



Civilian Police Advisory Board Study Committee

Date: October 13, 2021

Time: 7:00 PM

Location: Conducted by Remote Participation

Attendance

Karen Bishop	
Anne Brown	p
Michael Brownstein	p
Elliot Elkin	p
Kerrie Fallon	p
Julie Flaherty*	p
Laura Gitelson	p
Jillian Harvey*	p

Doug Heim*	‡
Carlos Morales	p
Mona Mohtadi	p
Sanjay Newton	p
Bob Radochia	p
Kathy Rogers	p
Clarissa Rowe	p
Susan Ryan-Vollmar	p

‡ Deputy Town Counsel Michael Cunningham attended

* - non-voting member | p - present

Agenda

The meeting was called to order at 7:05pm

1. [Current Complaint Process](#) - Susan Ryan-Vollmar and Jillian Harvey
(Laura Gitelson) thanked Director of Diversity Equity and Inclusion Jillian Harvey for her memo to the committee. She asked that we move directly to questions as Jill needed to leave soon for the Select Board meeting.

(Susan Ryan-Vollmar) thanked Jill for her memo as well and asked about the second incident described in the memo. Susan noted that the officer involved declined to meet with the resident, and asked if there had been any indication about why they declined.

(Jillian Harvey) answered that there was a continues to be a tenison between officers and community members. Officers seem to have general a fear that

they will be attacked if they engage. Jill also believes they were advised by their union not to engage, but asked Chief Flaherty to comment to make sure she had her facts right about that part.

(Chief Julie Flaherty) confirms that per their CBA officers are not required to speak with a complainant at this time. She noted that officer in that particular case did not wish to engage and according to CBA rules, did not have to.

(Susan Ryan-Vollmar) asks how much time Jillian Harvey spent on the cases outlined in the memo.

(Jillian Harvey) doesn't have an exact amount of time, but the first complaint was multiple meetings over the course of months, with each meeting lasting at least an hour. The second complaint was dealt with over the course of a couple of weeks.

(Susan Ryan-Vollmar) wants to clarify the recommendations at the end of the memo. They are:

- Create a mechanism for filing complaints anonymously
- Create a mechanism for triaging incidents
- Assess what outcomes the complainant would like and work with them
- Assign someone who is not an employee of the police department to support residents who become involved in Professional Standards Investigations.

(Susan Ryan-Vollmar) asks whether these specific stories are the sole basis for her recommendations.

(Jillian Harvey) says the short answer is no. She outlined how her experience networking with other DEI professionals in Massachusetts informed her memo. She also outlined her work experience at Boston Children's Hospital assisting patients of various identities access care. She noted that systems are often not designed to help people with diverse identities navigate. She also noted that much of her work in DEI is based on her work at Brown University where she got her Masters' Degree in Public Policy with a focus on social justice focus. This all gives her insight into navigating these kinds of spaces, partially when equity is a focus.

(Susan Ryan-Vollmar) asks how Jill would characterize the problem she was trying to solve when she was working with those residents.

(Jillian Harvey) says the problem to be solved was around lack of trust. Of not feeling comfortable and safe. It's our job to help build that trust. Police can't do their job well if the people they are protecting and serving don't trust them.

(Susan Ryan-Vollmar) asks whether that problem is unique to Arlington.

(Jillian Harvey) answers that it is absolutely not unique to Arlington. This is a problem that exists across the commonwealth and country.

(Susan Ryan-Vollmar) asks whether the recommendations are based on deficiencies in Chief Flaherty's leadership or the professionalism of the Arlington Police Department.

(Jillian Harvey) answers that she has been extremely impressed with Chief Flaherty's leadership, her willingness to make change, and her willingness to put in time to make sure these residents felt heard. It was above and beyond and DEI colleagues in other communities have been impressed.

(Sanjay Newton) asks whether Jill can expand a bit on the recommendations from the end of her memo.

(Jillian Harvey) notes that her recommendations are based on the needs of community members who through their lived experiences just don't have a lot of faith in police. How are we going to build that trust? How are we building a community where everybody feels safe? When we put these kinds of things in place they don't just help people who would otherwise stay silent. They help everyone. And really bringing people into the conversation and allowing that community building to take place.

(Bob Radochia) asks about the process for anonymous complaints.

(Jillian Harvey) says that one way to do that could be through an online form, or through a triage line. This is an opportunity to get a glimpse at what's out there but might be missed by current practices. Being anonymous give a layer of safety for folks who wouldn't consider filing otherwise. The action that you take based on anonymous complaints may be different - you can't interview the victim, among other things - but you start to have data about the kinds of things that are out there and may require attention or retraining.

(Bob Radochia) asks where or to who something would go at that point?

(Jillian Harvey) answers that this is part of what needs to be fleshed out. The overall data can be used to inform policy and practice. It's much harder to conduct a full investigation based on an anonymous complaint. But having even the data of anonymous complaints allows you more visibility into areas where improvement may be needed.

(Laura Gitelson) asks if there are more questions before Jill needs to leave and thanks Jill for joining us on a very busy evening for her.

2. Updates from committees/constituencies

(Susan Ryan-Vollmar) - Rainbow Commission held a discussion last month about the interim report. It was a really engaged discussion and they will offer feedback soon.

(Anne Brown) - Council on Aging - shared documents and information with the committee and will have feedback to share, but not quite ready tonight.

(Elliot Elkin/Mona Mohtadi) - Arlington High School - The year so far has been very busy at the High School, so no specific update.

(Kathy Rogers) - Human Rights Commission - on the agenda for next week. Hoping for a rich discussion.

(Michael Brownstein) - Envision Arlington Standing Committee - will be meeting next week.

(Karen Bishop) - Board of Youth Services - no update

(Kerrie Fallon) - Disability Commission - no update

(Carlos Morales) - Envision Arlington Diversity Task Group - no update

3. Communications and Listening Sessions Update - Susan Ryan-Vollmar

(Susan Ryan-Vollmar) notes that our October 27th will be open for people to come comment and summarizes the ways that it is being publicized. Susan noted that an online survey form is almost ready to go out, and that Jill's office is setting up smaller listening sessions for various constituencies as well as two smaller sessions open to the general public.

(Sanjay Newton) notes that he has worked with the Parish Minister and others at the Unitarian Universalist Church to setup a listening session open to the congregation there.

(Clarissa Rowe) indicates that she will attend that as well.

4. Planning for the October 27th Listening Session - Susan Ryan-Vollmar

(Susan Ryan-Vollmar) asks Clarissa Rowe to share her thoughts and advice based on her experience leading many such sessions in the past.

(Clarissa Rowe) thinks that the most important part is to welcome people and to be open to hearing people talk. We should have some rules about how long people can talk. We should have some initial presentation on our work so far. Probably 3-5 minutes. We are here to engage the public. The form to fill out if they don't feel comfortable speaking is an excellent idea. Will need to open the floor and listening. Very important to set the rules at the beginning so that people with an axe to grind can be heard but don't crowd out other voices.

(Laura Gitelson) asks if the online survey will be ready to be part of the email inviting people.

(Susan Ryan-Vollmar) says yes definitely. Susan would like us to avoid using the phrase “people with axes to grind.” She thinks this is an emotional fraught topic.

(Clarissa Rowe) agrees that it was not the right phrasing and appreciates the reminder.

(Laura Gitelson) notes that she used to find it odd that other bodies had public comment and then didn’t offer direct responses. Initially it felt unsatisfying, but she has come to see why that is as she has attended more meetings. She suggests we adopt that as one of our ground rules for ourselves. That we’re there to listen and hear from our community. Perhaps take specific questions about the report, but she’s interested in hear other peoples thoughts.

(Kathy Rogers) thinks the expectation going in should be that we have an educated audience who has read the report and focus on listening. If the moderators believe there are mis-understandings they can address as needed.

(Sanjay Newton) agrees with Kathy, and also wants to highlight Clarissa’s earlier point about time-limits.

(Bob Radochia) notes that the Select Board limits to three minutes and don’t respond. He thinks we should do similarly.

(Laura Gitelson) agrees that setting a limit and stating it up front is the way to go.

(Michael Brownstein) thinks that we do need to frame the public comment. He leads community conversations and he has found that without the framing they often go in unconstructive directions. People are busy, and so even if they have read the report it is helpful to put everyone on a level playing field.

(Clarissa Rowe) agrees and thinks that at the very beginning of the meeting Susan and Laura should talk about our charge. That will set the tone of the meeting.

(Laura Gitelson) is in agreement.

(Sanjay Newton) thinks it is also useful to give a very short overview of the information in our interim report so that people have shared understanding and language to use.

(Laura Gitelson) notes that Carlos had a short version of the information prepared for the Select Board.

(Michael Brownstein) thinks whatever it is needs to be short so that we can focus on listening.

(Kerrie Fallon) notes that it's important for this to be a safe place for people to be able to talk. She wants a time limit. And she wants to make sure people feel listened to and safe. How do we make people feel safe saying things?

(Sanjay Newton) agrees that this is important and notes that part of the way we're addressing that is by collecting in a variety of ways, like the big forum, small forums and in writing. Different people are going to feel comfortable in different spaces.

(Susan Ryan-Vollmar) notes that she has been in contact with Chief Flaherty about how to have police officers' input into this process. She is working to setup a meeting with the heads of the police unions so that they can give input to the process.

(Laura Gitelson) notes that she thinks 5 minutes might be a good place to start.

(Anne Brown) thinks 5 minutes feels like a lot.

(Sanjay Newton) notes that the Select Board uses 3 minutes, but that the chairs can exercise plenty of discretion.

(Bob Radochia) notes that the number of participants matters, and that there's not need to cut people off in the middle of a point.

(Anne Brown) reiterates the discretion that the chairs will have.

(Bob Radochia) notes that we can ask people to raise their hands.

(Rebecca Gruber) notes that she would be most interested in responding to specific questions, rather than just coming to pontificate.

(Susan Ryan-Vollmar) thanks Rebecca for bringing that up. She reminds us of the questions we've used as we've reached out to our own committees and commissions:

- How does the historic nature of your committee interact with the work of this committee?
- Do you have any hopes for this committee?

5. Committee Discussion: Closing out research and moving to conclusions - Laura (Laura Gitelson) rereads the committee charge and asks if there are questions still lingering out there for people? How are people feeling about the 'study' part of our charge.

(Sanjay Newton) notes that we still have some open questions from our early September meeting and that Doug, Sandy Pooler and Caryn Malloy should be getting back to us soon with more information about that. Chief Flaherty has also been very open and is helping to pull together additional data based on the list from NACOLE. Those are his only two outstanding pieces other than public input. He feels comfortable that we have the context and overall information we need.

(Anne Brown) feels we have done a thorough study. She is looking forward to the input.

(Elliot Elkin) thinks we have done a good job with the study.

(Susan Ryan-Vollmar) notes how much she has learned over the course of our work so far.

(Laura Gitelson) asks Chief Flaherty whether she thinks there is any information or context from her perspective that the committee has missed or needs to complete our work.

(Chief Flaherty) notes the data collection that is going on. She thinks that Chief Wynn and Brian Corr were very helpful to have. She notes that she did meet with the union presidents. She gave them our committee website and suggested they review the information there.

(Mona Mohtahdi) doesn't have additional questions and is thankful that the "youth voice" is included in this conversation.

(Kathy Rogers) thinks we have the tools in our toolbox. We also have to be open to the idea we might find something missing as we listen to the community.

(Bob Radochia) thinks we've gathered a good basis. The next meeting will give the missing piece and then we can move to a discussion about what we're going to do or not.

(Clarissa Rowe) thinks we are in very good shape. Chief Wynn's presentation last week was very good for her. The politics of these things is very difficult.

(Michael Brownstein) says this has been a great learning experience for him as well. He's looking forward to the community input.

(Kerrie Fallon) thinks the group has worked very hard to find outside information. There may be things on the 27th that bring up more.

(Carlos Morales) thinks we have done a lot of work. We have collected a lot of great information and heard from a range of views. The last missing piece is hearing from the community. We are in good shape to take the next step.

(Sanjay Newton) notes that he's going into the 27th with the idea that he's looking to hear if there are issues or other things we haven't considered. The community input will help to shape and put in context the research we've done so far.

(Laura Gitelson) notes that it has been a while since we've had time to discuss as a group. We had a conversation several meetings ago and it seemed that there was consensus that a large New York-style Investigative fully-staffed model isn't right for Arlington. What are the things that committee members are thinking might work in Arlington?

(Sanjay Newton) reminds about Carlos' previous use of the concept of "functions" to go alongside "models."

(Carlos Morales) thinks that narrowing down is good. The easiest is to rule out things that will not be for us. In terms of functions, is there going to be some sort of review or not? Is there something about collecting complaints in an alternate way? How would we differentiate that? And then how do we gather data? Data can be a conversation, rather than specific complaints. How can a body handle communication.

(Kathy Rogers) like where we're going with the functions. But perhaps there's a question before that. "What are we trying to build and why?" "What is the problem we're trying to solve?" She thinks that identifying what we are trying to build will influence the functions we want to choose.

(Susan Ryan-Vollmar) notes that she wouldn't have had the information to answer this question at the start of the process. But she thinks that Jill has done a really good job answering the question of what we're trying to solve.

What are we trying to build and create? Must be a two-way process, must be a mechanism for people who are fearful of police. The summer of 2020 surely showed us that we need to make improvements. At the local level we have agency to improve things.

(Sanjay Newton) talked about “cleaning up a mess problem” vs. “improving the system” problem. When we’re improving the system, there’s not necessarily one big thing to point at as the problem. Instead we’re focused on improving Arlington. On making sure everyone feels safe in their community. And that we can tell a credible story about whether our police department is great. He would like to create one more piece in the trust puzzle.

(Bob Radochia) feels like he’s getting more confused. Bob thinks there are some non-police things getting mixed into the conversation here and in Jill’s report.

(Chief Flaherty) clarifies that Jill Harvey does work on all sorts of discrimination complaints, but her memo details two complaints that she was involved in which were specific to police.

(Bob Radochia) is feeling like other areas of discrimination are being brought into this discussion.

(Chief Flaherty) notes that during the meeting Jill talked about her previous work, including at Children’s Hospital and how that informs her work now and the memo she wrote.

(Susan Ryan-Vollmar) notes that perhaps the confusion is that the DEI Director job description might not directly spell out helping residents with their police complaints.

(Sanjay Newton) wonders if this is about how difficult navigating institutions can be. And especially so if you’re a marginalized person. He is interpreting the common thread between her work at Children’s and now for this committee as about how best to help people navigate an unfamiliar institution for help.

(Laura Gitelson) was impressed how these two particular cases were handled by both Jill and Chief Flaherty. But Jill’s job is huge and what if she hadn’t been able to answer the phone when they called? Or didn’t have the bandwidth to guide them through. She would feel good about including that function in a potential body.

(Susan Ryan-Vollmar) notes that this was like an accidental model of how this should work. We had somebody who was afraid. Somehow they made it to someone who could support them, and the police department met them where they needed to be. She thinks that’s how it should work for everybody.

(Laura Gitelson) was struck that the result of one of the cases was that the resident has felt more willing to use police services. That's a goal that people can support. She asks whether others have comments about additional functions. She is finding it helpful as she prepares to listen to public comment.

(Sanjay Newton) asks if we can call on people who have been quieter so far.

(Elliot Elkin) thinks that many of the interactions people have with police at the high school are with the school resource officer. He's done a good job of making himself available to talk, but it's difficult to talk to someone who's a stranger. Perhaps online form or ability through the counseling office.

(Mona Mohtahdi) thinks the reason people don't come forward is because of fear or being alone. It might be good for people to be able to create a space with other people to discuss these issues.

(Kerri Fallon) thinks the idea of peer work is amazing and that's where change happens. When something is a secret it festers. Who from the community can be there to be a support person? Sometimes churches have the trust of people. How do we reach people who are often dismissed. Are we going to invite people?

(Laura Gitelson) clarifies that we will be having smaller meetings for people to share their experiences with the committee.

(Michael Brownstein) is wanting to hear more voices before sharing any opinions.

(Laura Gitelson) asks Kathy whether she thinks we've made progress on her earlier question about "what problem we are trying to solve?"

(Kathy Rogers) doesn't feel fully comfortable with the way she worded the question. She does think we made progress. She thinks the meaty work is coming up. We've been charged with being architects and she's looking forward to that discussion.

(Sanjay Newton) took away from the conversation with Chief Wynn last time that the committee there was having some identity issues on what they could accomplish and what they could do. He thinks that having a variety of tasks will be important for whatever we architect. He feels it's important to provide concrete action for whatever that is.

(Bob Radochia) asks when the committee will be presenting to the Select Board and wants to make sure our report is published.

(Laura Gitelson) notes that Susan has been in talks with the Select Board Chair about when we would be rescheduled to. And that the report is published on the committee webpage.

(Sanjay Newton) notes that a member of the public found some broken links in the published report. He apologizes for the mistake converting to PDF. The corrected report has been published.

(Chief Flaherty) wants everyone to think about what anonymous complaints would really look like. It's a bit different for someone to submit a complaint to the police department vs. to a third party.

6. Approve minutes from prior meetings

Vote: to approve minutes from September 20, 2021

Approved unanimously

7. Adjourn

Vote: to adjourn at 8:52pm

Approved unanimously