

COMMUNITY OVERSIGHT TASK FORCE

PUBLIC SESSION MINUTES

November 16, 2017

Present at the meeting were Community Oversight Task Force (COTF) members Marvin McKenstry (chair), Ed Jackson (co-chair), Daniel Levine (secretary), Jeff Anderson, Denise Duval, Danielle Kushner, and Andrew Reinel.

Also present were:

Richard Ochs, Baltimore Green Party

Summary of motions passed:

- November 2, 2017 minutes adopted without revision

I. Welcome

The meeting was called to order at 5:13PM.

II. Moment of silence for Detective Sean Suiter

At Denise Duval's suggestion, the COTF observed a moment of silence of Det. Sean Suiter, who had been killed the previous day.

III. Adoption of minutes

Marvin McKenstry noted that the draft minutes needed to be sent to the COTF sooner than they had been, recently. Ms. Duval suggested that their level of detail could be reduced (since, as Daniel Levine noted, raw notes taken during the meeting as the basis for the minutes could be consulted if any detail needed to be recovered) in order to make the minutes more timely, and that if a writer was hired using Open Society Institute-Baltimore (OSI) funds, she or her could assist with notes/minutes. Mr. McKenstry also reported that he had been discussing COTF interns with contacts at Morgan State University (MSU).

Jeff Anderson moved that the 2 November minutes be adopted without revision; he was seconded by Ms. Duval and the motion passed unanimously.

IV. Future meeting times and venue

Discussion of the adoption of a "default" meeting space for future meetings centered around the availability of a space that could be used slightly later than the offices at 1510 W. Lafayette Ave., which needed to be vacated by 7PM. Pending their availability, it was decided to use the offices of the Baltimore Community Mediation Center (BCMC), from 6-8PM, for the COTF's 30 November and 14 December meetings.

The COTF decided not to meet until the new year after the 14 December meeting, because of the winter holidays. Besides being reflected in the minutes, Dr. Levine said that he would check if a notice could be posted on the City website for the COTF, for anyone who might be expecting the usual fortnightly meeting.

V. Sub-committee reports

A. Community Engagement Sub-committee

Danielle Kushner reported on the work of the Community Engagement sub-committee. The sub-committee met by phone on 9 November. Public forums will not begin before the new year, but focus groups and meetings with local organizational leadership could begin in December. Mr. McKenstry and Dr. Levine are reaching out to contacts in the LGBTQ+ community for focus groups; Andrew Reinel will be reaching out to members of the immigrant community. Mr. McKenstry will be working with the Western District police commander to draft questions to use with police officials. Mr. McKenstry invited any COTF member who might have contacts within a marginalized community to discuss the possibility of a focus group with them. Any member of the COTF with contacts in a grassroots organization is also invited to meet with them and report their views to the full COTF. In addition, Mr. McKenstry has been reaching out to youth.

Not all COTF members would be expected to attend all forums when they are convened, though every COTF member should attend at least one. Public forums (since they are intended to be public) would be announced through regular channels, so that a quorum of COTF members could attend without violating the Open Meetings Act. Focus groups would not be public, and so a quorum of COTF members could not attend (though their results would be discussed/disseminated publicly).

Andrew Reinel will be creating a spreadsheet of community events relevant to the COTF.

B. Comparative Institutions Sub-committee

Ms. Duval reported on the work of the comparative institutions sub-committee. The sub-committee is working to develop a list of cities for COTF members to visit and individuals from outside Baltimore to invite to speak to the COTF, so that they can hit the ground running in January when OSI funds are available.

VI. Writer

Ms. Duval opened a discussion about recruiting a writer for the COTF, using OSI funds, in January. The COTF will be reaching out to OSI for recommendations, but also recruiting more generally. Given the need to read writing samples and conduct interviews, Mr. McKenstry suggested that an *ad hoc* sub-committee be formed. Dr. Kushner and Mr. McKenstry volunteered to assist, and Ed Jackson mentioned a contact at the Baltimore City Community College who might also be able to assist. Mr. Reinel has been conducting academic research on police oversight, and offered to share that work with the writer, once recruited. Dr. Levine suggested that looking for a local academic, particularly from one of Baltimore's historically Black colleges and universities (HBCU) might be a way to get a high-quality candidate and contribute to longer-term capacity-building for police oversight in the city. Col. Jackson concurred, noting that in the past the Baltimore Police Department (BPD) had had stronger connections to local academic institutions around training and continuing professional development.

VII. Town Hall on Police Reform

Ms. Duval and Mr. Reiner attended a Town Hall meeting on police reform hosted by the NAACP on November 4. The Town hall included a panel discussion and breakout tables, and the main message from those conversations was that improving community-police relations required bringing both

sides together to build trust.

VIII. Department of Justice Meeting

Among the participants in the NAACP meeting were representatives from the Department of Justice (DoJ). Mr. McKenstry, Mr. Reinel, and Ms. Duval had a conference call with DoJ staff during which the intent and history of the consent decree was discussed. While the members on the call said the discussion was frank, they noted that the DoJ needed to be pressed on specifics of the support they could offer, and in the end – to avoid the impression that they were influencing the COTF – their support would be largely limited to providing information on the law and consent decrees in other jurisdictions. One matter discussed on the call was the unusually restrictive legal environment for police reform in Baltimore created by the Law Enforcement Officers’ Bill of Rights (LEOBR) and the fact that the Baltimore Police Department (BPD) is a state, rather than a city institution. Ms. Duval noted that the consent decree is explicit that it does not supersede state law, and so cannot be used to overcome those difficulties. Col. Jackson noted that it would be difficult to change LEOBR, since many jurisdictions were content with their police, but Ms. Duval replied that it would be possible, in principle, to reform LEOBR in a way that created provisions specific to Baltimore City. Jeff Anderson reiterated the need to frame LEOBR change as a reform that would help police by improving their relationship to civilians, to general assent, though some concern about whether police institutions such as the Fraternal Order of Police would be open to discussion, even if the issue were framed that way.

The COTF members on the call and the DoJ agreed to try to set up a meeting with the full COTF. Mr. McKenstry noted that, as discussions progressed, conversations with the DoJ might center on legal technicalities, and so it might make sense of a sub-committee of COTF members with legal experience to be the main liaison with the DoJ.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:58PM