

**TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND
POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY BOARD**

Minutes of Public Meeting
November 14, 2023

The meeting of the Talbot County Police Accountability Board ("PAB") was called to order at 8:30 a.m. on Tuesday, November 14, 2023. Present were Chairman Mitchell Ettinger, Members Michael Bibb, John Gilbert, Jo Ann Murray, Chris Rice, Connie Webster, Guky Irving, and Board Secretary Victoria Bradley, and Board Attorney Rebecca Guay

- I. **Call to Order** – Chairman Ettinger called the meeting to order and made welcoming remarks.
- II. **Minutes** – Upon motion made by Ms. Webster, seconded by Mr. Gilbert, the minutes of the Tuesday, August 8, 2023, PAB meeting were unanimously approved without modification.
- III. **Discussion with Law Enforcement Agencies ("LEA")**

Use of Force Reports (Submission of Underlying Reports) – The LEAs submitted summaries of their Use of Force Reports. The Chairman also requested submission of the underlying reports.

Identifiable Trends or Increase in Criminal Activity – The LEAs discussed some of the recent increased criminal activity, but reported that there are no identifiable trends. Easton PD reported two recent homicides, some drug related activity and a number of homeless sex offenders struggling to find shelters able or willing to provide shelter. The Sheriff's Office too has seen an increase in homeless sex offenders. The LEAs noted that this is a problem experienced nationwide.

Easton PD is assigning more officers in the areas where violent offenses have been reported and is working to resume officers on bicycle patrol.

The Sheriff's Officer also noted an increase in elder fraud and, as a result, is reaching out to senior centers to educate and inform them of the identified scams.

St. Michaels PD has seen an uptick in theft this past year and expect it to rise with the upcoming holiday season.

Labor or Staffing Issues –

St. Michaels PD explained how a salary increase has helped retain officers and recruit new officers. Oxford PD reported their commissioners have increased their staffing to four (4) full-time officers. Easton PD reported hiring one lateral officer and two are scheduled to attend academy training, but currently remain five officers below full staffing.

The Sheriff's Office reported that it will be changing to a 12-hour shift. It has three recruits in attendance at the police academy. The Sheriff's Office currently provides patrol service to Trappe and has asked the town to begin exploration of forming its own police force. Resources may prevent this from occurring in the near term.

Citizen Engagement Activities – The LEAs discussed some of their programs and events that relate to citizen engagement, including but not limited to (i) coffee with cops, (ii) citizen police academy, (iii) educational classes and workshops for the public, (iv) bike and foot patrols and (v) attending public events where they are able to engage with the public, (vi) hunter safety course, (vii) Shop with a Cop Toy Drive.

Mediation Process for citizen complaints §3-207(D) of MD. Code Ann., Public Safety Article – The LEAs are close to being able to implement the mediation process contemplated by the Maryland legislature. Mid-Shore Mediation has offered their services free of charge.

Status of the establishment of Trial Board procedures pursuant to §3-106 of MD. Code Ann., Public Safety Article – The LEAs report that the process should be completed and ready by year end.

Discussion regarding school resource officers and identifiable trends relating to school incidents – The LEAs have seen an increase in school related issues with juveniles. The LEAs are finding challenges with the new juvenile justice reform law, which precludes formally processing an offender under the age of 13. The Sheriff said 40 of the 113 school incidents this year have involved students that are under 13 years. The law, he opined, is preventing these juveniles from receiving services that may otherwise correct their behavior or assist them to address the underlying issues.

Talbot County Council has provided funding to have one resource officer in each public school. The resource officer is there to enforce the law and engage with the kids. The officers work with the principal, students, teachers and staff to keep the schools safe.

Topics LEAs would like the PAB to address in its annual report – The LEAs requested that the PAB reference in its annual report the time and effort required to satisfy the new ACC process. The LEAs also requested that the PAB's annual report address the dilemma created by the year and a day rule in the context of a parallel criminal investigation.

General discussion regarding the Administrative Charging Committee dispositions –

The Chairman stated the ACC has had 14 complaints this year.

The LEAs asked if the ACC would accept a short form investigation process and report in instances where the complainant is not responding to the LEAs or the Officer in question admits to any wrongdoing. The Chairman noted that this may be appropriate depending on the particular case and that the LEAs should use their discretion in making such submissions. If the ACC feels it needs additional data, it will request it.

The LEAs expressed concern about the ACC's reference to a communication between the officer in question and a fellow officer beyond the hearing of the complainant. Specifically, such references, they asserted, may result in officers turning off their body worn camera recording devices. The Chairman explained that, where the complainant questions the professionalism and intent of the officer, the ACC will consider all information relevant to those issues. In the case referenced by the LEA, the ACC considered the interaction between the two officers, otherwise unknown to the complainant, to be relevant and therefore included in the final disposition. The Chairman committed to raising the issue with the full ACC.

- IV. **Discuss Annual Report Content and Assignments** – The PAB reviewed the outline for the 2023 Annual Report and assigned each member a section to complete.
- V. **Next PAB Meeting** – The Board set a date for the next PAB meeting to discuss the draft annual report for December 19, 2023, at 8:30 am.
- VI. **Adjournment** - There being no further business to discuss, 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 10:57 a.m.