

Citizen and Police Community Relations Advisory Committee
City Hall Commission Chambers
Meeting Minutes
201 W. Central Avenue
March 22, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Andy Oguntola at 6:02 p.m.

Members Present: Andy Oguntola, Tiffany Davis, Dwight Wilson, Deputy Chief Troy Schulze

Members Absent: Narvell Peterson, Moe Moyer

Staff Present: Police Chief Chris Velasquez, Executive Assistant Judi Gladue.

2. SPEAKERS

Troy Schulze asked to update the group on the request from a previous meeting for speed limit signs. Deputy Chief Schulze advised that as requested, signage have been placed on Jackson Avenue, Florida Avenue, Pearl Street, Jewel Street, and Washington. In addition, Washington, Harding, and Florida Avenues have additional signage that is pending.

Chairman Oguntola asked if the update could be sent to the pastors who were at that meeting where the signs were requested.

Terry Christian, Sr. was the first speaker advising he had just a few questions. What is the police liaison's title and duties, how long has the Board been in existence and how many complaints have been filed since this process.

Deputy Chief responded that Officer Ed Palmer's title is Community Liaison Officer. Deputy Chief advised that the Board's first meeting was September of last year, and that he is aware of three complaints since the Board was formed.

Mr. Christian asked what has been done about the complaints, because his son has not been contacted.

Deputy Chief advised that Lieutenant Smith and Officer Palmer advised that his son was contacted, but he would have his son contacted again.

Deputy Chief asked if he could speak on the shooting incident, for there were several at the meeting from the Central Avenue area. As it is an active investigation, Deputy Chief was not able to speak on details, but he did brief everyone on the incident. On Thursday evening, March 18, a shooting occurred at two different locations. One location is the area between B and D Street on Lincoln Avenue, and the other location was 4 south Park Avenue and Lakeshore. The shootings were about two hours apart from one another. At this point, four individuals have been identified, and arrest warrants obtained. These individuals were involved directly in the shooting. There are arrest affidavits on them.

Terri Miller, from Park Avenue, spoke for a few minutes to the group. Ms. Miller advised she did not hear the shooting, and it is concerning to her, and what happened is not okay in any neighborhood. Ms. Miller spoke on this topic of guns and her hopes to have a plan to heal the community. Ms.

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Miller also wanted to address the homeless people that are on Park Avenue. She concluded by advising she is appreciative of what the Board is doing.

Deputy Chief responded for a moment of the work that is being done in regard to the shooting, and that they are continuing to work diligently on the incident. Deputy Chief advised we became aware of the homeless about a week ago and have been trying to offer resources to them. Deputy Chief advised we are aware of who the individuals are, and it is a work in progress. He spoke for a few moments on what the police have been doing and the challenges of this matter.

Burney Hayes of 848 Sherwood Drive spoke to the group on patrolling in areas of where high potential crimes are being committed and the concern of citizens feeling harassed or their rights infringed upon.

Deputy Chief responded that recently at a department meeting staff spoke heavily on relationship building and this it is a process and is being worked on.

Terry Christian advised there are two different complaints and nobody got back with him on the complaints.

Deputy Chief advised that he would make sure that Lt. Smith gets back with him.

Burney Hayes stated that it is not hard for officers to go and talk to people.

Chairman Oguntola responded that we have been under scrutiny, and we have to get to a place of peace. He asked if we could talk about what patrolling looks like.

Deputy Chief responded with some of the things they are doing, i.e., rallying points, meetings with citizens, knocking on doors, this committee and more. It was hoped through this Committee that it would be productive in suggesting specific ideas on how to approach and address people and help bridge the gap.

Terry Christian spoke to the group that there needs to be diversity in the police department, that if you look like the person you are serving, the people will trust you. He asked Deputy Chief what the percentage was of black people in the police department. Discussion was held regarding hiring black people. Deputy Chief advised we recruit, but we cannot make them apply. Mr. Christian advised he has a name and number for recruitment, and Deputy Chief responded that they would be happy to contact the individual.

Chairman Oguntola advised we need to implore strategies to bridge the gap and asked that this topic to be added on the agenda. We need to find innovative approaches to bridge the gap.

Dwight Wilson thanked the City services in having the signage put up. Mr. Wilson also spoke on the discussion of bridging the gap, and spoke several minutes on the role and focus of this committee.

Chairman Oguntola briefly reiterated Mr. Wilson's words and spoke for several minutes of the role of the Committee, the police, and city government. Mr. Oguntola concluded and asked that in the next meeting if we could discuss the body camera policy.

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Delton Hayes asked each committee member if they feel that his committee has been positive. Tiffany responded that she feels that the Committee members do what they can, that they take opinions and conversations to try to work things out. She advised that the committee is trying to assist, but we need assistance from the community. Mr. Wilson advised one positive measure is we took the meetings out of the chamber and went into neighborhoods. Mr. Oguntola also spoke on the positive things from this Committee.

Ron Power asked questions of Deputy Chief concerning the Lakeshore and Central Avenue shootings. He asked what weapons were used, how far the bullets could travel, and if the citizens were in danger.

Deputy Chief advised that yes, the neighbors were in danger, and there could be more charges coming in this case when we find people. The warrants we have so far are for the Lincoln Avenue shooting.

Linda of Central Avenue spoke to the group thanking the committee members and the police department. She advised she had a business for 40 years, and police have put cards in the door, but knocking on doors may be an invasion of police. She advised she liked the police walking around.

Chief Velasquez spoke on the progress of the body cameras advising that at the next meeting, he will bring one and maybe more policies at the next meeting. Chief advised there are only eight cameras right now. The Lake Wales Police Department is the first agency in Polk County to have body cameras, and we need to have a rock-solid program. Chief also mentioned that we would be taking social media to the next level. In addition, Chief advised that the police department is entering into a contract with the Center for Public Safety Management. The CPSM group will show areas of strength, weakness, and ways to improve.

Chairman Oguntola advised the next meeting would be in the City Commission Chambers on Monday, April 26, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.

Chairman Oguntola asked if the Committee could be E-Mailed the camera that is going to be used.

The Committee members made closing remarks.

3. ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 7:43 p.m.