



POLICE REVIEW & ADVISORY BOARD

A Department of the City of Cambridge, Massachusetts

Minutes from the Meeting of June 28, 2023

Board Members present: Chair Alexandra Fallon, Maria Arlotto (departed at 7:47 p.m.), Brendan Koscher, Gina LaRoche, Beverly Sealey

City Staff present: Executive Director Brian Corr; CPD Director of Professional Standards, Training and Certification James Mulcahy

Chair Fallon called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

Public Comment

There were no comments from members of the public.

Review and Approval of Minutes

The Board considered the draft minutes of June 1, 2023 and based on questions about the amount of detail in the listing of those present at the June 1 meeting and in the executive director's report, Exec. Dir. Corr stated that he would draft that a revised set of minutes for consideration at the next meeting of the Board and that he would seek guidance on the amount of detail needed for the minutes.

Executive Director's Report

- Exec. Dir. Corr provided brief updates on several topics:
 - He informed the Board of the death of former state representative and Cambridge city councillor Sandra Graham, who was central to the creation of the Police Review & Advisory Board in 1984. He noted that she had been active in many advocacy efforts over half a century and that the City Council adopted a resolution recognizing her death and her legacy.
 - He reminded Board members of the need to complete their Criminal Justice Information systems (CJIS) certifications and to please let him know when they had done so.
 - He reported that he worked with the Law Department to schedule a training session on the Mass. Open Meeting Law for the Board on September 13.
 - He noted the value of Board members participating in ride-alongs and walk-alongs with CPD officers to see how they conduct their work, and advised that he would work to identify a point person at CPD to help Board members schedule those.
- Exec. Dir. Corr reported that on June 7, he and Chair Fallon attended a hearing of the City Council's Public Safety Committee to discuss the Board.
 - During the hearing they made a presentation to the committee – [*Civilian Oversight in Cambridge - Context, History, and the Role and Purpose of the Board*](#) – and then answered questions from City Councillors. The hearing went well, and Committee Chair Zondervan indicated that there may be future hearings regarding the Board.
 - Chair Fallon reported that Exec. Dir. Corr developed a great presentation, and that many of the councillors had limited knowledge of the role and work of the Board and appreciated learning about it – and valued the Board's work. She reported that after exec. Dir. Corr

reviewed the various models of civilian oversight for the Committee, that there may be interest among councillors in making changes to Cambridge's oversight model.

CPD Professional Standards, Training and Certification Unit Report

- Dir. Mulcahy reported that the most recent class of 35 cadets graduated on June 15 from the joint CPD/Northeastern University Police Academy, with 10 of those now working as CPD Officers and the other 25 working for other departments. Chair Fallon noted that it is exciting to have new officers coming out of the Academy with Cambridge's specific training model, and the recent training on Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics (ICAT) that the Board received provided a better sense of what happens at the Academy.

Report from Board Chair Fallon

- Chair Fallon thanked Dir. Mulcahy for setting up the ICAT training with Officer Cameron Deane on June 5, stating that it was an excellent training session on Use of Force, and that Board members were extremely impressed with Off. Deane's knowledge and his openness about sharing his personal experiences and how they led to his passion for training officers in new and innovative ways. She noted that she was looking forward to the next part of the training which will focus on ICAT's philosophy and methods.
- She reported that while in Washington State for personal reasons, she had the opportunity to meet informally with members of the City of Tacoma Community's Police Advisory Committee (CPAC), and that Tacoma is located 25 miles south of Seattle, with approximately twice the population of Cambridge.
 - The CPAC members shared that Tacoma experienced a horrific incident where a man was killed by police in 2020 and that three officers have been charged with murder.
 - The Tacoma Police Department (TPD) has just gotten body-worn cameras (BWCs) and they have many cases where they have complaints about conduct, and the BWC recordings often have clear audio and CPAC members can hear how much the officers are doing to communicate well with individuals they interact with.
 - She noted that despite a City of Tacoma public body, the Tacoma CPAC is only able to obtain any information from TPD is by filing public records requests, which put in perspective how positive the interactions are between Cambridge's board and the CPD in this area.

Report on NACOLE Webinar on Bias in Interpretation of Video Evidence

- Board Member Arlotto took the lead in reporting on a recent training webinar presented by the National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement (NACOLE) on [Bias in Interpreting Video Evidence](#).
- Board Member Arlotto reported that on May 18, Board members attended the webinar and that a recording is available on the NACOLE website and is just under 60 minutes long.
 - The speaker was Prof. Yael Granet of Smith College, who presented a great deal of research on how people interpret video evidence. Starting with a video about what people see and don't see and which many may be familiar with, Dr. Granet pointed out that humans miss a lot of information and yet believe their eyesight is the stronger of the senses – and that people will believe their vision over other senses.
 - Dr. Granet discussed how people tend to fill in the visual blanks with what they think they see, and the role that confirmation bias plays in that. She noted that how a video is conveyed and explained to someone affects what they believe they saw, and that being made aware of one's bias does not eliminate it, even though it can help mitigate the impact of bias. Another key idea from the presentation was that people often “resolve unclear visual images” as guns in certain situations.
 - Board Member Arlotto mentioned a number of key findings that came up during the discussion part of the webinar as it relates to BWC footage, including that: letting officers watch BWC footage before they write initial reports can lead them to believe their eyes over

their memory; because viewers tend to ascribe agency to the individual(s) on screen when they view BWC footage, it may reduce the weight of the actions of the officer wearing a BWC, while watching bystander footage may increase the weight of the actions of the officer; and that the speed at which a video is replayed has an impact on how you interpret the agency and culpability of the individuals seen in the video because the longer the “action” lasts (the slower the video) the more weight people give to the action.

Process for Reviewing CPD Use of Force Report for 2022

- Chair Fallon explained that the CPD’s annual report on Use of Force for 2022 was released just after the ICAT training with Off. Deane and that it was discussed at the Public Safety Committee hearing, where Chair Fallon was asked whether the Board would be reviewing the report.
- She stated that her current thinking is that the process could be: reviewing the new CPD Use of Force policy being developed as part of the certification process that involves rewriting all CPD policies, as well as the new Guidelines on Use of Force issued by the Massachusetts Peace Officer Standards and Training Commission (POST); then putting down some questions in advance and getting them to CPD; and then inviting the Police Commissioner to join a meeting of the Board to discuss the report. She noted that this might take place in October, though there will also be presentations from the Emergency Communications Department and the Community Safety Department during that meeting.
- Exec. Dir. Corr noted that the Board could schedule additional meetings if needed, and that there would likely be an executive session in September to consider one or more complaints.
- Board members discussed the possibility of looking at demographic data regarding Cambridge to inform its review of the report.

Updates and Planning for Outreach

- Board members discussed possible venues for outreach, considering upcoming events in the summer and fall and with new banners for visibility:
- Board Member Sealey and Chair Fallon volunteered to staff a table to conduct outreach on one of the two days of the Cambridge Jazz Festival in July
- Board Member Sealey pointed out that the Cambridge Carnival will take place on September 10 and noted that because she usually attends the event she might staff a table on behalf of the Board. She also noted that Boston has a Puerto Rican festival which is well attended and could be a good venue for outreach.
- Board Member LaRoche indicated that she usually attends Danehy Park Day and would be interested in tabling at that event.
- Exec. Dir. Corr said he would reach out to the organizers of the Cambridge Jazz Festival and Danehy Park Day to apply to have tables at those events and let the relevant Board members know.
- Chair Fallon noted that once an online complaint form is available, additional venues for outreach could include CRLS, as well as student groups at Harvard and MIT, and that launching an online complaint form would be a good hook for enhanced outreach efforts.

Adjournment

The Board voted unanimously by roll call vote to adjourn the meeting at 8:05 p.m., on a motion from Board Member LaRoche, seconded by Chair Fallon.

Documents Used During the Meeting

- Police Review & Advisory Board Meeting Minutes of June 1, 2023
- Draft banner for conducting community outreach