

Village of Brockport Advisory Committee on Police Reform and Reinvention

Meeting Minutes November 18, 2020, 7PM, LGI Room, Oliver Middle School, 40 Allen Street

Attending in person:

Co-Chair Mayor Margay Blackman, Co-Chair Trustee Annie Crane, Chief Mark Cuzzupoli, Village Clerk/Manager Erica Linden, Lt. Steve Mesiti, Monroe County Legislator Jackie Smith, Karen LoBracco, Dan Brockway, Bill Plews , Robert LeSuer, Melanie McDonald, Orlando Benzan

Attending via Zoom:

Katy Wilson, Howard Ward

Guest: Dr Torrance Jones

Virtual Public Participation: Livestream on Facebook/Village of Brockport by Susan Smith

Mayor Blackman introduced Dr Jones, who is a professor of leadership in the St John Fisher College School of Education, a member of the clergy and is very active in assisting Executive Order 203 committees. He has worked with most Police Chiefs in Monroe County.

The Mayor stated that the Village administration is very proud of our Police Department, and are glad to have Chief Cuzzupoli lead the department. The Chief is very familiar with the community and is very big on community policing. The Department has been very accommodating in this process.

The first part of the meeting was to discuss responses to the High School student guests at our last meeting the follow-up questions sent to them.

Karen stated that there were multiple truths in the room, different experiences. Some easily understood, but others perplexing to those who have not had similar experiences. There is often a difference between intent and impact.

Melanie stated that it sheds a light on a part of our community we don't often hear from. Some of their truths can be difficult to hear. The students were brave to come before us.

Dan was impressed by the email from Kerry Gant, the faculty advisor to the Diversity Club. He thought *8 Can't Wait* was something to look into, an accountability board was a good idea, and we should do a cost/benefit study on the size of the Department.

Mayor Blackman responded that we had done a cost/benefit study when the Department was expanded to 15 full time officers, which found that 15 officers cut down on overtime, and saved money. Monroe County did a study of all the departments in the County and did wonder if Brockport was over-policed, but because our population doubles when the College is in session, we often need three officers on duty on weekend nights.

Lt. Mesiti addressed each of the the *8 Can't Wait* steps, all of which the department is already addressing.

Questions related to *8 Can't Wait*:

Jackie asked if our General Orders require a warning before use of firearms.. Lt. Mesiti replied that it is not required, but they are trained to give a warning. There are instances where it is not practical, which is why it is not in the General Orders. Chief Cuzzupoli added that the only time it is justified to shoot at a moving vehicle is if the vehicle is being used as a deadly weapon.

A question was asked about reporting requirements after a use of force incident. Lt Mesiti replied that all incident reports go the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS). This portal is for law enforcement only—not open to the public. The State generates statistical reports that go to the Department. All use of force reports are reviewed within the Department. The Department keeps its own records in addition to the DCJS records.

Melanie commented that she liked the reporting system that the Fairport Chief Farina mentioned when he spoke to the committee.

Jackie asked about the time requirement for reporting. It is 24 hours after an incident.

Lt Mesiti discussed his feelings about the students' statements from last meeting. He gives them credit for coming; that took courage. He is proud of his Department. The students were discussing problems with policing nationwide and with the Rochester Police Department, things that would not be tolerated here. If any of the students did have any bad experiences with the Brockport Police Department, he would like to know which officer. He needs to know if there is a problem within the Department. He stated that Dr Myers (former **BCSD** School Superintendent wanted them in the school buildings. If there is ever an active shooter in the building, they are ready for it. Most students react positively to them. It is upsetting to hear some are afraid of him.

Melanie commented that those students have had bad experiences elsewhere. That experience is negative no matter where. We need to find a way to reach those people.

Lt Mesiti discussed the Take Back the Night marches. The Police were asked to help by the College, and had been asked to have their lights on. They were not there to intimidate, but to decrease heckling and stop traffic when necessary. They meet beforehand with the organizers. The only rule from the Police is that the marchers not use profanity. Melanie commented that from one marcher's perspective there were too many rules, they weren't allowed to defend themselves, there didn't seem to be anyone stopping heckling or throwing things at them. It takes a lot of kid gloves to deal with traumatized sexually assaulted victims.

Chief Cuzzupoli commented that he can understand how some kids can view the police negatively. He is working on building bridges to take away some of that fear and he would like an opportunity to meet with and bridge the gap with those kids.

Dr Jones discussed his observations on the minutes of the meeting with the students. The students opinions resonated with him. There was a theme of fear based on their lived experiences. They did not feel protected. They feared they would be hurt by the police rather than helped. There is also minimum positive interactions with the police. It is important that they have more positive experiences.

Mayor Blackman pointed out that the Village Board, Village manager and herself have a different relationship with the Brockport Police. We know them, and therefore have no fear.

Dr Jones had some handouts on Executive Order 203 and racial equity resources, and mentioned that it is time to start working on recommendations. The mayor told him the steps we have already taken.

Dr Jones asked what we would like to see.

Jackie-An ongoing comprehensive plan

Melanie- Not just a one and done for restorative justice, de-escalation, etc. An ongoing plan helping marginalized parts of our community.

Bob- Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threat analysis.

Dr Jones-there are industry standards. We need sustained success, with a diversity/equity one to three year strategic plan, with vision, goals, measurable action steps and an evaluation framework.

Bob-that's more than we can do by April.

Bob- From an equity and diversity perspective, we have some challenges. We live in an historically monolithic community, which makes diverse recruiting difficult.

Dr Jones suggested we do a survey to find out what our community at large wants/\.

The mayor mentioned NYCOM has some surveys that have been used in other communities in the State.

Chief Cuzzupoli asked if it was part of our Comprehensive Plan survey done recently.

Village Manager Linden replied yes, and the replies were all positive and that both of the in dissolution attempts in the Village the Police were a major issue, and both failed overwhelmingly.

It was pointed out that we need to take into account the type of individuals who answer surveys.

Jackie asked if we did a survey, would it include residents of Clarkson and Sweden outside of the Village? The mayor responded probably, but we would want to look at those responses separately.

Dr Jones pointed that the last thing we would want is for a few people making decisions without knowing what the whole community wants.

Dr Jones mentioned that Monroe County is the only county in the State that is fully accredited, and we should build on that success. What is missing is equity and inclusive excellence.

Annie asked if those were included in items in the national accreditation program. He does not know.

Bob commented that thinking about this is relatively new and there are few resources.

Dr Jones replied that some of the information we need comes from the community -what do they want is the foundation piece. We can get good information from informal meetings with groups, especially marginalized ones, who might not answer a survey, as well as surveys. The data will navigate us.

Bob commented that it is hard to identify what, if anything is broken.

Melanie commented that we need to strengthen, rather than fix, Strengthen community ties. Strengthen mental health.

Dr Jones- Build off of success

Karen-We need a sense of preparing and building for the future., institutionalize policies and a culture that will take us into the future. The challenge for her is that the Village is unique and the Brockport Police Department is unique, but we are influenced by what happens with the Sheriff and the Rochester Police Department. Part of the issues we are discussing we cannot control.

Dr Jones commented that we are witnessing a collective triggering of post traumatic racial trauma. He has worked with inmates and their families in Monroe County and he gets how there is a different experience with policing for the Black population. It is their lived experience no matter where they are.

Someone asked what is the Black population of Brockport? Village Manager Linden replied we don't know, but the Black population of the School District is 11%.

Dr Jones said we need a rich sample size of all backgrounds in our information.

Bob asked if there were established surveys we could use.

The Center For Governmental Research can develop, Roberts Wesleyan has done it.

Jackie- Can SUNY Brockport do it? Dr Jones- They would probably love to.

Melanie- How do we deal with mental health issues within the Police themselves. It is a stressful job. Is it part of the training to take care of yourself as a person?

Dr Jones- No, but it is crucial.

Chief Cuzzupoli- There is an officer wellness movement through the Monroe County Chiefs association, but it got stalled with COVID. There is a Blue Health organization.

Dr Jones-Keep in mind that 203 is for a plan-not necessarily done. Set a one to two year goal by April.

Karen- I'm curious about other conversations, especially RASE.

Dr Jones- Not a part of RASE himself, but while there is not a lot in the news, there is a lot going on with subcommittees.

Karen- When I read about proposals to defund the police, they are about large cities. How do these proposals relate to a small Village?

Mayor Blackman- While it is a well meaning idea, 75% of the Police budget is salaries and benefits. Hard to defund.

Bob- We have 15 Officers. Willing to look at 14 plus one mental health professional.

Annie- There is a shortage of mental health professionals.

Dr Jones- Reallocation of resources to mental health is a good idea, but also need to work on officer wellness.

Melanie suggested a SUNY program to train officers in mental health, with reimbursement.

Chief Cuzzupoli- It is important to know how police and mental health work together. Safety needs to come first. On a call the police need to go in first to evaluate the situation, if safe, then bring in the mental health professional. There is now an additional 40 hours Academy training in Crisis Intervention. The FIT program has a referral system for follow up with a specialist. Referrals have increased as the police have developed a relationship with FIT.

Melanie- FIT covers the entire County, with only five people.

Mayor Blackman- Thank you to Dr Torrance Jones.

Housekeeping session:

Bill Plews has ideas for workshops with Police dealing with migrant workers and the undocumented population. He knows an immigration attorney who is chairing one of these committees and in an adjunct in a Police Department. Chief Cuzzupoli would like to invite her to an upcoming training.