

**TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND
POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY BOARD**

Minutes of Public Meeting
May 14, 2024

The meeting of the Talbot County Police Accountability Board ("PAB") was called to order at 8:30 a.m. on Tuesday, May 14, 2024. Present were Chairman Mitchell Ettinger, Members Michael Bibb, John Gilbert, Jo Ann Murray, Chris Rice, Connie Webster, and Board Secretary Victoria Bradley.

- I. **Call to Order** – Chairman Ettinger called the meeting to order and made welcoming remarks.
- II. **Minutes** – Upon motion made by Mr. Gilbert, seconded by Ms. Murray, the minutes of the Tuesday, February 13, 2024, PAB meeting were unanimously approved without modification.
- III. **Discussion with Law Enforcement Agencies ("LEA")**

Submission of Quarterly Use of Force Reports – The LEAs discussed their submitted reports. Easton PD noted that it had a few use of force reports pertaining to intoxicated and/or altered mental state individuals.

The Chairman asked the Sheriff's Office about a specific use of force report pertaining to an attempt by an officer to stop a moving motorcyclist by grabbing him when he passed in front of the officer. The Chairman inquired whether the Sheriff's Office has a policy regarding use of force on moving vehicles, citing the pepper spray case from the year before. The Sheriff confirmed his view that the deputy's actions were reasonable under the circumstances and stated that there is no specific policy governing the situation that occurred in this instance. The Sheriff also noted the increase in unsafe motorcycle driving habits and a propensity for the operators to flee rather than stop when directed to do so by law enforcement.

The LEA's discussed proper use of force standards issued by the State's Attorney General's Office.

Current Arrest Data for 2024 – The LEAs discussed arrest data for this quarter. The Sheriff and Easton PD stated that the arrest and incidents reports are more frequent in relation to student conduct in the schools. The LEAs also discussed the rise in drug, assault and theft related arrests.

Criminal Activity Trends or Upticks – The Sheriff noted that the number of overdoses reported to his office is trending down; however this statistic does not take into account

those who self-submit to the hospital. The Sheriff stated there has been a rise in fatal overdoses related to Fentanyl and Xylazine. He also noted that Xylazine is not listed as a controlled substance at this time. Unfortunately, Narcan is ineffective to address Xylazine overdoses. The Sheriff stated cocaine overdoses are currently up by 20%.

Easton PD stated there is a decrease in deaths related to drug overdoses thanks to Narcan being more accessible; however the number of overdoses themselves have not decreased. Easton PD further reported there has been an uptick in crack and cocaine arrests.

Easton PD also reported an uptick in child abuse and sexual assault cases. They received four (4) reported violations on one day alone.

Community Relations Activities in Q1 and Planned Events for Q2 – The LEAs discussed their ongoing community relations activities. Easton PD reported on its community Mock Trial Class, which had 13 graduates. Easton PD also had a very successful coffee with a cop event that was well attended and resulted in good community interactions.

The Sheriff stated there will be a fishing tournament on June 22nd that is sponsored by all local LEAs. The Sheriff's Office is working to create a community police academy. The Sheriff also reported that his office is continuing with its Talbot Goes Purple initiative. The Sheriff's Office rap prevention program is quite popular with the students.

Oxford PD stated they have a community police academy starting in September. The Oxford Day celebration was successful this year.

Report on ride-along participation by PAB members – Ms. Webster discussed her experience with the ride-along she did with the Sheriff's Department. Ms. Webster said it was a great experience and was very impressed with the officer. All PAB and ACC members are encouraged to participate in the ride-along program.

Teen Court – The Chairman discussed his experience with the Sheriff's Teen Court program, noting that it is well organized, and a great alternative to a judicial resolution. The Chair encouraged the other LEAs to participate in the program, especially the Easton Police Department. Chief Lowry expressed some hesitancy to do so, citing the need to ensure that the Department of Juvenile Services is performing as the legislature intended.

Ms. Murray stated from her experience with similar programs that diversion programs, such as Teen Court, are effective. The Chair noted that if DJS is not providing services to these children, then there are certain offenders or troubled youth who are receiving no services and that Teen Court is a reasonable alternative.

The Sheriff offered to share information regarding future Teen Courts so that PAB members may attend.

Status of Requested Trial Board – The Chairman inquired about the status of the requested Trial Board by the former Easton PD officer. The LEA noted that there is now a criminal case pending and that it may obviate the need for a Trial Board.

LEA Topics of Interest/Concern – The Chairman asked if there was anything the LEAs thought the PAB should focus on this year. The Sheriff noted that there currently is no budget for programs to assist inmates in recovering from addiction. He noted that there are grants available to subsidize such programs/treatment. This is a topic that may make sense to high-light for the Council in the annual PAB report.

The Chairman asked if the LEAs were taking part in the mental health training. The LEAs stated this was mandatory training that is required every two years. The LEA's work with a local mental health facility for this training and do frequent mental health checks with their officers. The LEAs stated they will send their officers to seek mental health evaluations if they have been involved in a difficult case, incident or situation; they will also send their officers for evaluation if they display signs of undue stress or mental health issues.

VI. **Next PAB Meeting** – The Board set a date for the next PAB meeting with the Local Law Enforcement Agencies for September 17, 2024, at 8:30 am.

VII. **Adjournment** – There being no further business, a motion was made by Mr. Bibb and seconded by Ms. Webster to adjourn the meeting. The motion was passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 9:38 am.