



PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE MEETING

~ MINUTES ~

Tuesday, April 2, 2024

3:00 PM

Sullivan Chamber
795 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

The Public Safety Committee will hold a public hearing on the State of Policing in Cambridge, and safety in the community with an update on recommendations from the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) report.

Attendee Name	Present	Absent	Late	Arrived
Marc C. McGovern	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Joan Pickett	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Sumbul Siddiqui	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Paul F. Toner	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Ayesha M. Wilson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

A public meeting of the Cambridge City Council’s Public Safety Committee was held on Tuesday, April 2, 2024. The meeting was Called to Order at 3:00 p.m. by the Co-Chair, Councillor Wilson. Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023 adopted by Massachusetts General Court and approved by the Governor, the City is authorized to use remote participation. This public meeting was hybrid, allowing participation in person, in the Sullivan Chamber, 2nd Floor, City Hall, 795 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA and by remote participation via Zoom.

At the request of Co-Chair Wilson, Clerk of Committee Erwin called the roll.

Vice Mayor McGovern – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
Councillor Pickett – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
Councillor Siddiqui – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
Councillor Toner – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
Councillor Wilson – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Present – 5, Absent – 0. Quorum established.

Co-Chair Wilson offered opening remarks and noted that the Call of the meeting was on the State of Policing in Cambridge, and safety in the community with an update from the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) report. Present at the meeting was Police Commissioner Christine Elow, Deputy Superintendent John Boyle, Deputy Superintendent Anthony Macone, Deputy Superintendent Michael Medeiros, James Mulcahy, Director of Professional Standards, and Dr. James Barrett, Director of Clinical Support Services. Commissioner Elow shared that members from PERF were joined via Zoom and included Chuck Wexler, Jen Sommers, and Thomas Wilson. Mayor Simmons was also present at the meeting.

Co-Chair Wilson recognized Commissioner Elow who asked if any Councillors had questions regarding the PERF report before she gave a presentation.

Co-Chair Wilson recognized Councillor Siddiqui who asked if there were any policies relative to the number of shots fired in specific situations. Commissioner Elow shared that this is going to be a difficult statement to hear, but the Police are trained to stop the threat. Commissioner Elow pointed out that PERF was brought in to look at and review policies and procedures to help the Department move towards what best practices are. Thomas Wilson provided additional comments which reemphasized what the Commissioner had shared, that the focus is to use minimal amount of force that is necessary, and Police Officers are trained to stop that force when the threat has stopped. Councillor Siddiqui noted that reading the report is very heavy, and asked Commissioner Elow to clarify what training is done to address a suicide by cop situation. Commissioner Elow shared that there was never a delay in training due to COVID, and a second module on suicide by cop was created in collaboration with PERF. Jim Mulcahy provided additional comments to support the training that is completed by Cambridge Police Officers through the department.

Co-Chair Wilson recognized Councillor Pickett who asked for more information regarding community engagement around police equipment. Commissioner Elow responded and shared that a less than lethal analysis was done last spring and provided examples of less than lethal equipment that is being used in the Department and how the Officers are trained to use them. Deputy Superintendent Boyle provided additional information and shared how last year multiple companies were brought in to review their less than lethal products and noted that after discussion within the department it was believed that they were not operationally sufficient. Deputy Superintendent Boyle also pointed out that tools that Officers are currently using were already part of the department's inventory, which is why there was no community engagement process.

Co-Chair Wilson recognized Chuck Wexler who thanked the Cambridge Police Department (CPD) and the City of Cambridge for their cooperation while PERF was conducting their report. Chuck Wexler highlighted that Cambridge is already doing state-of-the-art work and that this report, with the proposed recommendations, can only build on that.

Co-Chair Wilson recognized Commissioner Elow who gave a presentation titled "Cambridge Police Critical Incident and Policy Review" which was provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet. The presentation offered an overview of recommendations from PERF to CPD, steps that are in process, steps that are being finalized, statistics, clarifications, and collaboration. After the presentation, CPD and PERF were available to respond to questions and comments.

Co-Chair Wilson thanked Commissioner Elow for the presentation and shared that Sayed Faisal's death is a tragic loss, and when a call comes in for a Police Officer to respond to you cannot predict an outcome. Co-Chair Wilson noted that his death is something that will always be in the back of our minds as the City and CPD move forward to provide better support for those who are in need. Co-Chair Wilson shared that this support could come from informed decisions, appropriate training, and policy review. Co-Chair Wilson added that she appreciates all the work that is being done to reach these goals and looks forward to the conversation.

Co-Chair Wilson opened Public Comment.

Kenneth E. Reeves, 340 Harvard Street, Cambridge, MA, NAACP President, shared that this is an opportunity to be a voice of the public about transparency and offered comments relative to the incident involving Sayed Faisal and the Cambridge Police.

Co-Chair Wilson recognized Co-Chair Toner who asked if there has been any discussion on bringing tasers to CPD as a less than lethal option. Commissioner Elow and Deputy Superintendent Boyle responded, with Deputy Superintendent Boyle sharing that it has not been ruled out but would require further discussion with the Police Commissioner, the City Council, and the public. Co-Chair Toner questioned if there is a specific distance an Officer should be when firing their firearm. Commissioner Elow responded and provided a review of the 21-foot rule, which is training that is not done in the academy anymore and it is not something that is taught during in service trainings. Co-Chair Toner shared that he believes that the men and women of CPD do not ever want there to be an appropriate time to use their firearm, but asked under what circumstances they should be protecting themselves and when is the appropriate time to be using their firearm. James Mulcahy responded and shared that there is information available in the state guidelines in terms of when Officers can use lethal force, and part of it is based on the totality of the circumstances. In addition, James Mulcahy provided information on the Professional Standards Unit as well as the Training and Certification Units. Co-Chair Toner asked how often Police Officers must train to keep their firearm certification. James Mulcahy shared that CPD Officer's have the opportunity for a full day of training every September at Fort Devens for firearm training, as well as once a year participate in tactical and use of force training, in addition to multiple other training exercises, which meets and exceeds the requirements that are set by the Municipal Police Training Committee (MPCT).

Co-Chair Wilson recognized Vice Mayor McGovern who shared that this is a challenging and tough conversation. Vice Mayor McGovern pointed out that this is not something that happens often in Cambridge, noting that CPD has contact with people who are in a mental health crisis on many occasions, where the results are positive. Vice Mayor McGovern highlighted that in many ways, CPD is always ahead as far as training and leadership. Vice Mayor McGovern asked for information regarding a fence that Officer McMahan had hopped over and if he did not hop that fence would that have lessened the threat because of a barrier being there, and if having something between an Officer and the threat to close the gap is part of training. Deputy Superintendent Boyle responded and pointed out that the decorative, three to four feet fence the Vice Mayor was referring to was not on the side of the house where the fatal encounter occurred, and given the circumstances, there was nothing to put between them. In addition, Deputy Superintendent Boyle shared that Officers would like to have some type of cover between the threat, but it is not always possible. Vice Mayor McGovern referenced packet page 72, and pointed out that the percentage of calls that result in use of force are very low and asked what the comparison is to similar municipalities in size and amounts of calls. Jen Sommers responded and shared that while doing the report, PERF did look at other cities that were similar in size, noting that it is difficult to match characteristics, but in many cases Cambridge's statistics and Officer involved shootings remained low, and that is something PERF wanted to highlight in the report. The Vice Mayor shared that there are a lot of good recommendations that were brought forward by PERF and hopes that the Department continues to keep moving forward in the right direction.

Co-Chair Wilson recognized Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler who had a question from the report which mentioned a dedicated training facility, and asked if it is unusual that Cambridge does not have one. In addition, Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler asked if neighboring cities had their own training facilities. Commissioner Elow responded and shared that Cambridge is not an outlier with not having its own training facility, noting that Boston does have a significant training space, but other surrounding cities do not. Commissioner Elow pointed out that the Department does have a nice space for academic and in-service training. Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler shared he looks forward to continuing the conversation.

Co-Chair Wilson recognized Councillor Pickett who asked for more information on the Co-Response Unit Pilot. Dr. Barrett responded and shared that it is something the Department is hoping to move forward with soon and will be posting for the position. Dr. Barrett offered a review of how the Co-Response Unit will be utilized and staffed, sharing that at first the plan will be to have one cruiser that will have a Clinician and an Officer from the Family and Social Justice Unit to respond to mental health calls within the city. Dr. Barrett pointed out that as the Pilot moves forward, an additional cruiser will be added for calls and shared how the Clinician and Family and Social Justice Officer will work together, noting that other Officers will always be available to assess the situation to make sure it is safe for the clinician to respond. Dr. Barrett shared that the two goals of this Unit will be to avoid arrests and transportation to the emergency room whenever possible. Councillor Pickett shared that she looks forward to the success of this program.

Co-Chair Wilson recognized Mayor Simmons who thanked everyone for being present to have this difficult conversation. Mayor Simmons voiced that she is pleased to have the city's police department and proud to be in Cambridge. Mayor Simmons offered a personal story related to how the Police Department has had such a positive impact on youth in her family and shared she continues to look forward to the collaboration between CPD and the youth of Cambridge. Mayor Simmons also highlighted all the positive work that is done by CPD in addition to the work that is done with the youth, and encouraged the Police Department to continue what they are doing and to help citizens understand all the good work that comes out of their department. Mayor Simmons asked if the Commissioner could share if there are still citizen information meetings that are done. Commissioner Elow shared that there are still community meetings and citizen information meetings and that fall under the new Director of Communications and Media Relations, who also has been putting out informational videos on the department. Commissioner Elow provided statistics on diversity within the Department, and shared that she is proud of the numbers because the Department has been working hard to diversify to represent the community, noting that the Department is 43% minority, and that women Police Officer went up from 10% to 14%.

Co-Chair Wilson recognized Councillor Siddiqui who noted that there was a recommendation on creating a special investigative body responsible for investigations of any incident involving members from CPD and asked if the City's Police Review Advisory Board (PRAB) could be a Board that helps with these investigations. Commissioner Elow shared the importance of having someone with the training and knowledge of what Police are out there doing if they are going to be conducting investigations and noted that is where the Department's Internal Affairs plays a

role. James Mulcahy provided additional information and pointed out that currently there are multiple levels of review. Commissioner Elow provided an overview of the internal process when there is a report of use of force and how it is reviewed. In addition, the Commissioner shared she is interested in Officers taking a more holistic approach when working to avoid the use of force and provided examples of how that goal could be accomplished.

Co-Chair Wilson asked how the CARE Team and HEART are going to partner with CPD to support and interact with citizens who are experiencing a mental health crisis. Dr. Barrett shared their excitement for this initiative moving forward and pointed out that well-trained police departments partnered with alternative policing are the model for best practice right now. Dr. Barrett provided a review of the ongoing conversations of how CPD and CARE are planning to move forward with responses where they may warrant a police response in addition to an alternative response, and what calls are safe for just an alternative response. Co-Chair Wilson asked if there was any training done that may help Officers handle a situation or a call where members of the community may not trust the Police. Commissioner Elow responded and shared that CPD was one of the first Departments in the country who went through Officer Implicit Bias Training and provided information on the data that is collected through the Department relative to the different interactions between the community and the Police Officers. Commissioner Elow also shared examples of how Officers are out in the community trying to build that trust and relationships with people, noting that engaging is a big part of the Department. Co-Chair Wilson asked if Commissioner Elow could provide an overview of the protocols for a multi response call that may come in, noting that every call is different. Commissioner Elow provided a review of how calls are triaged through the Emergency Communications Department, which determines how many Officers are deployed to a scene, and how Officers are trained to handle the call once they are on scene. Dr. Barrett provided additional comments to support the Commissioner, noting that CPD Officers have excellent training in establishing safety and de-escalation and when the appropriate time is for a clinician to co-respond. Vice Mayor McGovern was recognized and provided comments from a Social Workers point of view when responding to someone in a mental health crisis. Co-Chair Wilson asked how the Department works with members of the community where English may not be their first language and how there is engagement with people from different backgrounds. Commissioner Elow shared that recruiting members to the Police Department from different backgrounds is always a priority, noting that there are 17 languages spoken within CPD. The Commissioner also shared that there is a language line available to Officers as a tool to use to communicate and provided different examples of ways CPD engages with the diverse Cambridge community. The Vice Mayor asked if there were any tools the City could invest in for CPD to use when they are on calls to assist with language barriers, Commissioner Elow shared that is something that the Department could look into. Deputy Superintendent Boyle shared that Google Translate has been a great tool for Officers to use.

Co-Chair Wilson offered closing remarks and thanked Commissioner Elow and her Department for all the work they are doing. Co-Chair Wilson offered support to help CPD continue to move forward in the right direction and that highlighted the importance that Officers have the resources and tools needed to continue to grow. Co-Chair Wilson asked if there was a breakdown of different calls that Officers respond to. James Mulcahy shared that there is the Annual Crime Report by the Crime Analysis team that is available as well as monthly reports.

As the meeting was coming to a close, Commissioner Elow shared with the Committee that earlier in the day there was an accidental discharge of a School Resource Officer's firearm at Cambridge Rindge and Latin High School. The Commissioner noted that the Officer involved was in a staff bathroom, there were no injuries, and that the Officer involved immediately reported the accidental discharge. The Commissioner shared that more information will be available as the active investigation continues. Councillor Toner shared that he received information that this is not the first time there has been an accidental discharge with these specific Department issued firearms, and asked if there was more information available relative to this. Commissioner Elow noted that it was something that she would have to look in to.

Co-Chair Wilson recognized Vice Mayor McGovern who made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Vice Mayor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Picket – Yes

Councillor Siddiqui – Yes

Councillor Toner – Yes

Councillor Wilson – Yes

Yes – 5. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 4:55p.m.

Clerk's Note: The City of Cambridge/22 City View records every City Council meeting and every City Council Committee meeting. This is a permanent record. The video for these meetings can be viewed at:

https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/727?view_id=1&redirect=true

A communication transmitted from Yi-An Huang, City Manager, relative to the final report from the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF).

To the Honorable, the City Council:

Please find attached communication from Police Commissioner Christine Elow, regarding a report from the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) containing their review of the Cambridge Police Department's fatal officer-involved shooting of Arif Sayed Faisal on January 4, 2023 and related Departmental policies procedures, training and protocols.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Yi-An Huang". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Yi-An Huang
City Manager

A communication was received from Robert Goulston Director of Communications & Media Relations Cambridge Police Department, transmitting 2024 PERF Recommendations and Status Updates.