

Albemarle County Police Department

Community Advisory Committee

Tuesday, July 11 2023

09:00 am

Committee Members Present:

Richard Hewitt, Maureen Deane, John Springett, Tanishka Cruz, and Bea LaPisto-Kirtley

Others Present:

Colonel Sean Reeves, Albemarle Chief of Police

Diantha McKeel, Board of Supervisors

Chief Michael Kochis, Charlottesville Chief of Police

Deputy Chief Bryant Hall, University of Virginia Police Department

CA Joe Platania, Charlottesville Commonwealth's Attorney

Ms. Diane McNeal, Albemarle County Resident

Richard Hewitt asked for a motion to approve the March 14th, 2023, meeting minutes. John Springett motioned to approve the March 14th, 2023, meeting minutes, and Bea LaPisto-Kirtly 2nd the motion, all were in favor. The March 14th, 2023, meeting minutes were approved.

Richard Hewitt welcomed everyone and asked for introductions:

Maureene Deane- Owner of Downtown Athletics and a member of the Community advisory group for several years.

Diane McNeal-A retired Albemarle County resident from the south side of Chicago.

Bea LaPisto-Kirtley- Is a member of the Board of Supervisors, the Rivanna District, and her 1st year on the Community Advisory Committee.

Diantha McKeel-Has been a member of the Board of Supervisors, the Jack Jouett District going on 9 years, and was a member of the Albemarle County School Board for 16 years.

John Springett- Was an auxiliary officer with the Albemarle County Police Department and a member of the Community Advisory Committee for several years. Retired Air Force and Intelligence.

Colonel Sean Reeves-After serving in the Army he came to the Albemarle County Police Department in 2001. Worked his way through the ranks to Deputy Chief for (Ret) Chief Lantz and was sworn in on March 1st, 2022, as the new Chief of Police.

CA Joe Platania- Came to the City of Charlottesville in 1999, and worked as a Public Defender for three years, in 2017 he was elected to Charlottesville's Commonwealth of Virginia.

Chief Michael Kochis-Native to New Jersey, he left to serve in the Army, spent most of his career with the Alexandria Police Department, and retired after 22 years. Came out of retirement to serve as Warrington's Chief of Police for 3 years, then moved to Charlottesville to serve as Charlottesville's Chief of Police.

Deputy Chief Bryant Hall-It will be 4 years this September Hall and his family moved from Portsmouth where he had a career as FBI Taskforce specializing in narcotics and gangs. His wife is an ABC Agent and his school-aged daughter support the move to Charlottesville and Halls employment with the University of Police. He has been UPD's Deputy Chief for 1 year this Aug.

Tanishka Cruz- Has had a career as an Immigration Attorney working with Legal Aide Justice Center, and a year ago opened a private practice.

Richard Hewitt thanks Ms. McNeal for attending the meeting and asked the reason she decided to come today.

Ms. Diane McNeal- there was an incident near her home (Blackwell District) back in April that she and her neighbors were wanting more information about the situation/car fire.

We would like to remind everyone the best way to public comment or to reach the Chief of Police, is to call the office at 434-296-5808, use the following email address askACPD@albemarle.org, which is located on the Citizens Advisory Committee website and the Police Department's website at www.albemarle.org.

Matters from the Public:

-A New Process for Lt. Martin's Position will be taking place. Recently Lt. Martin left the department to serve as Deputy Sheriff and the Albemarle County Sheriff's office.

-Our HARTS program has its Kickoff today, but we are still a work in progress. HARTS is a mental health unit made up of ACDSS, ACFR, and ACPD personnel.

-Colonel Reeves addresses the Quarterly Report link added to the CAC meeting reminder and that it will soon be available to the public on the ACPD website.

-We, unfortunately, had a Homicide take place in mid-June with a shooting/aggravated assault incident a few days later. Both incidents were domestic situations with boyfriends as suspects. The suspect from the homicide was located in DC days later and taken into custody. The suspect from the shooting/aggravated assault turned himself in a few days later.

-Colonel Reeves participated in an NAACP Zoom meeting with close to 25 participants. Meeting topics were mental health, gun violence, and overdoses the victims were unaware fentanyl had been added to their marijuana, pills, cocaine, etc..

Fentanyl does not discriminate, no matter age, race, or where you live. It is in our area and people have lost their lives. When fentanyl overdoses are suspected a JADE Detective is sent to the scene.

Richard Hewitt inquires about department staffing and morale for the County and Staffing for the City and UPD.

Colonel Reeves- Morale is good with the pay increase from the Board of Supervisors. Our sworn staff is now at 155 which includes the 2 School Resource Officer positions. In January we will have 3 added which will bring us up to 158. We have implemented 3 over-hire positions in our specialty units.

We are still down in our civilian positions, mainly our Services Unit which is operating at 50% staffing.

Chief Kochis- The department had 30 vacancies out of 109 when he arrived which is down to 6 vacancies in 6 months. They have 14 recruits slotted for the July academy which is the largest and most diverse group sent to date. An additional 5-8 recruits are looking to attend the September or October Academy. One certified officer coming from Danville will be joining the city. The city will try and focus on certified officers so they can be utilized on the street in a shorter timeframe. One employee has been demoted and another was let go within the last 6 months. Reassignments have taken place to complete the backgrounds of new applicants.

Deputy Chief Hall-Since 2018 10 positions have been added for 77 sworn officers and 66 security officers. They have 10 vacancies with 3 in the academy and 33% of the Department is minority. The community is very appreciative of the officers and of the collaboration of all three jurisdictions.

Richard Hewitt- The action of our officers is a reflection of the county. The best relationship with the community and other jurisdictions is one of mutual respect.

Joe Platania- The CA's Office has lost 2 attorneys, one moved to the Juvenile District Judge, and the second is a Dep Judge. Will Tanner from Payne & Hodous, LLP has recently been hired with one vacancy left.

Continued with his working relationship with Chief Kochis for the past 6 months. Chief Kochis does not focus on the past but on the future. The department has not felt backed by the command staff in a long time. Chief Kochis has no problem reaching out to check on/advocate cases involving his officers. He has a conviction about reform in the city.

Chief Kochis Believes in getting rid of the bad apples and officers do not need to be on social media. The command needs to hold staff accountable in-house and not on social media.

New Business:

Colonel Reeves discusses the Regional CompStat. This became a work in progress while Col. Reeves was Dep Chief due to the rising numbers of stolen vehicles, gun violence, and shootings involving juveniles. This was the right time to come together due to the two new Chiefs and Chief Longo. All three collaborated and the 2 hour-long Regional CompStat began. Once a month the three chiefs, department crime analysts, Juvenile Intake, FBI, Commonwealth attorneys, prosecutors, and the US attorney's office get together. The 1st hour is a discussion of data on crime trends and events that have taken place. The second hour is closed for sworn participants only. This is a chance to share information not for the public.

Each month the three chiefs get together to talk about what is going on in the community and the departments. It's an opportunity to express any needs a department may have or assistance they may need from the other jurisdictions.

Richard Hewitt- For the past 5-6 years the three agency heads just had too big of egos to collaborate like it is being done now.

Deputy Chief Hall- a year ago there were no relationships, now the Chiefs collaborate daily. Regional CompStat has helped, we may have borders, but crime doesn't. Our departments working together, and our analyst working together is giving a better opportunity to fight/ stop crime in our area.

Col. Reeves-When our staff sees the collaboration of the three Chiefs staff will follow the example.

A continued conversation on the expectations the community has for the three departments' collaboration, and daily communication so that when and if a tragedy happens, we can all work together.

CA Platania – The board members go out as ambassadors; our community is at its strongest with its leaders. Things are looking good, and we are moving together.

Richard Hewitt- Any operation exercises between the departments taking place or future plans to take place.

Col. Reeves- Right now we have a joint Spartan Academy that follows the Police Academy. There is a great infusion of training for our department, some with Albemarle Fire and Rescue already taking place. Looking forward we are working towards a collaboration of training with all three jurisdictions involved.

Dian McNeal- From the perspective of a black female from South Chicago, to be effective you need collaboration, but it can feel threatening to the black community.

As far as the HARTS unit what part does the Fire Department have if they are volunteers?

Dep Chief Hall- Most of the Fire Departments have transitioned to paid. A few smaller departments are still volunteer.

Bea LaPisto-Kirtley- has no tolerance for anyone that is a bad apple or not doing their job.

Col. Reeves- The three of us (Chief Kochis, Chief Longo, and himself) don't shy away from tough conversations. We may not agree but if everyone can be heard and understand each other's perspectives then there is room to work together to move forward.

Diantha McKee- Has seen in the past law enforcement and Schools don't fire people they let them resign and move to another area to cause trouble. They should not have the option to resign, everyone should be held accountable.

Chief Kochis- You need to know and understand the history of your community. Attend UVA for Grad School and believe he knew Charlottesville. Events like August 17th and Vinegar Hill had a large impact on our community. Kochis and his family moved into Charlottesville which has given him the opportunity to really speak with and live with the community he serves. There is a 23% poverty level and families that own their home but are unable to afford the taxes.

Maureen Deane- I Now understand crime has no boundaries and am aware of the lack of past collaboration. The city is very unique and has unique issues.

Tanishka Cruz- Has seen what good the collaboration of jurisdictions has done for the community.

Violence:

Richard Hewitt- We have shootings and violence but the next day you read there are known suspects or suspects in custody. It demonstrates everyone is doing their jobs.

Continues by asking Chief Kochis, Deputy Chief Hall, and CA Joe Platania if they believe the county has and is a good partner.

Deputy Chief Hall- the county is an outstanding partner and doesn't know what else they could do.

Chief Kochis- We have a great relationship.

CA Platania-The county is great to work with. Detectives have made themselves available if we have asked for assistance in a case.

John Springett made the motion to adjourn the meeting and Bea LaPisto-Kirtley 2nd the motion, The adjourned at 09:59