officers are very well trained in all aspects of mental health. It was suggested that future presentations get publicized over a period of weeks and not just days.

Adrian Seltzer from CARE Commitment of High School praised Captain Frank Thomas and Officer Josie Murray for their friendly police presentation.

Tom McDaniel mentioned a police show on Friday nights for 3 hours that is worth watching. It might be called Cops Live.

An unidentified woman asked how to go about filing complaints. Captain Thomas and Superintendent McGrath said the police department takes and investigates all complaints from start to finish with a determination at the end. There are many ways to file a complaint: in person, one can stop by and ask for a Sergeant or supervisor. Someone can also call in or send an email. There is a general Lower Merion Police email or a form you can use that can be found on the website. One can also go to one of the Committee members who will forward the

complaint to police management. (\* It was determined after the meeting, that with the changeover to the updated Township Website, the PCRC brochure and comment form were not transferred to the new site. The brochure is being updated to reflect who is currently on the committee and both will be added to the website prior to the next meeting.)

Sturgis Poolman of the Ardmore Presbyterian Church, on Montgomery Avenue at Mill Creek Road, commented that they are renting a house on Sheas Terrace for newly arriving refugees. These refugees will stay in the house anywhere from two to four weeks, until a permanent place to stay is found. The refugees are from Iraq, Afghanistan and the Congo. Right now, there is an Iraqi refugee living in the house. He was an interpreter for the United States and was being targeted, so the U.S. approved his entrance into the United States. As of right now, the church is leasing the house for one year. The church donated all the furniture. So far, the neighbors have been very welcoming and there have been no issues reported.

Linda Jackson was asking about the bomb threats to the Jewish community and wanted to make sure that the Churches are available to help if needed. Superintendent McGrath explained what happened at the Perelman JCC. At 10:40 a.m., a bomb threat came in through a phone call. The caller had a digitalized computer voice. The school has a protocol in place, and the building was evacuated. The occupants were taken to a safe location. Police had two explosive canine teams come in, and in one and a half hours, the building was cleared. Superintendent McGrath said that today, alone, there were five threats in the region. The PA Attorney General's Office, PA State Police, and FBI are all assisting with the investigation.

### **Old Business**

Captain Thomas reported on the minority composition of sworn officers. As of 1/25/17, the department had a total of 130 Officers which included:

- Four (4) Black Males
- Two (2) Black Females
- Seven (7) White Females
- Three (3) Hispanic Males

The authorized strength for the department is 136.

Captain Thomas also reported that police handled 69,360 incidents in 2016. Of those, 4,896 were vehicle stops, and 1,237 arrests were made. Only two interactions resulted in alleged bias complaints.

The two alleged bias complaints consisted of one traffic stop and one pedestrian stop. For both, no force was used, and no arrests were made. Both were filed by someone other than the individuals contacted by police in those incidents. Internal reviews, which included dash camera video for the traffic stop, concluded that both contacts were based upon legal justification and not were not bias related.

Captain Thomas added that last year the department received 63 letters of commendation from the public, and 26 Officers received official commendations for their work. There were a total of

51 complaints from last year, and 40 of those complaints were initiated by police supervisors. Only 11 complaints were filed from the public. The breakdown is 78 % internal and 21 % external.

**New Business** - None.

**Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be on Monday, March 27, 2017, at 6:30 p.m., at Mt. Calvary Baptist Church, 127 Walnut Avenue, Ardmore, PA 19003

There being no further business, the public portion of the meeting was adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

**Executive Session**

Members of the PCRC met in executive session to discuss ongoing issues in the area.

There being no further business, this portion of the meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.