

MINUTES
POLICE ADVISORY BOARD
ST. ALBANS POLICE DEPARTMENT, 142 SOUTH MAIN STREET
NOVEMBER 23, 2021, AT 5:00 PM
DRAFT

Board Members Present - Melinda White, Chair; Jamie Pinkam, Vice Chair; John Nicholls; Tom Benton; Danielle Mitchell; Kris Lukens (arrived at 5:05 PM).

Board Members Absent - Winnie Wilkinson.

City Staff Present - Angela Bernard, Minute Taker

Members of the Public Present - Chief Maurice Lamothe, SAPD; Roger Lindala, Northwest Access Television; Lise Enala; Daniel Towle, Parker Advisors; Samantha Weber, NCSS; Ashley Boylan.

M. White called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM

Agenda Introduction & Review - Open Brief Public Comment on Agenda -

M. White asked for introductions. Introductions were made.

Mission Review

J. Pinkam reviewed the mission.

Mission: To offer advice to the St. Albans Police Department for the successful implementation of 21st Century Policing strategies and to assist the Police Department in following the established "Road Map" as amended by the City Council

Consider approval of September & October Meeting Minutes

Motion by J. Pinkam. Second by T. Benton. Minutes approved at 5:04 PM

Areas of Focus:

- Recommendation for City Council – Embedded position/s

M. White told the board they would be joining the City Council meeting of December to request an embedded position within the police department. She requested input from board members to clarify their position before going before City Council. J Pinkam suggested an executive session after the meeting to review.

- Data – Co-Chair, Jamie Pinkham –

J. Pinkam reviewed that the community surveys on policing have been mailed. She requested assistance from board and community to share publicly that the due date for return is December 1, 2021.

- Community Partnership – Chair, Melinda White –

M. White told the board that SAPD posted on social media that there was a need for donations of turkeys to support Martha's Kitchen and within 24 hours dozens of turkeys had been dropped off by the community.

M. White mentioned to the board that Police Advisory Board members, SAPD Chief Lamothe and S. Weber presented to FGI Community Partnership on Wednesday, November 3rd in a successful event.

- Policy & Procedure – Co-Chair, Jamie Pinkham

J. Pinkam introduced the packet of policies from the police department. The policies include:

- Arrests and Investigatory Stops
- Investigations 2021
- Harassment and Discrimination LGBTQ Specifications
- Sexual Harassment – Workplace
- Transporting and Searching Prisoners
- Use of Force Statewide Policy - J. Pinkam noted that this policy is not one that this board can impact or offer comment / recommendation on.

The floor was turned over to Chief Lamothe. He thanked J. Pinkam for reviewing these policies. He explained that these are standard policies and mostly related to human resources, with the exception of the investigations policy.

Chief Lamothe explained that the Harassment and Discrimination LGBTQ Specifications policy was not introduced in response to complaints but is a way for the department to think ahead and outline best practices to avoid any possible future complaints.

Chief Lamothe further explained that the use of force policy cannot be changed because it's a statewide policy that every law enforcement group in Vermont has to adopt so they all have the same policy. It has a lot of definitions and parts to it and is available on the state website.

J. Pinkam asked about stops policy and making sure that the group knows it is written into policy not to discriminate on race, gender, etc. J. Pinkam explained that the language about discrimination in this policy was so well written that they carried it over into other policies as well.

Chief Lamothe explained that the officers in the department are going through a training on fair policing at the South Burlington Police Department and that every officer has to go.

Motion by D. Mitchell to approve these policies as written. Second by K. Lukens. Policies approved with all in favor at 5:18 PM.

Peer Worker – Dan Towle – Overview of Mental Health Peer Worker -

J. Pinkam introduced an addition to the agenda and explained that she received a letter from a member of the community and that the subject matter of the letter strongly relates to this item on the agenda. J. Pinkam read the letter to the board.

The letter writer explains that they are the parent of a 12-year-old child with mental health ups and downs. The parent says available services have failed the child, who experiences bouts of

suicidal thoughts and self-harm. The mother explains in her letter that when she calls the crisis hotline, they say to call the police, and when she calls police, they say to call crisis. She explains further that the Vermont State Police once hung up on her. She suggested more funding for NCSS and a continued collaboration between the PD and NCSS to come up with better solutions.

D. Towle presented before the board - Crisis Response Plan and the intersection of mental health and police response.

His agenda included:

Background -

D. Towle explained the background and history of crisis response in the United States and in Vermont. He highlighted the city of Austin and their community response team, which focuses on situations that do not require PD response. He discussed Sacramento and that city's "Mental Health First" program, led by community groups affected by police violence, with a specific focus on de-escalating confrontations. He also discussed the city of Eugene, OR, which implemented their Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets (CAHOOTS) program 30 years ago. CAHOOTS is a community policing alternative that's been responding to 911 calls for years. Moves from law enforcement responding to all calls to a crisis response team that can augment law enforcement.

D. Towle then explained that in the states of Vermont there are a number of initiatives moving down the path towards finding the appropriate response to dealing with a crisis. He told the board that the state Agency of Human Services has a grant and asked for proposals to set up a statewide mobile crisis response unit and that the Vermont State Police recently made the decision to hire embedded social workers in every state police barracks.

Future Opportunity -

D. Towle proposed his "Crisis Response Triad," wherein law enforcement, social worker, and peer support groups work together.

M. White asked if the board would receive the power point after the meeting.

D. Towle said he would send parts of it to the board for individual review.

D. Towle reviewed the background of peer support. Peer support workers are people who have lived experiences and can go out to provide support to others. They can build trust and relationships. They can deal with distrust and fear that may have built up with other responders. They provide hope and demonstrate possibility of recovery by serving as an example. Further, D. Towle explained that a Peer Support Crisis Worker (PSCW) team is made up of people who have been trained to deal with a crisis situation and received more in-depth mental health training. This takes the peer support model and gives it more depth.

D. Towle explained that there are many Benefits of the PSCW program, including eliminating the need for law enforcement when there's a mental health situation with life affirming interventions and to help deal with the issue of stigma. It reduces the pressure on local emergency departments and

inpatient facilities, and it connects with the individual based on shared experience and mutuality.

D. Towle also explained that this model helps save money of healthcare response and police backup response, and it cuts down on higher cost of other types of responses, such as going to the emergency room.

D. Towle then went into the challenges and risks of adding PSCW program, including that it's new type of model and that there is a shortage of peer support workers, as well as a shortage of management capacity to run the initiative. He explained that he is part of an initiative to develop trainings and a certification process to build out the workforces and give them the support they need to fill all the different roles.

J. Nicholls asked if there are any other standards that already exist for training employees. D. Towle said 43 states have a certification process, but Vermont does not. He explained that they are working on a legislative strategy to get funding for it, and that with so many other places around the country already doing it, at least Vermont has other states to model after and is not starting from scratch.

M. White mentioned recovery coaching and certification for it. D. Towle explained that current state funding goes into either mental health bucket of substance abuse bucket. But the peer support group wants to learn from the recovery coach side and the mental health side.

D. Mitchel said she's not sure the same model holds true with adolescents. She explained that a mental health crisis presents itself differently in children than adults. She said as they explore the peer model it might be nice to include children's groups in the state.

Saint Albans -

D. Towle then went into the current policies and procedures in St. Albans and acknowledged the work S. Weber and Chief Lamothe have done. He offered up kudos the department and the city for the collaboration.

Keys to Success -

D. Towle said the keys to success for this program are:

- Collaboration between SAPD NCSS and Peer Support Entity
- Peer Support Entity, peer-run, peer-staffed organizations, having a strong peer-run organization. The state of Vermont has a few but needs more.
- Peer Support Workforce - having enough employees who are successfully trained for this type of work, because not every peer support worker can be a Peer Crisis Response Worker.
- Training
- Funding

Parker Advisors -

D. Towle explained the mission, vision, and background of his group, Parker Advisors, and told the board about his personal background and experience.

Proposed Game Plan -

D. Towle then explained that the proposed plan for implementing Peer Support Crisis Worker programs widely is in phase one, the early stages. The overall concept for phase 1 is to pull together a team and create an implementation plan. Part of that is to create a needs assessment and look for opportunities for collaborations between groups. M. White asked about funding. D. Towle explained it's part of phase 1, to create a funding strategy that would involve tapping funds that are focused on mental health and finding the right opportunities. He then explained that phase 2 assumes the funding has been either secured or earmarked, then implement plan, then provide advisory services.

D. Towle then presented one of the recommendations that he thinks the board should bring to city council, similar to one that was presented in Montpelier. It includes recommending the addition of 1.5 full-time equivalent crisis worker positions. Would bring response total to two. He said the city of Montpelier has agreed to this idea but haven't said how much they will fund it.

Next Steps -

D. Towle opened the floor for discussion and questions. He wondered what the process is for deciding and presenting recommendations to the city council. He asked the board what he can do to support the process and the board, and what they agreed upon next steps should be.

M. White asked about the 1.5 full-time equivalent concept and if it is two employees. D. Towle said yes, it's asking for 1.5 mental health specialists and then seeing how that works out.

J. Pinkam asked whether they had a dollar amount associated with the 1.5 full-time equivalent when they presented it to the Montpelier city council. D. Towle said they did not have a dollar amount but that the police chief there reached out to a neighboring department with a similar plan to get an idea of the possible dollar amount. He estimated \$100,000 to \$150,000. J. Pinkam wondered if there was a need to have it before the presentation. D. Towle said no, they accepted it without a budget number attached.

M. White said it's nice to know they didn't get too specific in presenting to the city council.

D. Mitchell said there should be sustainability in the funding for the program, but that it's not always possible. D. Towle said there should be a plan for how to fund it down the road.

Chief Lamothe explained that he and D. Towle have had several conversations leading up to this presentation and asked what his realistic timeline might be to get this into practice. Beyond just the recommendation to city council, what's the timeline to get someone in place? D. Towle said if everything fell into place

(collaboration, funding, etc.) it would probably be 1 - 3 years. Chief Lamothe agreed that it takes time. Chief Lamothe said he also believes the accurate dollar amount would be \$100,00 - \$140,000. Chief Lamothe said he supports the peer worker program 100% and he thinks it's a great program.

D. Towle said the goal is to create a program that has real, lasting effects and a long-term effect.

J. Pinkam said the effect on the community isn't really in their pockets but to make the community better as a whole, make people want to live there.

D. Towle asked the board what their next step is. M. White said they are holding an executive session later to discuss each board member's thoughts on direction and goal.

K. Lukens asked if M. White wants to recommend to city council that a substance use recovery coach is embedded in the PD. M. White said she thinks the department needs both a peer support worker and a mental health expert. K. Lukens agreed. M. White said ideally the peer support worker would also have a recovery coach background. D. Towle said he wouldn't recommend only having a peer support specialist worker in place without the mental health component.

J. Pinkam asked D. Towle and Chief Lamothe what they need from the board. Lamothe said this presentation was more for the board, to help them form a proposal to bring to city council. Chief Lamothe explained that he wanted the board to understand that this existed before they go to city council, so they have all the knowledge that's out there.

M. White thank D. Towle for visiting and presenting and for offering the board a vital perspective.

Public Comment -

None.

Tour of new SAPD Site -

Chief Lamothe led the board on a brief tour of the new facility. Virtual tour planned for the PD Facebook page. Highlights included a look at:

- The new secure transport system and garage.
- New holding cells.
- Dispatch.
- Offices.
- New secure evidence system and lockers.
- Security throughout the building, including cameras and doors that can only be accessed via security badge.

Adjourn

**Motion by J. Pinkam to move the meeting into executive session. Second by K. Lukens.
Meeting was moved to Executive Session at 7:08PM**