

POLICE REINVENTION COMMITTEE

03/10/21

Zoom Minutes

Present: Sheriff William A. Schrom, Chemung County Sheriff's Office
Chief Joseph Kane, Elmira Police Department
Mayor Dan Mandell
Captain George Delnagro, New York State Police
Chief Rick Churches, Elmira Heights Police Department
Mayor Margaret Smith, Elmira Heights
Chief Thomas Stickler, Horseheads Village Police Department
Chief Bob Richards, Village of Elmira Police Department
Ron Allison, Manager for Village of Elmira
Aaron Dowd, Chemung County IT
EMO Director Douglas Houper, Emergency Management
DA Weeden Wetmore, Chemung County District Attorney's Office
Director Brian Hart, Office of Mental Health (late)
Melissa Brown, Chemung County Sheriff Admin. Asst.
Randy Reid, Reid Media Group
Anita Lewis
Jerome Emanuel
Georgia Verdier
Miquelle Fountain
Juhura Shazer
Nykole Parks

- I. An Agenda was provided by Sheriff Schrom to all committee members.
- II. Attendance was taken by Zoom logins.

Sheriff Schrom wanted to express his condolences to the Town of Elmira on the passing of Neil Milliken. Also introduced Supervisor Ron Allison who will be attending all future meetings.

Sheriff Schrom also introduced Chief Bob Richards who replaced Chief Barr after his retirement from the West Elmira Police Department.

- III. Motion was made to approve the Minutes from 02/09/21 by Brian Hart and seconded by Rand Reid.

- IV. Subcommittee Reports

A. Mental Health:

Chief Stickler - They have not met since they sent their report to the County Executive's Office. They do still need to continue to expand on some things. Anita Lewis agreed.

B. Faith Based:

Chief Churches - They have had further discussions. The need to continue their mission to reach out to the Faith Based Organizations, especially once COVID restrictions end.

Sheriff Schrom – Sgt. Ayers from the CCSO talked to the church on Maple Ave., should he hold off or proceed?

Chief Churches – Corey Cook is the pastor, yes move ahead with contacting the leaders and youth congregation. He is good with staying on this Subcommittee.

George Verdier – She belongs to a forum of 9 ministers and she can reach out to them.

Lt. Julian Hughey – Some of those 9 are outside of Chemung County, Corning, Ithaca etc. He thinks it would be positive to include the outside area too. He did receive the picture and biography for Sheriff Schrom, but not the others yet.

Sheriff Schrom – Are you looking for pictures and biographies for the LE POC or from him and the Chiefs?

Lt. Julian Hughey – They want the local law enforcement person for each church. It would be great if the chiefs could take on that role, but perhaps the liaison should be a street person.

Sheriff Schrom – There are union issues with this, such as compensation to the person attending. It is easier to assign somebody off line to attend.

Lt. Julian Hughey – Each department has to decide for their agency.

Chief Churches – Maybe have a separate meeting with the chiefs of each agency for ideas and a decision to be made.

Sheriff Schrom – That is a good idea, can accommodate anytime.

Nykole Parks – Lt. Hughey has good ideas and good elements to the plan. People want to engage with patrols in their area. If the leader/chief is the one to attend these things, what is the plan to trickle down information to the patrol?

Sheriff Schrom – The CCSO has division head meetings where the Major, Captain and Lieutenants all attend and disperse the information to their personnel. We also have quarterly staff meetings where all of these people plus their Sergeants attend. Also, if the Sheriff attends an event that he has other personnel more familiar with the subject (such as Active Shooter Training) he brings them with him.

C. **Community & Youth Engagement:**

Chief Richards – He has not attended anything since the last Zoom meeting. He will get his contact information out to the Subcommittee so he can be added to the group.

Nykole Parks – She and Jerome met with the City of Lights Church. They had 8 or 9 kids from the 7th – 10th grades. Two of those children had direct police contact, but mostly they had positive comments. 50% of them said they want law enforcement in their neighborhood. They don't feel safe being out at nighttime. Their group is willing to work in conjunction with the Faith-Based Group. What is Trauma Informed Care and can that be included in the training?

Brian Hart – Trauma Informed Care recognizes that an individual is likely to have a history of trauma and the role that plays in a person's actions. He is willing to bring somebody in to train on this; however, it would be hard to do with the de-escalation and bias training because too much to cover.

George Verdier – COVID brings its own trauma issues. Many people are reporting trauma from this pandemic. Is there anything being provided for them?

Brian Hart – Not per se for the pandemic, but people are seeing counseling due to depressions, anxiousness, relationship problems etc. due to being isolated. There are many private places to seek help such as Family Services, Elmira Psychiatric Center and Arnot Medical.

V. Correction Officer vacancies

Sheriff Schrom – We have previously discussed minority recruiting in Law Enforcement and Corrections. There are currently vacancies at the Chemung County Jail for part-time Correction Officers. The current civil service list has been exhausted and we are hiring provisionally. They will need to pass a medical screening, take the next Civil Service test and score in the top 3. It should be noted however that due to the low number of persons signing up for the exam, usually if you pass the test you will be reachable regardless of where you rank. The next CO test is scheduled for 06/05/21. If you know anybody interested, they can reach out to Civil Service or the Sheriff directly for provisional details. This job starts at almost \$21/hr and is 20 hours per week but with no benefits. There are no age limits; however, we usually look to hire anybody over 20-21 years of age. We have hired retirees over 50. The Deputy Sheriff/Police Officer exam is also being given on 05/15/21. With both tests, it generally takes about 3 months to get the results back from the state. Sheriff Schrom later added that the Correction Officer position requires you to be a Chemung County resident. The Deputy Sheriff positions also does, other agencies however, don't have a residency requirement and can consider other candidates from different counties.

Chief Kane – Jail employees have made good law enforcement candidates.

Sheriff Schrom – Yes, a lot of the COs move from the Jail to the Road. They are an asset to any agency, they have interpersonal communication skills and are familiar with the criminal element.

VI. Civil Service Exam – already covered

VII. Pictures and biographies for liaisons – already covered

VIII. Arnot's request to help administer medication

Brian Hart – Arnot is looking for volunteers at the vaccination sites on 3/10 from noon – 5:30 pm for 400 people. This is located at the gym next to the DSS building. If interested, please reach out to Brian.

Sheriff Schrom – What positions are they looking for?

Brian Hart – Not law enforcement positions, just volunteers. Any nurses will give the shots, other positions will be data entry, foot traffic, etc.

IX. Recent violence/homicides

Chief Kane – There have been 3 homicides in the City of Elmira in 2021. He welcomes ideas to help, need to increase cooperation and stop the escalation. Most of these are happening between midnight and 3:00 or 4:00 a.m. DA Wetmore is involved in the court part and sees the lack of cooperation which means he can't satisfy the prosecution requirements. The value of life in Elmira seems low.

Georgia Verdier – This is not acceptable, fear is a major force. They fear retaliation, we need a method to alleviate that fear and offer protection.

Chief Kane – They already have the philosophy to not comply with law enforcement. We can issue Orders of Protection, file intimidation charges. However, these are just consequences they don't put them in a safety bubble. In the new Discovery Laws their names are revealed.

Georgia Verdier – The people don't trust the police to keep them safe.

DA Wetmore – The last homicide just occurred 10 days ago at the Speedway on the Southside. There were two young girls there and one wanted to cooperate while the other was yelling and screaming venomous things to the police. Then the mom called the police and complained that they had their daughter all night. The police are met with hostility by young people and these shootings. They are not afraid to be hostile with law enforcement.

Nycole Parks – We need time to implement these strategies after COVID so we can reach out to people. People are still being reactive and the nation is still in an uproar.

Georgia Verdier – We are still talking, this will be a slow process. This group is interfacing with officers.

Juhura Shazer – This is our community. Parents are advocating for their child even knowing their child was the issue. It wasn't until his neighbor's child was a victim that he could have conversation with her about her child. She would not listen to law enforcement or DA. These people foster the behavior. They have a skewed perspective of law enforcement until the bullets fly at them.

Anita Lewis – Employees at her office want to meet about these murders and what can be done. Need the communities to talk.

Georgie Verdier – It takes a village. She has seen mom’s curse out the police. It is right vs. wrong. Everybody wants to be safe.

Sheriff Schrom – On what Nykole said, there is a lack of trust and resentment. A lot of us remember the Rodney King case of excessive force. For a long period of time “all” law enforcement was painted with the same picture and perceived to use excessive force all the time. We come into a situation because law enforcement was called and we need to render safety and/or aid, yet are met with heckling. The manner in which the people at these scenes interact with law enforcement who are trying to help is troubling. Certainly, the interaction differs, some are a result of a vehicle and traffic stop compared to others which are a result of law enforcement being called to a scene.

Anita Lewis – Can you use the body cam footage of these scenes and interaction for training? Maybe just blank out the faces. Why is this okay? Maybe have workshops.

Sheriff Schrom – We do use the body cams for personnel complaints. That is the first thing we do is pull all car and body cam footage. It usually contradicts what is being alleged and they are just mad because they got a ticket. We also use it to train personnel. We could use it as suggested if there is not an active case of the DA does not oppose the release of the footage, we would have no objection to sharing or posting if it was appropriate to do so.

Juhura Shazer – He is getting these conversations too late. When he sees these people it is usually at a funeral. We need to reach them earlier.

Anita Lewis – Maybe better gun control.

Sheriff Schrom – These guns are not legally obtained. We can’t just search homes and cars without probable cause, need to develop intelligence.

Chief Kane – There are strict firearm laws, these are illegal weapons. They did try a gun buy-back program at a Wegmans in Buffalo or Rochester where they got a \$50 gift card for turning them in. Also, a Gun Amnesty Program, but space is an issue. Can’t have a line of people all with guns. Most people were just cleaning out families homes and turning them in for the gift card. Not getting the criminals to turn in guns. Sharing videos from body cams would show what law enforcement deals with. Sometimes it is just high emotions at the scene. Discussed where a suspect punched a cop after being released.

DA Wetmore – Gives a lot of credit to the EPD Officer that was punched, because he then handcuffed the perpetrator and put him in the car and was completely calm. He can't talk much about it or show the video right now because it is still pending prosecution. He can check to see if law enforcement can release it.

Sheriff Schrom – Body cameras are also used for internal investigations. This also works at the jail. However, the cameras are now getting old and malfunctioning. Deputies are afraid to use because if they shut down part way through they are afraid it will look intentional. Looking at getting funding for more cameras. About the Gun Take Back events, it is like the Drug Take Back program. We have taken in 15,000 pounds of drugs/medication since 2010. None of that is cocaine, heroin, marijuana, these are all just expired medications. Probably 99% legal drugs. Unfortunately, the same would be true for a gun take-back event. Although it's always good to get guns off the streets or out of the hands of people who don't want them and could be obtained by others, most of the guns, if not all, would not be turned in by criminals.

Anita Lewis – Maybe have a conversation with people and ask if they would turn them in?

Jerome Emanuel – This seems to be a poverty/low income housing issue in the African American community. Need to start early and reach the younger generation to create paths for change

Georgia Verdier – We have a lot of young parents that had little to no parenting themselves, they don't know how to teach proper behavior.

Miquelle Fountain – Can we arrest parents for their child's behavior?

Nykole Parks – We used to have truancy officers, family court and youth court avenues.

DA Wetmore – There is no penal law sanction, in most cases that would allow for the parent to be charged for a child's behavior outside the home or in another setting, this is social work. In some cases it may be appropriate to charge a parent(s) with Endangering the Welfare of a Child, Unlawfully Dealing, Obstruction of Governmental Administration, etc. depending on the circumstances. Most times the parent is mad at law enforcement because their child has been arrested, not at the child for the illegal behavior. They can be sued in civil court.

Miquelle Fountain – Can they file charges for interfering with investigations such as obstruction or resisting arrest?

Chief Kane – Emotions are just high at the scene. We have limited personnel and it delays response to the urgent situation. We used to have a law that if we were called to a residence 4 times there would be a \$1,000 fine. However, this had a negative impact on domestic violence cases. No longer active.

X. Updates of latest survey results

Sheriff Schrom – Aaron Dowd from IT was on this Zoom but looks like he had to log off. No updates.

Nykole Parks – Still looking for the top 10 comments from the survey.

Sheriff Schrom - We will need to touch base with Aaron Dowd for those.

XI. Status of Local Law for the target date of 04/01/21

Sheriff Schrom – County Executive Moss was unable to attend this meeting today. There was a problem with getting this on the Agenda for the Legislature this month.

Nykole Parks – She checked the Legislative Minutes and there wasn't anything listed for 3/8/21. Moss did a good job presenting to the Budget Committee, but the Full Legislature has to vote and pass the Executive Order then to local municipalities to adopt.

Sheriff Schrom - We will contact County Executive Moss for status. ****We did check and it passed through the Legislature 15-0, Resolution #21-173 (see attached).**

Nykoel Parks – Demographics seem low. Where did the numbers come from (Schrom/Kane believes from the 2010 Census). Minority was only listed as 6% in entire county. There was another line for Other that had 7% so maybe a total of 13%. Asked if we could see actual numbers next to the percentages.

XII. Committee Member general feedback: No response

XIII. Old Business

Nykole Parks – Should these Subcommittees still continue?

Chief Kane thinks we can reunite to one committee.

Nykole Parks – We need more time as Subcommittees.

XIV. Next Police Reinvention Committee meeting date will be scheduled for Tuesday, April 6, 2021 at 9:00 A.M.

If anybody has questions from this meeting or for the next meeting, they can be sent to the Chemung County Sheriff's Administrative Assistant Melissa Brown at mbrown@chemungcountyny.gov She will send to the appropriate agency for a response or add to the next meeting Agenda.

Meeting adjourned by Sheriff Schrom at 10:44 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Sheriff William Schrom
Co-Chairman

Respectfully submitted,



Chief Joseph Kane
Co-Chairman