

**TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND
POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY BOARD**

Minutes of Public Meeting
September 17, 2024

The meeting of the Talbot County Police Accountability Board ("PAB") was called to order at 8:30 a.m. on Tuesday, September 17, 2024. Present were Chairman Mitchell Ettinger, Members William Belding, John Gilbert, Jo Ann Murray, Connie Webster, and Board Secretary Victoria Bradley.

- I. **Call to Order** – Chairman Ettinger called the meeting to order and made welcoming remarks. He introduced William Belding, who the County Council recently appointed to the PAB.
- II. **Minutes** – Upon motion made by Mr. Gilbert, seconded by Ms. Murray, the minutes of the Tuesday, May 14, 2024, PAB meeting were unanimously approved without modification.

III. Discussion with Law Enforcement Agencies ("LEA")

- a. **PERF June 2024 Report and Recommendations** – The Chairman identified two recommendations from the PERF Report that, if implemented in Talbot County, would be beneficial. The first recommendation is that the LEAs make appropriate law enforcement training sessions available to PAB and ACC members. The Chairman requested that the LEAs review their scheduled training calendars to determine which, if any, classes would be useful for PAB and/or ACC members to attend.

Oxford PD noted that it has an upcoming emergency response training session that is open to the public. This will take place on October 11th at the Easton Public Library and will be hosted by the Talbot County 911 Center.

The second recommendation identified by the Chairman is that LEAs share all new complaints of officer misconduct with the PAB at the time the complaint is received. The Chairman explained that having this information would assist with understanding the number of complaints to be resolved and to better track the time requirements established by statute. The LEAs agreed to adopt this approach.

Mr. Gilbert asked the LEAs whether a withdrawn complaint is investigated or closed. The Sheriff's Office explained that the Maryland Attorney General issued an opinion on this very issue, concluding that the complaint must be investigated

and the case submitted to the ACC for disposition. The LEAs noted that it is standard process to advise the complainant that, once submitted, the investigative process will be completed.

- b. Discussion Regarding Disclosure of LEA Internal Investigations – The Chairman also asked that the LEAs disclose the subject matter(s) of internal investigations that are pursued but not subject to ACC review. He explained that disclosure of such information will enable the PAB to report that all investigations within its jurisdictional mandate have been submitted. The Chairman requested that the LEAs consider submitting the nature of each such investigation (e.g., uniform discrepancy) and the internal number assigned to the matter. The ACC does not need the name of the officer that is the subject of the complaint. The LEAs will discuss this request internally, and it should be included on the November agenda for resolution.
- c. Submission of Quarterly Use of Force Reports –Easton PD submitted six use of force reports for the past quarter. All involved “hands on” situations with no serious injuries being reported and no complaints from the individuals.

St. Michaels PD had one use of force report arising from a domestic violence incident.

Without explanation, the Sheriff’s Office did not submit *any data or information* to the PAB for the previous quarter. The Chairman requested, at minimum, that it submit Use of Force Reports to Secretary Bradley as soon as possible.

- d. Current Arrest Data for 2024 – The LEAs discussed arrest data for the quarter, including perceived trends. Easton PD noted an increase in child abuse cases, specifically for the month of May. Easton PD also noted that vehicle thefts declined during the quarter.

The Sheriff’s Office reported crime rates remained static. They did note an increase in internet and phone scams during August and worked with other law enforcement agencies and local businesses to inform the public. These fraudulent schemes have the greatest impact on elderly citizens.

St. Michaels PD stated they have noticed that, with the resumption of school, there has been an uptick in juvenal crimes. The Sheriff’s Office stated they have had an uptick with school related issues, especially bomb threats.

- e. Community Relations Activities in Q2 and Planned Events for Q3 – The LEAs discussed their ongoing community relation activities, including the successful National Night Out.

Oxford PD discussed the town’s local summer events and noted the large turnouts. Oxford PD canceled its citizen police class because too few residents expressed interest in attending during the summer months. The Oxford PD Chief will participate in a Dancing with the Stars fundraiser at the Community Center.

Easton PD states that they are currently preparing for the upcoming Waterfowl Festival. They anticipate a large crowd and will have foot patrols during the event.

- f. Report on ride-along participation by PAB members – The Chairman discussed his experience with the Easton PD ride-along program. The Chairman reported that it was a great experience, and he was very impressed with the officer. The ride provided good insights into the daily tasks of the officers and how they approach patrol. The Chairman encouraged all PAB and ACC member to participate in the ride-along program.
- g. Teen Court – The Chairman asked whether Easton PD was prepared to participate in Teen Court. It responded that they are discussing the prospect internally. We will raise this issue again during the November meeting.
- h. Status of Requested Trial Board – The former Easton PD officer who requested a trial board recently was convicted of two related offenses. The criminal convictions may obviate the need for a trial board. Ms. Murray expressed concern for our preparedness for a trial board. The Chairman noted that several of its members attended the trial board training. The rules state that an ACC member cannot serve as a member of a trial board, but do not preclude a PAB member from doing so. The Sheriff’s Office expressed its view that PAB members are well situated to serve in this capacity. St. Michaels PD sent one of its officers to trial board training.
- i. LEA Topics of Interest/Concern – The Chairman asked if there was anything the LEAs thought the PAB should focus on when drafting its annual report. St. Michaels PD discussed its new hires and current vacancies. Easton PD stated they have a few vacancies, but it too has hired two new officers – one with previous experience and one who is currently in the academy.

The Sheriff’s office asked if it could receive a draft of the ACC opinions before they are issued. The Chairman explained that was not possible. If the ACC has any question about an investigative matter, it will make inquiry of the LEA before

issuing its decision. If the LEA wishes to appear before the ACC to address any aspect of an investigation or complaint, it is always welcome to do so. The integrity of the process, however, is best served without sharing draft decisions with the LEAs.

Mr. Gilbert asked about mental health counseling available to the LEAs. The LEAs explained that they have mandatory procedures regarding mental health evaluations. In addition to regular interval evaluations, officers will be referred to a mental health specialist if, for example, they have been involved in a difficult case, incident or situation. Mental health evaluations also are directed when officers display signs of undue stress or other altered mental health states.

IV. Old Business and Administrative Discussion – The PAB discussed preparation of the PAB report and possible drafting assignments.

The Chairman discussed general information regarding a recent ACC decision for which the Sheriff’s Office requested reconsideration. The ACC did reconsider its decision and affirmed its previous findings.

The PAB also discussed how the County could make the public more aware of the roles of the PAB and ACC. Members observed that many members of the public do not know of either board or its function.

V. Next PAB Meeting – The Board set November 12, 2024, at 8:30 a.m. in for the last PAB meeting this calendar year with the LEAs.

VI. VII. Adjournment – There being no further business, a motion was made by Ms. Webster and seconded by Mr. Gilbert to adjourn the meeting. The motion was passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 9:50 am.