

Connecticut General Assembly

Police Transparency & Accountability Task Force

Daryl McGraw, Co-Chairperson



c/o Judiciary Committee, Room 2500

Legislative Office Building

300 Capitol Avenue

Hartford, Ct 06106

MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, June 16, 2020 at 1:00 pm

Via Zoom

Members Present: Co-Chairperson: Daryl McGraw, Shafiq Abdussabur, Marc Pelka, Chief State's Attorney Richard Colangelo, Steven Cousin, Rep. Joshua Hall, Chief Thomas Kulhawik, Chief Keith Mello, Commissioner James C. Rovella, Deputy Chief Maggie Silver for Hans Rhyhart, Jonathan Slifka, Sgt. John Szewczyk, Chief William Wright

Meeting is called to order at 1:00pm.

Chairman McGraw welcomes members to the Police Accountability and Transparency Task Force and asks for a moment of silence for the gentleman killed in Atlanta Georgia. He asks for introductions from each task force member.

Chairman McGraw makes a motion, moved by Rev. Cousin to approve meeting minutes from the 06/08/2020 meeting.

Chief State's Attorney Colangelo and Sergeant John Szewczyk request the minutes be amended to reflect their comments. Chairman McGraw stated the minutes would be amended to add those comments and final approval to be postponed to the next meeting. Sergeant Szewczyk makes a motion to table the minutes until next Task Force Meeting. Seconded by Chief Keith Mello. Motion passes.

Chairman McGraw speaks about systemic racism that is rooted in every area and aspect of life including housing, employment and education, not just in the criminal justice system. He shares his experience as a father as it affects his children. The task force is important to address systematic racism. He acknowledges the role of members of the task force as leaders and as leaders they should be doing all they can to address systematic racism. He notes that Connecticut should lead in this effort.

The task force has been charged with examining: 1) Police interactions with those with intellectual or physical disabilities; 2) The feasibility of police who are conducting traffic stops to issue receipts of those traffic stops to include demographics and information of the person being stopped; 3) Any additional police transparency and accountability issue the task force deems appropriate. Chairman McGraw stated COVID-19 slowed the task force down because the country shut down. He addresses the call to defund

police departments and asks how to address these issues. He noted that during the last meeting, members named one thing they would address regarding police accountability. Chairman McGraw asked Ken Barone, Policy and Research Specialist at the Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy at Central Connecticut State University, to create recommendations looking at the 6 pillars from President Obama's *"President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing"*.

Ken Barone begins his presentation on the Draft Preliminary Report on Priorities and Recommendations. He walks through each pillar and priorities articulated by the task force. He wants members to remember that this is a living document. 1) Pillar 1: Building Trust and Legitimacy, which includes but is not limited to changing the culture of policing, adopts a guardian versus warrior culture of policing, publicly address the role of policing in past injustices and makes all departmental policies and procedures available online.

Chairman McGraw thanks Ken Barone for the presentation and the flow of the presentation of each pillar. He asks Karen Boisvert, Administrator of the POST Academy that handles training to discuss at some point about POST Training. He states that he will take a few questions and comments.

Rev. Steven Cousin requests the issue of requiring officers to live in the city they are policing to be revisited. Chairman McGraw agrees that is an area one of the working groups can examine.

Chief Keith Mello addresses the amount of work there is to do. He brings up the guardian versus warrior culture and police officers are not trained in a "warrior mentality." He says the term warrior has many different definitions and police officers are trained to be "guardians of our democracy." He said police officers should have the mindset of a guardian but need to have the skills of a "warrior" because sometimes people do bad things and law enforcement needs to be able to respond. He thinks the phrase "guardian versus warrior" isn't a simple distinction. He acknowledges Susan Lee Rahr from President Obama's *"President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing"* and the training of police officers. He also comments on the 500 hours of community service and is asking what that might look like conceptually. He asks if it is specific to a police officer's community where they work.

Chairman McGraw responds to Chief Mello's comments and notes that as a task force, members will create logistics for what the 500 hours of community service should look like. As members, they hold that responsibility. He makes mention that it is a problem to have a police officer who lives in a suburb community then goes to work in an inner city to police people. He recalls as a child, he looked up to police officers, but people don't say that anymore, people are fearful.

Chief Keith Mello responds that these things should be decided by communities as the task force goes forward. He comments that the communities that are policed are not just residential communities. He comments that law enforcement polices everyone and knows no boundaries and it shouldn't. Chairman McGraw responds that he always appreciates interacting with Chief Mello and the community listening sessions will be important.

Shafiq Abdussabur shares concern that so much of the content of the preliminary task force recommendations are in the news. He states there should be no false promises made and when things are in the news, it creates a narrative and things need to be extremely specific before released to the media. He states that everything cannot be fixed in a year and asks that feasible goals are created right now. He states there is a lot of work to do and many layers of creating successful legislation and long-term solutions. He shares concern and asks what the task force has to offer for communities who are concerned.

Chairman McGraw thanks Mr. Abdussabur and states the task force should be talking about what they can do rather than what they can't do. As a group, it should be discussed what should be done going forward. He comments that President Obama's "*President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing*" is just a guide and prior to this meeting there was no guide. He would like to see this used as a guide going forward so members can create effective change.

Chief Keith Mello offers clarity to Pillar 1 and commits that it can be brought to the POST Council. He discusses other points that fall under Pillar 1 and says those things can be addressed through training.

Ken Barone continues his presentation on the 6 Pillars. Pillar 2: Policy and Oversight addresses developing an independent external investigating authority, prohibiting chokeholds, and neck restraints, reform internal affairs, reform citizen complaint process and require officers to identify themselves by their full name when stopping someone. This information should also be provided to individuals in writing and policies should require officers to state the reason for the stop and the reason for the search if one is conducted. He continues discussing Pillar 2: Policy and Oversight. He asks the Chair to continue the discussion.

Chairman McGraw reminds the members that these are recommendations and are subject to change.

Chief State's Attorney Richard Colangelo comments that he is on board with number 8: independent authority. He reached out to Senator Winfield to discuss ideas. He wanted to clarify that when some states empower the attorney general to conduct those investigations and it is not the case in Connecticut. He also comments on number 14 of Pillar 2, adding the ability to decertify officers, so they would not be able to continue their work.

Chief Keith Mello comments on Pillar 2, continuing the point the Chief State's Attorney made regarding number 14, and it is a "real deep dive" as it is difficult to change this process. He would like to see the POST Council vote to support the recommendation amend this section to create a "decertification" measure. This would provide a process where chiefs can discipline police officers. He believes this could have significant impact on culture.

Chairman McGraw thanks both Chief Mello and Chief State's Attorney for their expertise and recommendations.

Chief State's Attorney Richard Colangelo comments that he does not know if it is prudent to keep the language regarding the attorney general. The Chair acknowledges that language can be adjusted.

Ken Barone comments on the presentation and the role of the attorney general in other states and exploring an independent investigation is the bigger point to be made here. The editorial language can be removed. He continues to review the presentation and speaks about mechanisms to address the points made in the presentation. Chief State's Attorney Richard Colangelo responds that in looking at this point, the investigation would have to be two separate bodies.

Sergeant John Szewczyk comments that the two go hand in hand, the investigation should be done so well that the Union doesn't go forward with it but usually what happens is that the investigation is done poorly or is biased. He comments that those investigations should be done externally not internally. He says Unions and Management should work together because they have the same end goal in mind. He thinks it is a good idea to have the investigation in the Attorney General's Office. There is much work to be done under Pillar 2. He comments that police should not be investigating police.

Ken Barone continues the presentation with Pillar 3 Technology and Social Media and Pillar 4, Community Policing and Crime Reduction including “ending broken windows policing.” Chairman McGraw comments on the work that needs to be done regarding those pillars and asks if there are other pillars to be discussed.

Chief Keith Mello comments on those pillars. It is important for the community and most officers will be fine with the recommendations from Pillar 4. The majority of individuals who live in suburban communities should be brought to the table- the majority of complaints coming from those communities will be surrounding quality of life issues and motor vehicle issues. He states that while he does not like the language, he supports a lot of the content.

Chief Thomas Kulhawik echoes Chief Mello that there are over 100 municipalities and as a police chief, his responsibility is to respond to his community. They will have to understand the bigger picture for everyone, and each police department should listen and reflect those communities. Chairman McGraw agrees.

Chief State’s Attorney Richard Colangelo comments on the listening tour and states there are 13 judicial districts in Connecticut. Each district would be happy to contribute to those community listening tour.

Ken Barone continues the presentation on the last two pillars, Pillar 5: Training and Education, to develop a strategy to achieve accreditation (State or National) for all police departments in Connecticut. Pillar 6: Officer Wellness and Safety, to ensure early intervention through assistance, correction action and discipline which also includes, implementing psychological evaluation of officers into the recertification process. Chairman McGraw responds to the Officer Wellness and Safety issue and states that he previously worked with State Police and officer wellness is key.

Chief Keith Mello questions the development of a strategy to achieve accreditation for all police departments in Connecticut because there are already have that. He comments that it was previously called Mandatory Accreditation. He states it was through a council of 15 people, that began with 38 standards. He states that the concepts are good, but he disagrees with the language.

Jonathan Slifka comments that he appreciates the recommendations that have been made so far and reserves the right to expand on the disability community.

Chairman McGraw welcomes Representative Rebimbas to the meeting. Chairman McGraw calls asks for a vote on the recommendations.

Ken Barone states the motion is to accept the preliminary report and recommendations and to move to provide authority to the chair to create subcommittees of the task force. Chief Mello makes a motion to further study the recommendations and to allow for subcommittee groups to be made. A second was made by Chief Thomas Kulhawik. Chairman McGraw calls all in favor. The motion passes.

Jessica Drake, Associate Consultant, for 21CP Solutions shares information about their firm which surrounds 21st century policing after President Obama’s Task Force. She states that a report is only as good as its implementation. She discusses the goals of President Obama’s task force but notes that the current administration has not taken this work and continued it. She states that Connecticut has great target goals. Chairman McGraw thanks Jessica for her presentation.

Andrew Clark, Director, IMRP, adds that staff is imperative in contributing to ideas and taking those ideas and making them into effective legislation. He also adds that there were additional priorities and recommendations that have been added to the initial document. He comments on the President’s Task

Force and looking at all elements of the justice system. He expresses his eagerness to be part of this task force.

Ken Barone comments that for transparency purposes he will re-read the motion that was previously given (for the record). He states that the motion made by Chief Mello was to further study the concepts in the draft preliminary report and allow the chair to assign subcommittees to find further guidance to issue final recommendations. He recommends that because this is the Police Accountability and Transparency task force and the draft should be reflected on the Judiciary Committee webpage.

Chief State's Attorney Richard Colangelo comments that with the changes discussed, an updated version should be shared with members. Ken Barone, echoes that. Chief Mello agrees that the public should be aware of these recommendations and final recommendations will be made with language changes.

Karen Boisvert, Administrator of the POST Academy thanks the chairman for the opportunity to participate in these conversations.

Chairman McGraw outlines his next steps for community tours. The next meeting time is announced for June 30th and subcommittee group assignments will be made.

The meeting is adjourned at 2:53PM