



Akron City Council

Special Committee on Reimagining Public Safety

Report of Recommendations

Jan. 25, 2021

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Introduction

In July 2020, Akron City Council announced that it was forming a Special Committee on Reimagining Public Safety, in order to create a process by which Council could participate in the ongoing community conversations around policing and public safety. We recognize that continued trust between law enforcement and communities requires constantly improving our systems of recruitment, training, use of force, technology, accountability, and more.

We all have a part to play in creating change in our community. As legislators, we wanted to take a dive deep into the fact-finding process, to engage in dialogue with our Akron Police Department, learn more about what works, ask questions about what can be improved, and make recommendations that can contribute to meaningful change.

Each member of Council participated in this process, across four working groups – Accountability and Transparency, Prevention, Personnel and Culture, and Technology and Equipment. Over the course of several months, our four working groups held 22 meetings, live-streamed on YouTube, and engaged in many productive conversations. We would like to thank our APD liaisons for their hard work during this process, as well our interns from the University of Akron and all of our guest speakers.

The following report summarizes the discussions that occurred within each working group and contains recommendations from those groups on ways to improve our policing and public safety systems. This document is just a first step. Akron City Council will continue to pursue our Reimagining Public Safety efforts in conjunction with Mayor Dan Horrigan, the Akron Police Department, and all of our community partners. Specifically, Council's work during this coming year will focus on public engagement in conjunction with the University of Akron – sharing the information in this report with the community and soliciting feedback about policing and public safety. We will also continue our work on the recommendations included herein.

Together, we can create a safer and fairer community for all Akronites.

Margo Sommerville
President, Akron City Council

Accountability and Transparency Working Group

Chair – Ginger Baylor

Co-Chair – Shammias Malik

Member – Phil Lombardo

Summary and Recommendations

Over the last several months, our working group has heard from a number of sources on the topic of police accountability and transparency. Our APD liaisons have shared a great deal of helpful information about the department's internal oversight mechanisms and discipline process, including the work of the Office of Professional Standards and Accountability (OPSA), the Patrol Bureau, and other APD offices.

OPSA, also known as Internal Affairs, conducts internal investigations into officer misconduct, reviews investigations into use of force or citizen complaints, audits body worn camera (BWC) footage, conducts drug screenings, uniform inspections, and property room audits, interacts with the Firearm Review Board, reviews and updates APD policies and procedures, and maintains the IAPro / Blueteam early intervention system. These software programs are advanced tools that maintain comprehensive data on certain types of incidents that could serve as early indicators of potential performance issues, including use of force, officer-involved shootings, vehicle chases, critical incidents like witnessing juvenile deaths, etc. If an officer passes a certain threshold of one type of incidents, or a combination of incidents among several types, in a certain period of time, a shift commander (a captain) is notified and can review these incidents to spot trends, counsel the officer, or suggest additional training, depending on what is needed in the shift commander's judgment. This is a digital version of the early intervention system that APD has had in place for several decades. In addition, APD also maintains other important software and data systems, including the citizen contact log, which tracks demographic data like race, gender, and age with regard to citizen traffic stops, but it is not clear what conclusions APD has drawn from this tool, and it is not readily accessible to the public. A new software program, LEFTA, monitors for racial bias in how Field Training Officers grade new officers in the field. APD should be commended for adopting these sophisticated software-based controls on accountability and misconduct, but more information from them should be shared publicly, as discussed below.

APD reviews all reportable use of force incidents (force reaching a certain minimum threshold¹) and citizen complaints at the shift supervisor level. These investigations are then reviewed through the chain of command and OPSA, and at each level may be sent back for further study. Finalized use of force and complaint investigations are shared with the Independent Police Auditor, Phillip Young, and the collaborative relationship between Patrol Bureau supervisors and Mr. Young is appreciated. If a use of force investigation, complaint investigation, or internal investigation substantiates a finding of misconduct, the Police Chief

¹ Reportable force is defined in APD Policy 2020-013 as "... striking, kicking, tackling, taking a person to the ground forcefully, use of a chemical defense spray, use of a conducted electrical weapon, K-9 applications of force, whenever force of any type results in physical injury, and when the suspect complains of physical injury from a use of force."

imposes a form of discipline (ranging from a written reprimand to firing) based on a discipline matrix. The discipline process is governed by Chapters 700 and 1300 of the APD Rules and Regulations, as well as by provisions in Article XXV of the collective bargaining agreement between the City of Akron and the Fraternal Order of Police. The discipline process is meant to reflect “progressive discipline,” in which the frequency of the conduct (1st offense, 2nd offense, etc.) and the severity (major, minor, and degrees within) relate to escalating punishment. However, after two years, a second minor violation of the same rule is treated as a first offense for the purposes of discipline. While this seems at odds with the progressive discipline concept, the counterargument is that there should be some time horizon after which additional minor violations (like being late to roll call) are not treated as second or third offenses. Further, in order to have an officer agree to a discipline and not appeal it, the Police Chief is empowered to reduce the punishment for minor offenses below what the matrix would suggest – in effect bargaining down minor disciplines. While these rules do not impact major rules violations, these practices, and the collective bargaining agreement, deserve further scrutiny. Available data appears to indicate that uses of force and citizen complaints are infrequent. Data for 2020 indicates that there were 200 reportable uses of force by APD, once in every 746 calls for service, which is 0.134% of all calls. In addition, APD received 36 complaints in 2020, once in every 4,143 calls for service. Expressed as a percentage, they received a complaint on 0.024% of their interactions on calls for service with the public. Use of force incidents were down 13% and complaints were down 35% versus 2019.

For officer-involved shootings, in-custody deaths, or other incidents involving the use of deadly force, investigations have typically been undertaken by the APD Detective Bureau, with determinations on the lawfulness of the force used being made by the Summit County Prosecutor’s Office. As of June 2020, the prosecutor’s office has made the decision to refer these incidents to the Ohio Attorney General’s office, although there is some uncertainty about whether initial investigations will be undertaken by the state Bureau of Criminal Investigation or the APD Detective Bureau. Since 2007, there have been 31 deadly force / in-custody death incidents, including 10 deaths. In addition, from 2009 to July 2020, there have been 11 legal settlements involving APD use of force, with a total of \$956,000 being paid by the City of Akron, which represents an average of about \$87,000 over the last 11 years. These issues also deserve further study and context, particularly given the serious and tragic nature of incidents involving deadly force.

Our working group has also heard from Phillip Young, the city’s Independent Police Auditor, who has served in his role since 2007. Mr. Young’s role functions as an external form of oversight – his office serves as an alternative location for the filing of civilian complaints, and he is charged with auditing complaint investigations, making policy recommendations, and reviewing officer-involved shootings. As noted above, APD shares some information with Mr. Young, including copies of completed investigations into use of force incidents and citizen complaints. However, Mr. Young’s ability to effectively monitor the department and its 458 officers is significantly hampered by his 30-hour-a-week position and lack of any staff support. In addition, Mr. Young does not have direct access to Body Worn Camera (BWC) footage through Evidence.com, or access to the IAPro / Blueteam software, both of which would make external oversight much more robust and effective. These limitations are largely because the Police Auditor role is unclear and does not appear in our city code or charter, and so Mr. Young

has no defined authority under city law to access information that he needs, in many instances having the same type of access as any other citizen.

We have also heard from a number of experts in police accountability and oversight from across the country, including Cameron McEllhiney, Director of Training and Education for the National Association of Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement (NACOLE), Susan Hutson, New Orleans Police Monitor, Fred Davie, Chairman of the New York Civilian Complaint Review Board, Willie Bell, Chairman of the Detroit Board of Police Commissioners, and Don Casimere, retired from the Police Commission in Richmond, California. All of these individuals have spoken about their experiences with external oversight of policing and how important external oversight is in building community trust in law enforcement. Ms. McEllhiney presented on NACOLE's 13 principles of effective oversight, which include: (1) independence, (2) clearly defined and adequate jurisdiction and authority, (3) unfettered access to records and facilities, (4) access to law enforcement executives and internal affairs staff, (5) full cooperation, (6) sustained stakeholder support, (7) adequate funding and operational resources, (8) public reporting and transparency, (9) policy and patterns in practice analysis, (10) community outreach, (11) community involvement, (12) confidentiality, anonymity, and protection from retaliation, and (13) procedural justice and legitimacy.

In our society, we entrust police with the critical responsibility of protecting public safety, including by using force, if necessary. External oversight recognizes that the seriousness of this delegated power requires particular scrutiny in order to ensure that the rights of the public are protected. On both a national and local level, historic injustices have created a trust deficit in how the public, particularly communities of color, interact with law enforcement, and government more broadly. Community trust is essential for effective policing. Strong external oversight helps build trust between police and the community, and operates as a two-way street, allowing the community to share concerns and ideas, while also allowing police to give the community a better understanding of the difficult job they do.

Recommendation #1 – City Council should enact legislation that clearly establishes the Office of the Independent Police Auditor and ensures that the auditor has sufficient authority to access information, adequate staffing and funding, and independence from the political process.

Access to information – Currently, the auditor lacks formal power under city ordinances to access APD information. To be able to operate effectively, the auditor must have the authority to access all relevant records, including BWC footage and the IAPro / Blueteam software. If direct access to BWC footage is not possible, there should at least be a process by which the auditor can quickly request and receive footage with as few redactions as possible.

Adequate staffing and funding – One person cannot adequately audit a department of 458 officers. The auditor's office would be much more effective with three positions – the auditor, a deputy auditor / investigator, and an administrative / communications assistant to help with office management and community engagement.

Civilian oversight / independence from politics – To ensure that oversight is seen as fair by all members of the community and law enforcement, a best practice would be for the auditor to report to a board made up of members of the public. These board members could be chosen by community groups, to underline that this body is totally independent from city council, city administration, and any city politics.

Recommendation #2 – City Council should work with the Akron Police Department and members of the public to ensure that more police data and information is made publicly-available online and updated on a regular basis

With all of the data being gathered by the citizen contact log, the early intervention system, and other software programs, more of this should be made publicly available online and updated on a regular basis. APD posts a monthly PDF with crime and police statistics, which includes use of force and call for service information, but additional summary data from the early intervention system would help citizens get a deeper understanding of use of force and other issues, and data from the citizen contact log would allow citizens to understand the demographics of those individuals being stopped, both instilling confidence in the system and allowing for suggested changes to be made where data presents concerns. It would also allow for journalists and academic researchers, some of whom have been provided citizen contact log and calls for service data in the past, to have direct access online in a way that would inform their work. This additional transparency will bolster the community's understanding of how police do their job and spread information about the internal oversight mechanisms that exist. In this way, transparency would build trust and contribute to more effective policing.

Prevention Working Group

Chair – Rich Swirsky

Co-Chair – Linda F. R. Omobien

Member – Mike Freeman

Summary and Recommendations

Our working group has spent the last several months discussing community-based programs by the Akron Police Department and social services agencies to proactively prevent crime, improve public safety, and reduce the overall burden on the police force. Our meetings have included presentations by current and retired APD employees and social services staff about existing collaborations, as well as discussions about ways in which many of these programs might be expanded or improved.

Historically, APD's community policing efforts have existed since the 1960s. These efforts were significantly expanded in the 1990s through the training of specific officers in the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) program. Through this initiative, officers helped create dozens of citizen block watches, visited repeat call locations to troubleshoot neighborhood issues, and engaged in mediation efforts. As COPS officers retired over the years, this evolved into the Neighborhood Response Team (NRT) program, started in 2012. Through the NRT program, 12 officers (divided among the four police zones) devote their shifts to responding to frequent call locations, trying to resolve neighborhood disputes, attending community gatherings, and generally serving as a point of contact for citizens and councilmembers.

APD also maintains a Community Relations unit, which includes a lieutenant, a sergeant, and two officers. This office works on a host of community-based programs, including block watches, National Night Out, the police explorers program for youth, Red Cross blood drives, Safety Town, gun safety, Shop with a Cop, and more.

We feel strongly that citizen engagement and relationship-building by APD will contribute to increased trust between law enforcement and residents, and will allow more neighborhood issues to be proactively addressed before they become full-fledged threats to safety. Ultimately, the level of community engagement is tied to budgeting and how we allocate resources, both within APD and citywide. Going forward, new federal grant funding is slated to add 12 new officers – including five in the NRT program and two in Community Relations office (as well as three in the Gun Violence Reduction Team and two in the FBI's Safe Streets program). This expanded staffing will help further the engagement efforts of NRT and Community Relations.

In addition to staffing, a key policy decision of any police department is how patrol officers divide their time. In Akron, high call volumes often require patrol officers to spend much of their shift responding to back-to-back calls for service. When it comes to building community trust, relationships are key, and proactive bike and foot patrols could help in that regard, allowing officers to spend more time walking the beat and interacting with folks outside of emergency calls. APD has been studying this issue in detail, and the City of Akron has set a

goal that our 17 NRT officers shall spend at least 25% of their time on foot patrols, bike patrols, or meeting with the community. This is an important and laudable step, and we should build upon it by finding ways that bike and foot patrols can be built into the regular schedules of all the officers who serve in the Patrol Bureau. Again, high volumes will make this complicated, but even ensuring that a certain number of weekly or monthly patrol hours are spent on bike and foot patrols could make a significant difference in expanding citizen-APD relationships and building trust.

Another significant topic of discussion in our meetings has been APD programs and collaborations with regard to mental health issues. APD recently celebrated its 20th anniversary of Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training, a 40-hour process through which officers learn tools and a mindset that helps them approach and engage with individuals dealing with crisis and addiction. Akron had the first CIT program in Ohio, and one of the first in the country, and since then CIT has become a national best practice. Over the years, more than 180 Akron officers have been trained in CIT, and often these officers share these practices throughout the department. Currently, about 110 officers are CIT-trained, and at last count about 81 of these officers were serving in the Patrol Bureau, where officers respond to calls for service.

APD also has a long-running, successful partnership with Community Support Services, Inc. (CSS), a local behavioral health agency. On Monday evenings, and during daytime hours throughout the week, an APD officer and CSS case manager make visits to individuals who are referred through CSS or other sources. This two-person team checks in on these individuals and helps connect them with services they might need. If an individual is suffering a significant mental health crisis, they can be brought to Psychiatric Emergency Services (PES), a psychiatric facility that deals with emergency situations, or in some cases they can be brought to CSS during daytime hours for support services.

The Quick Response Team (QRT) is another excellent APD collaboration, started in 2017 to address the opioid epidemic. The QRT consists of an Akron police officer, an Akron fire medic, and a treatment counselor/provider from Summit County Public Health (SCPH). The team spends one day a week visiting with individuals who have recently experienced drug overdoses. The QRT members attempt to engage the individual and their family members in a conversation, connecting them with resources and leaving behind Narcan if appropriate. In some cases, the SCPH counselor/provider has a background in substance abuse, using that lived experience to form an emotional connection with the individual. One challenge facing this program is funding – there were suggestions about expanding the number of days that the team would go out, or expanding this model to other issues, like individuals who have recently attempted suicide.

We also discussed court diversion programs for those suffering from mental health issues. In the Akron Municipal Court, the Forensic Assertive Community Treatment (FACT) program assists about 20 individuals who have severe mental illness with a history of psychotic experience and a history of misdemeanor offenses. For individuals who go through the program, roughly 90% do not recidivate within one year, and over 90% have stable housing when they complete the program. At the county court level, the Healing, Opportunity, Progress, and Empowerment (HOPE) court offers a similar program for individuals with severe mental illness

with a history of psychotic experience, a current felony 3, 4, or 5 charge, and no history of violence. This program, started in 2018, serves about 35 individuals and has had 3 graduates.

Between CIT training, the QRT, the APD partnership with CSS, and the involvement of our court systems through diversion programs, it is clear that our community is very lucky to have a wide range of social services that collaborate well with APD. Going forward, it seems there is a lot of potential in expanding these partnerships, and that the barriers to doing so are primarily based on funding.

Throughout our working group meetings, there was a continuing discussion of whether it may be appropriate for social service agencies to respond to some 911 calls relating to mental health or other issues, the idea being that a social service-focused approach might be more effective in some cases, and could also free up APD to focus on issues that clearly need a police response. Our APD liaisons made clear that they believe there should be a police response to all calls, as situations are fluid and could endanger non-police responders. We also heard from the Police Chief in Alexandria, Kentucky, a small city south of Cincinnati, who described a program in which the department employs two social workers, who follow up on calls (and in some cases respond to calls where the scene is deemed safe).

Finally, we heard from our Safety Communications dispatch center, which receives about 165,000 911 calls each year and dispatches police, fire, or EMS as appropriate. New hires are trained for about six weeks on how to handle the difficult calls that come in, and then are placed on a 1-year probationary period. In some cases, dispatchers redirect calls to 311 or other services as appropriate. As with our police, fire, and EMS personnel, Safety Communications staff perform a difficult function under stress. In order to support them, the office tries to celebrate good calls and connects employees to the citywide Ease at Work services as appropriate.

Recommendation #1 – Council should work with city administration, APD, and community partners to fund CIT training for all officers, particularly all patrol officers and supervisors who respond to calls for service. Mental health and crisis issues are among the most difficult and complex safety concerns, and APD has been far ahead of the curve in addressing these issues. Department-wide CIT training would help us continue to improve our response to residents impacted by these situations.

Recommendation #2 – Council should work with city administration, APD, and community partners to expand existing community and social services partnerships, including finding ways to involve social service providers in follow-ups to incidents and potentially in co-responding to some 911 calls as appropriate.

APD's partnerships through CSS and the QRT program are forward-thinking and proactive ways of engaging with residents experiencing mental health and addiction issues, and the NRT officers perform a similar function with regard to broader neighborhood issues. It is worth considering how we can continue building and expanding these programs, in order to increase our social service response after incidents. It is also important that we engage in further study of models that involve a joint police-social service response to calls. Another key consideration will be communication and data-sharing between organizations, ensuring that

information and feedback goes both ways. Ultimately, expanding these community and social service partnerships will require close consideration of how funds are allocated within APD, and what additional funding can be provided from grants and other outside sources.

Recommendation #3 – Council should work with city administration and APD to find ways to build regular foot and bike patrols into the schedules of all Patrol Bureau officers, in order to expand APD-citizen contacts outside of emergency situations and help solidify stronger relationships between police officers and the communities they diligently patrol and serve.

Personnel and Culture Working Group

Chair – Tara Samples

Co-Chair – Brad McKittrick

Member – Jeff Fusco

Summary and Recommendations

Our working group has closely studied the police hiring process, as well as having broader discussions about improving in-service training for current officers and supporting positive culture and morale within the Akron Police Department. Through our meetings, we've had productive conversations with our APD liaisons – Captain Kris Beitzel, Lieutenant Allen Fite, and Lieutenant Gerald Forney – City Human Resources Director Donald Rice, and our University of Akron interns – Trevon Richardson and Shelby Stevens Kennedy.

Personnel and hiring

Over the years, a continued focus of the Akron Police Department and the City of Akron has been building towards a police workforce that is demographically representative of the city, in terms of both race and gender. This challenge is reflected in statistics from earlier this year which indicate that roughly 17% of the force is black, and women represent 9%. This data also shows representation challenges at the supervisory level – black employees make up 13% of sergeants, 20% of lieutenants, and none of the highest ranks (captains, deputy chiefs, and chief). This is also true for women, who make up 4% of sergeants, 5% of lieutenants, and 22% of captains (2 of 7 positions). It is important to note that APD and city government have confronted these concerns head-on and are clearly focusing substantial effort on improving both recruitment and retention in order to build a more diverse and representative workforce.

As discussed extensively in our meetings, the current hiring process for Akron police officers has a number of steps and involves both APD and the City of Akron Human Resources Department. The steps include:

- (1) Advertising and recruitment – done continuously, but particularly for 6-8 weeks before the test
- (2) Written civil service test – test-takers are ranked and then recruits are selected off of this list
- (3) Physical fitness test – push-ups, sit-ups, and a 1.5 mile run
- (4) Background check, polygraph test, and meeting with command staff
- (5) Conditional job offer
- (6) Psychological and medical exam
- (7) Participation in a 24-week in-house police academy
- (8) Appointment as a police officer, with a 1-year probationary period

Nationwide, police recruitment has steadily become more difficult. In recent years, APD and the City of Akron Human Resources Department have taken a number of steps to improve and restructure the hiring process to make it more efficient and to expand the pool of qualified,

competitive, and diverse recruits. The most notable change was returning to an in-house police academy in 2019, after many years of using outside academies. This allows trainees to start learning about the City of Akron and APD's specific culture and policies much earlier in the process. As part of the Akron academy, recruits are now paid during the process, which allows for the participation of individuals who might not otherwise be able to forgo pay for roughly six months.

Several other notable changes have helped broaden the pool of applicants, including raising the maximum age for applicants from 35 to 40, and shifting deadlines for physical testing standards. Previously, applicants had to meet the statewide physical standards at the beginning of the academy. Now, APD's requirement for those beginning the academy is 15% lower than the final statewide standard (resulting in 271 individuals making it past this initial threshold in 2019, versus only 156 in the 2017 class), although recruits must still meet the full statewide physical standard before becoming officers. In addition, recruits are selected from a ranked list based on the civil service test scores (often there are ties in scores, so the top 3 ranks could include more than 3 individuals). Previously, each open position was filled by looking at the individuals in the top 3 ranks on the civil service test list, and then moving down the list, 3 ranks at a time, until each position was filled (the "Rule of 3"). With a recent charter amendment passed by voters in November 2020, each position will now be filled by looking at the top 10 ranks for each slot (the "Rule of 10"), allowing for a broader pool of candidates to be considered. Finally, recruiting off of the civil service list takes a lengthy amount of time, and individuals who are not initially selected may end up pursuing other prospects (often referred to as the civil service list becoming "stale"). Now, background checks are being performed more expeditiously, so that the city can move through the list quicker and prevent missing out on qualified candidates.

There are some things that have been difficult to change – the American with Disabilities Act prevents having a psychological exam before a conditional job offer. Drug screens test for several illicit substances like marijuana, cocaine, and amphetamines, but not for steroids, largely because of cost, and tests are done later in the process, when there's a smaller pool, to cut down on expenses as well. Going forward, we would like to work towards testing for steroids in some capacity, as these drugs are at least as significant a concern as marijuana. There are some cost concerns – current drug tests cost \$50 per applicant, and testing for steroids could be an additional \$100 apiece. In addition, there is some difficulty in identifying what particular steroids are tested for, given the ever-changing chemical makeup of steroids. Finally, an alternative could be random steroid testing for current officers, although this would likely need to be negotiated in the police union collective bargaining agreement. In addition, looking into ways to move up the drug tests (and the psychological test, if possible) could help focus attention on the most suitable candidates and make the process more efficient.

In our discussions, some concerns were raised about individuals who may have been removed as candidates due to bad credit, or for minor drug use many years ago. Our APD liaisons made clear that these are not criteria for rejecting a candidate, and that the primary concern in these situations is often honesty. Still, if there are any concerns about credit (or honesty regarding credit), there may be an opportunity to connect recruits to the local Financial Empowerment Center, given that financial issues may be more present in future classes because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Still, there was an acknowledgement that if there are concerns about

specific cases, the rejected candidate should be able to address these with APD and HR, in order to ensure that the process is working properly. In future hiring panels, we should include a community representative who could help add an outside perspective to the process, while still respecting confidentiality.

Above, we mentioned that the maximum age for applicants was recently raised from 35 to 40. We would like to engage in further study about removing the maximum age requirement entirely. There are a number of major jurisdictions that do not have maximum age requirements (including Cincinnati, OH, Columbus, OH, Los Angeles, CA, Philadelphia, PA, Phoenix, AZ, San Diego, CA, Seattle, WA, New Haven, CT, and Toronto, Canada. In addition, there are a number of departments with similar or higher maximum age requirements (40 for Cleveland, OH, Chicago, IL and Fort Worth, TX, 45 for Houston, TX and San Antonio, TX). If an applicant is able to adequately complete the other requirements – physical and psychological fitness, civil service exam, drug screen, etc., then it may make sense to invest in that officer, even if they are over 40 years old. In addition, the maturity of older officers may also itself be a benefit for the force. Years ago, APD did not have a maximum age requirement. As noted, this issue deserves closer study, and we look forward to continued discussions into removing the requirement.

In addition, there are some changes that could help at the beginning of the process. Many years ago, the Akron Urban League offered in-person hands-on test prep for the civil service test, and exploring a restart of that program through the Urban League or Stark State could help candidates immensely. In addition, there is a growing understanding that recruitment is a community process, relying on neighborhood groups, businesses, faith organizations, city council, and more. Still, there is a need to build on this outreach in a number of ways. It would be particularly helpful to find neighborhood “figureheads” who can help direct young people to APD as a career pathway, as well as working with the Akron Public Schools College and Career Academies, as well as continuing to engage potential recruits through ride-alongs and shadowing officers. Finally, the APD mission statement could be updated to include the need for a workforce that reflects community and the need for diversity.

A significant issue of discussion was how to improve recruitment of Akron youth, particularly minority youth and women – to “grow our own from home.” Often teenagers interested in public service and public safety are involved with programs like the Akron Police Explorers or the Mayor’s Youth Leadership Council. These young people are promising candidates to become officers, they often end up going into other fields because individuals under 21 cannot become sworn law enforcement officers, creating a 3-year gap between high school and a job with APD.

Even before our first meeting, our working group was focused on creating a Pathway to Law Enforcement for young people in our community. This program could involve 18-year-olds being hired as city employees, either within the Akron Police Department or within another department, and then they could serve in a variety of public-facing roles until they turn 21, when they could apply to be an officer. For example, an 18-year old could be hired as a seasonal employee in the Recreation Bureau to help staff parks and community centers, or in a seasonal or co-op role with the Service Department. They could then move into more intensive public-facing roles, such as answering calls in the 311 call center, and then perhaps the 911 call center.

Participants could also take advantage of the city's partnership with Stark State to get certifications or degrees that could help them as an officer, such as courses in Human and Social Services and Chemical Dependency fields (such as Social Work, Counseling, and Addiction Counseling), or even earning an Associate of Applied Science in Human and Social Services. When the program participants turn 21 and apply to APD, they could potentially have additional preference points added to their civil service test score given their participation in the Pathway program, as well as additional preference points if they have completed a social services-focused Associate's degree.

Continuing training and police culture

Our working group also focused on personnel and culture issues beyond the hiring process. One significant focus was continuing professional training (CPT), the in-service training that officers receive on an annual basis. The principal concern here is that cities lack strong state training mandates and support. In 2017, the Ohio legislature mandated 20 hours of CPT for all officers, but the state has not required CPT for any of the past three years, leaving departments to design and implement their own trainings. In addition, some training is typically done through the Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy (OPOTA), but OPOTA recently closed their Richfield campus, meaning that officers now have to travel to the London campus, which sometimes involves overnight stays and increased costs for the same amount of training. The state has made some moves towards standardizing training through the Ohio Collaborative, a group of law enforcement officials and community advocates who have set statewide standards for use of force and other critical policy issues.

APD's Training Bureau has done a good job with a difficult situation, notwithstanding the lack of state mandates or funding. The APD Training Bureau works with the Ohio Collaborative, APD Patrol Bureau commanders, and the Office of Professional Standards and Accountability (OPSA) to determine trends and issues that officers could use additional training in. Recently, they've focused on de-escalation and CIT awareness, implicit bias and procedural justice, as well as ongoing legal updates. Throughout our meetings, our APD liaisons noted that their focus is on building a department culture oriented around service to the community and responsiveness to community concerns.

This year, two days of in-service was required, and the plan for 2021 is to have roughly 40 hours mandated. In addition, the Training Bureau hopes to offer more, smaller trainings, opening a particular training to 20 officers and hold it five times a year. Still, the logistics of holding academy and in-service trainings can be difficult and can represent a strain on resources. For example, 53 current officers helped in the 2019 academy (and trainers for the academy need to be OPOTA-certified). Improvement of our in-service trainings is an area that is ripe for renewed focus and investment.

Officers also receive training at the daily shift roll call. There are five patrol shifts, and each shift is commanded by a captain, who leads a roughly 15-minute roll call, an opportunity for all officers on that shift to come together, talk about any notable issues or recent situations, and listen to quick trainings or updates. This is also an opportunity to boost culture and morale – Captain Beitzel spoke about how she uses roll call as an opportunity to send her shift out on a

positive note. In all, there is an opportunity to make roll call trainings more standardized and consistent across shifts, and to have the Training Bureau more involved in creating a curriculum, with short video trainings, and technology in the roll call room to support this.

In terms of culture, Captain Beitzel spoke to the national discourse around policing, and how many officers feel like their actions around use of force may be scrutinized in unfair ways. Our APD liaisons were clear that they felt there was a strong bond between officers, and that officers should feel comfortable going to their direct supervisors with concerns. There was discussion about the idea that, to the extent there are culture concerns, there is sometimes value in having a space where folks can share their concerns confidentially, without fear of reprisal, in order to catalyze institutional change. One possibility would be partnering with an outside group that could come in and facilitate a process by which personnel could share their unvarnished opinions, in a way that could provide constructive feedback for further institutional change.

Another area of training that we discussed involved training for new officers. Once recruits are appointed as sworn officers and begin their probationary period, they work in conjunction with a Field Training Officer (FTO) who helps mentor and grade the new officer, with pairings switched up roughly every 10 weeks. Often, the Training Bureau has some awareness of a new officer's strengths and weaknesses from the academy, and puts a lot of thought into pairing up new officers with FTOs. Furthermore, there was discussion about having seasoned officers help mentor new officers in a more formalized way. There was discussion about potentially taking into consideration race or cultural background in pairing up FTOs with new officers. It is important that this is taken into account going forward, to help ensure that someone who is from an area that looks very different from Akron demographically might get a better understanding much faster.

Finally, the working group also discussed the current staffing of the department and whether it is sufficient. There are currently around 450 officers, and the city budget authorizes a certain number of employees each year. One argument is that the number of officers is not high enough, because the number of specialized units (Neighborhood Response Team, Quick Response Team, etc.) all draw from the Patrol Bureau, the central "well" of officers that respond to calls for service. In December 2020, a new \$3.9 million Department of Justice grant was announced that will allow for the hiring of 12 additional officers who will serve in NRT, Community Relations, the Gun Violence Task Force, and the FBI Safe Streets Initiative. Nevertheless, one area of future study could be staffing levels and how things are balanced between the Patrol Bureau and specialized units that reflect important areas of community concern.

As discussed above, our working group discussions raised many thoughtful ideas about improving the APD hiring and training process. Many of these ideas deserve further discussion and study, but much of our discussion focused around two principal recommendations:

Recommendation #1 – City Council should work with the Mayor's Office, the City Department of Human Resources, and the Akron Police Department to create a Pathway to Law Enforcement program that will allow individuals under 21 years old to be hired into certain city roles with the purpose of eventually applying to become an Akron police officer. The program would allow

participants to interact with the public through community-facing jobs, such as City Recreation and Parks, the City Service Department, or the 311 or 911 call centers. The program would involve partnering with Stark State and/or the University of Akron so that participants could undertake education and training relevant to policing, social services, mental health, etc. The participants could also receive focused mentoring and guidance from current APD officers.

Recommendation #2 – City Council should work with the Mayor’s Office, the Akron Police Department, and state agencies like the Ohio Collaborative to expand CPT in-service trainings offered by the APD Training Bureau, allowing for certified officers and detectives to offer APD-specific trainings as much as possible. This could also involve standardized roll call trainings and improved roll call room technology to allow for such trainings. This could also involve discussions at the state level about better ways to fund and support training across Ohio departments.

Recommendation #3 – City Council should work with the Mayor’s Office, the City Department of Human Resources, and the Akron Police Department to consider eliminating the maximum age requirement for police recruits. Continued discussions around this issue could include looking at how this issue has been handled by similar jurisdictions.

Technology and Equipment Working Group

Chair – Donnie Kammer

Co-Chair – Sharon Connor

Member – Russel C. Neal, Jr.

Summary and Recommendations

Our working group has studied many recent and upcoming technology advancements at the Akron Police Department, including the implementation of Body Worn Cameras (BWC), the new Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) system, updated server infrastructure, a forthcoming drone program, and more. In addition, our working group has discussed the usage of tear gas, pepper spray, and tasers – often referred to as less-lethal agents. Throughout these conversations, we have been lucky to have the thoughtful participation of our APD liaisons, Captain Michael Yohe and Lieutenant Mark Farrar, who have provided much of the information contained in this report.

Police technology

Many of the technology projects within APD have been implemented by Akron Safety Forces IT, which has a team of seven personnel serving around 1,000 users across APD and the Akron Fire Department (AFD). This work has been supported by the City of Akron IT Department, which also provided helpful information to our working group.

One of the most significant technological changes within APD over the last several years has been the full implementation of around 245 body cameras for most officers interacting with the public. APD has contracted with Axon for cameras and for storage of BWC footage and all other digital evidence through an online platform, Evidence.com. The BWC implementation has cost over \$1 million, although it was funded in part by a \$400,000 outside grant obtained by APD. The BWC program will result in recurring costs of about \$1 million every five years going forward. The sheer size of data being collected by APD is overwhelming – as of December 2020, APD had about 230 terabytes of digital evidence stored on Evidence.com, the vast majority of that being body camera footage. To put this into perspective, 230 terabytes equate to roughly 115,000 hours of video footage, and a full-time employee reviewing that footage would need about 55 years to go through all of it. As such, the magnitude of the BWC project has impacted almost every unit in the department, and requires significant personnel time to manage BWC sorting, tagging, and records retention. In addition, for the time being, the city is focusing on body cameras over dash cameras, as roughly 80% of citizen interactions are picked up by the former, while only about 20% are picked up by dash cams, making the latter very costly for the benefit provided. Nevertheless, dash cameras may be something worthy of continuing study going forward.

Our working group made clear that City Council wants to continue to be involved with the BWC issue, making sure that all officers who need a body camera have one, and that we can all continue to work at improving the BWC program, given its value to both the public and to the police department. Our APD liaisons also pointed out that BWC footage sometimes presents a

more detailed view of an incident than an officer may have seen. Particularly, human eyes have about a 55-to-60-degree field of view, and this can narrow dramatically during a chaotic, high-stress situation (tunnel vision). Axon cameras, by contrast, offer a 180-degree view. As such, cameras sometimes capture more detail than an officer reacting to a situation may have seen. Given the recent charter change, we all recognize the importance of BWC footage of deadly force incidents being made public as quickly as possible. With that being said, it will also be important for some of these videos to be accompanied by sufficient context to explain what is occurring in the video, where appropriate.

Another recent IT project has been implementing a new citywide server platform. Previously, the city operated separate data centers for Safety Forces (police and fire) and other city services. Following a January 2019 cyberattack on city systems, the city is moving forward with a consolidated data center, which is resulting in significant savings that are being reinvested into the IT systems. Due to the wide variety of computer applications and functions across city servers, the city will focus on physical storage over cloud storage for the time being. Still, the city maintains cloud storage back-ups of some systems, and hopes to consolidate functions over the next several years before looking again at moving to cloud storage.

In addition, the city recently implemented the new Tyler Technologies CAD system, replacing the prior city dispatch system, which was about 25 years old. The new CAD system is a partnership with Summit County and other nearby municipalities, and will dramatically improve the service that the consolidated police and fire dispatch center can provide. The city is currently working on the implementation of the companion Tyler Technologies Records Management System (RMS), which will work with the CAD system and track and store call data going forward.

Another area of focus going forward is the drone program. Unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) have significant potential to aid police operations as a force multiplier. It is important to note that these are small, non-weaponized vehicles, similar to consumer drones, not the military vehicles commonly seen in media. The main benefit of UAVs in policing is the use of an aerial, mobile camera. As such, APD's UAV program will be used for accident reconstruction and crime scene investigation, not surveillance or crowd control.

UAVs are highly regulated at the federal level, and so drone pilots will need to be certified, receiving a Part 107 license from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), a process which is already underway. In addition, APD is formulating a procedure for UAV usage. The plan is to have a UAV team within the Crime Scene Unit, which will consist of a pilot, an observer who will watch the drone and keep an eye out for obstructions, and a third officer providing security for the other two members. APD has received a \$25,000 donation from Emerald Performance Materials, which will help pay for the purchase of a \$4,000 drone, as well as implementation. APD hopes to launch the program in 2021, and to engage in a public awareness campaign, to ensure that citizens are aware of what UAVs will and won't be used for. Throughout this process, APD has worked with other nearby municipalities who are implementing similar programs. One suggestion from our working group was potentially working with Kent State University, which has a significant aviation program.

Another focus has been finding ways to utilize the city's existing camera network to assist in solving crimes. The City of Akron has a network of 277 cameras across the city, often mounted on city buildings or light or traffic poles. These cameras are not usually monitored live, but they record 24/7 and hold data for 21 days. Recently, APD detectives have been given access to Milestone software which can allow them to view the cameras from their workstations. This has helped in solving crimes, including homicides. Going forward, there is significant potential to use video analytics software to help improve surveillance capabilities. Lieutenant Farrar presented about Briefcam, a new video analytics program that can filter footage from a single camera to show only individuals or vehicles that meet certain criteria. In an almost science-fiction way, hours of video footage can be combined into a condensed video that can be reviewed in minutes. In addition, Briefcam and similar technologies can scan camera footage for license plates of vehicles that may be stolen or otherwise part of an investigation.

Obviously, these programs require a tradeoff between security and privacy. Going forward, it will be important to gauge public opinion about how cameras in public spaces should be used. With Ring doorbells and other consumer camera systems becoming ubiquitous, it may be that the public is willing to accept greater surveillance by police within public spaces. Still, there should be transparency and clear rules on what is and is not permitted. For instance, some software packages, like Briefcam, allow for facial recognition to be used, but this may be something that the public is not willing to accept. Going forward, City Council can participate in these discussions, to help provide citizen input into how these technologies can be used in a way that meshes with public expectations of privacy and security.

There are a variety of other IT projects that we discussed. Within police cars, APD has replaced consumer-grade laptops with more rugged tablets. WiFi hotspots have been added throughout APD and AFD buildings to help allow personnel to access training materials. In addition, more than updated 250 computer workstations have been deployed over the last year, including all dispatch computers. In addition, APD has deployed more than 50 laptops during COVID-19 to allow remote work. Finally, APD has implemented a new software program called LEFTA, which checks for potential bias in evaluations of new officers by field training officers.

Going forward, APD is hoping to implement a citizen online reporting system, like LexisNexis Coplogic, that will allow citizens to report low-level crimes or minor accidents, to free up patrol officers to focus on higher-priority calls. There is also a need to expand the OnBase document management platform, in order to cut down on the usage of paper forms for procedures, travel, etc. APD is looking at implementing an e-ticketing system through the new Tyler Technologies platform, which, along with printers in police cruisers, would allow tickets, tow reports, and summonses to be printed in the field, instead of being written by hand. In addition, APD is studying an enterprise printing solution to prioritize copiers over small printers, upgrading to Office 365, and looking to invest in Chromebooks for new recruits.

Police equipment

Another focus of our discussions was police equipment and militarized functions. Captain Yohe provided some helpful background and context to the working group here. Police departments, given their charge of dealing with critical, violent incidents, do resemble the

military in some ways (a command and rank structure, use of weapons). Still, the differences are very significant – for instance, use of pistols as a primary weapon as opposed to long guns, less emphasis on helmets and heavy body armor. To this point, APD does have some rifles on loan through the federal 1033 Program through the Defense Reutilization and Marketing Office (DRMO), but does not have mechanized vehicles.

We also discussed less-lethal agents like pepper spray, tear gas, and tasers. Tear gas is primarily used during standoffs to force individuals out of a structure, or to move crowds during civil disturbances where there is a threat of violence or property damage. Still, there is a clear recognition that these tools are not to be used lightly. Captain Yohe emphasized that through the roughly 40 demonstrations that occurred this summer, APD was very focused on making sure that individuals could express their views openly and safely, and that tear gas was only deployed on one occasion, when a small downtown demonstration devolved into objects being thrown at officers and property damage. Similarly, patrol officers carry pepper spray, which can be used to subdue individuals who are combative. Again, use of pepper spray or tear gas must be justified within APD's use of force policy and the specific chemical defense spray procedure. While individual officers can make a determination that less lethal agents should be used, in a civil disturbance situation this determination will in most cases be made by a supervising officer surveying the entirety of the situation. In addition, we discussed tasers, noting that City Council was involved in recent years with equipping officers with tasers, to provide a less-lethal alternative to firearms, and that, like with the BWC program, we all can continue to work at improving our processes around use of force and less-lethal tools.

Recommendations

Our working group meetings were primarily informational, but a recurring topic was increasing community awareness of APD's use of technology and equipment, and making sure that City Council provides relevant input on behalf of the community. This relates to body cameras, surveillance cameras, the upcoming drone program, less-lethal agents, and more. The conversations that we had with our APD liaisons and among our working group members were productive, and we should continue to engage in dialogue with APD, within City Council, and with the community about various technology programs, like the UAV team and the potential use of video analytics, as we all move forward with building a safer Akron.

Appendix – Links to recordings of meetings

Accountability and Transparency

- 9/16/20 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YgjMpzJSj84>
- 9/30/20 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qgPg160AON0>
- 10/14/20 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MQyF5S8aDug>
- 10/28/20 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=alDCq2tNqNU>
- 11/10/20 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1hyeB_V8-n0
- 11/24/20 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iGNaYmTpQw8>
- 12/1/20 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zq3TDn76ly0>

Personnel and Culture

- 9/17/20 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F9IBTYzBpcE>
- 10/1/20 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VwJD21nvj1E>
- 10/15/20 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fxCg2v6jVYM>
- 10/29/20 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aUTAx_mOaZs
- 11/12/20 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XsCcYTpmq2s>
- 1/7/21 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RCK6l9atw7I>

Prevention

- 9/24/20 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T3O4b6s0yNQ>
- 10/8/20 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oWHKE6oPN70>
- 10/22/20 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pMUX_AWkF14
- 11/5/20 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6adTkitkxbY>

Technology and Equipment

- 9/23/20 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f0esbPJAQ6c>
- 10/7/20 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U2EMzGHZpOE>
- 10/21/20 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3SOXQENA4wk>
- 11/4/20 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KGaFqaM0Q3k>
- 11/18/20 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ox_epOMI3RU