

DULUTH CITIZEN REVIEW BOARD MEETING MINUTES

MEETING: July 24, 2024th – 5:32pm

Present board members: Vice Chair Blair Powless, Recording Secretary Bobbie Underthun, Todd Maas, Melissa DeRosier-Holshouser, Chenoa Williams

Others in attendance: Deputy Chief Ryan Morris, Lieutenant Steve Ring, Human Rights Office representative – Laura Laaksonen, City Councilor Tara Swenson – 4th District, Citizen Salaam Witherspoon, two other citizens that were late.

1. **Call to Order and introductions:** Vice Chair Powless leading the meeting, as President Franklin was unable to make the meeting. The meeting called to order at 5:32pm. Everyone went around the room and introduced themselves and shared a personal thing about themselves, if they wanted to.
2. **Public comments:** Salaam Witherspoon said she was here to support CRB member Chenoa Williams. Also stated there wasn't diversity and there was an acronym incorrect
3. **Approval of Minutes:** Maas motioned to approve – Underthun 2nd. Powless appreciated the layout and detail of the minutes – DeRosier-Holshouser asked if there was enough detail – Councilor Swenson liked the layout of the minutes. Minutes approved at 5:39.
** Powless and Franklin had a meeting and in the interest of complete transparency, minutes from said meeting were submitted to all members of CRB.
4. **Police Liaison Report:**
 - Lt. Ring had emailed the dispositions for three pending complaints – Powless asked to discuss one complaint that seemed vague – just that there was a complaint and then the disposition that there was some coaching. Lt. Ring explained that one individual made several complaints on several people over a long period of time, and it would've been too complex and confusing, and this was not a normal complaint process. 99% of the complaints are much clearer. Discussion was had about public/private data and what can and cannot be disseminated.
 - Lt. Ring said they have tried different formats and different ways to share “pending” complaints with the DCRB – at this time he will send updates biannually. This is only for pending complaints that don't have a disposition before the next DCRB meeting. Lt. Ring also stated at the end of the year he looks back at anything that is incomplete and will update the DCRB if anything gets completed in that time.
 - Salaam Witherspoon asked about a complaint filed on 6/17/24 where she said BWC was not on related to her nephew. Lt. Ring said he has reached out to the family regarding the complaint and discussing the outcome and he hasn't heard back.

- Powless asked how we would manage that situation, when someone knows a lot about a complaint – Lt. Ring cautioned about speaking about a complaint involving someone that isn't in attendance. In this case, Witherspoon's nephew wasn't in the room and wouldn't be appropriate to speak on it.
- Lt. Ring stated there are 9 candidates remaining in the hiring process – including laterals. Waiting on backgrounds, psychological testing and medical testing – hoping for them to start near the end of August. This doesn't get DPD fully staffed at all but will be nice to get them all trained in and serving the community.
- DC Morris reminded all about the upcoming events and that all of them are shared on the DPD Facebook page – also encouraged DCRB to attend and encourage others to attend.
 - Thursday, August 1st Operation K9 at Wessman Arena in Superior 4:30 – 8pm – see K9 teams in action and many other emergency vehicles – all welcome
 - Thursday, August 1st at Wade Stadium – 6pm - Field of Dreams charity baseball game benefiting the Northern Lights Foundation. Military, first responders and all kids get in FREE – fun-filled community event featuring police and fire displays, food, raffles and a ball game.
 - Tuesday, August 6th – National Night Out – 5pm-9pm – Officers will be out in force trying to attend all neighborhood block parties.
 - Wednesday, August 14th – Kids, Cops & Cars at Bayfront Park – 11am – 2pm – Lots of police vehicles, and K9 teams around, games, treats and lots of positive interactions with kids and families.

5. **Complaint Audit Report**

- Powless was a little disappointed with how big the goals were for the audit and how little was accomplished.
- Three complaints were made to DPD – all three were responded to in a timely manner.
- Two complaints were made to the Human Rights office – one was responded to in a timely and professional manner, the other wasn't responded to at all.
- One response from DPD could've been more engaging and welcoming for the "complainant" – DC Morris appreciated the suggestion about friendly and more engaging language when responding to complaints and will look into it going forward.
- Powless would like to see the language on the complaint filing page, some of the wording could be perceived as scary for the community and they would be discouraged from making complaints.
- Powless discussed having the CRB as a place for citizens to make complaints – Laura made the point that the CRB meeting is public and that's maybe not an appropriate way to file a complaint, due to sensitivity of some complaints, juveniles being involved, etc. Powless discussed maybe the best thing to do is if someone comes to the meeting to file a complaint, stop them and inform them about the minutes being taken of the meeting and it being public information – offer alternative solutions, i.e. talking with LE or DCRB after the meeting is adjourned.

- Councilor Swenson asked how often the audit is done – Lt. Ring and Powless said it's been in discussions for many years, but this was the first time it was done. Powless would like to see the audit being done yearly.
- The process for the audit goes as follows: file a complaint (many ways to do so), as soon as someone responds to the complaint let them know it is a “fake” complaint and that you are with the DCRB doing a complaint audit.
- Lt. Ring discussed being cognizant of the total number of “fake” complaints we would do in an audit, as it would make the number of complaints within the PD go up and while they can flag them as “audit” complaints and not “real” they cannot delete them from the data.
- Witherspoon: When her mother called her to say she was going to get her nephew from jail Witherspoon called 911 and was told the officer who arrested him wasn't working for four days. Witherspoon also wanted clarification about “fake complaints”. Stated people in the community she serves aren't going to feel comfortable complaining, they think it will just get swept under the rug, etc.
- Powless replied to Witherspoon clarifying that the “fake” complaints we were referring to were regarding the audit – nothing else. That the audit tests the system to ensure complainants get a response. Also stated we want people to complain, so they can bring things to light, if need be, and be educated if that is needed as well. The complaint audit was one of the results of the racial bias audit.
- ***AGENDA ITEM FOR NEXT MONTH*** How do we let people know about the different ways of making a complaint?
- Councilor Swenson asked how the complaint process could be more available to the public, keeping in mind community barriers, like transportation, not wanting to come to city hall, etc. Looking for ideas to engage people differently.

6. **Other Business:**

A). **Discuss Public Safety Ordinances:**

- Public Safety Ordinances – Powless asked for this to be on the agenda – anyone can put things on the agenda – just email them to Laura before the next meeting.
- There have been a lot of community concerns about this. One individual reached out to Powless asking the DCRB to discuss.
- DC Morris: Duluth is trying to get more in line with cities of First Class. The Misdemeanor option gives diversion options and that isn't available currently. Currently it's just an administrative fine.
- This will not change how the police department approaches these situations; they aren't looking to go out and arrest people just for living in an encampment. This will give them more options for the people suffering from mental health crisis and substance abuse population.
- Powless discussed that there are some ordinances that most people will agree with – i.e. no smoking weed in the skywalks – nobody is upset that that's an ordinance. “Making it a crime to be homeless” is what people are upset about. There are homeless people and there are some people putting on a spectacle – referring to the encampment at City Hall. Public protesting is now going to be possibly criminal and enforced?

- DC Morris said – blocking the sidewalk being an ordinance violation is already in existence and in effect. Labor Unions reached out – nothing changed for them, they aren't doing anything unlawful. We aren't going to be out arresting camps- we are looking for repeat offenders, who refuse all the multitude of services that are offered to them, and they continue to violate. The city is looking to educate above all. There is a city plan in place where the Life Safety team looks at conditions, trash, human waste, etc., but at some point, there needs to be accountability. The city's goal is always to be compassionate, and it is recognized that mental health issues and substance abuse are common in these camps. The hope is that with education, people can be given resources. We sometimes need to intervene in order to be able to help people and keep neighborhoods and the camps safe.
- Powless asked if this package passes will the city be removing the camp outside City Hall? DC Morris said there is not currently a plan to remove them as they are focusing on ironing out the details of the ordinance package, but that the city is always evaluating and monitoring the conditions out there.
- Salaam asked if crime numbers go up with these encampments.
- DC Morris – we see a lot of things, human waste, trash, physical assaults, sexual assaults, drug use, overdoses, etc. Ultimately homelessness is not criminal, but we need to help them. Mental health and substance abuse goes untreated in these camps. Businesses also have an interest in the city and the areas around their businesses and we must be aware of that too.
- Lt. Ring and DC Morris used drug court/traffic court as examples. They both are diversion programs and if the participant follows through with the stipulations of the diversion program, the charge will go off their record. They also discussed that they aren't trying to impose financial burdens on peoples that don't have the means.
- Powless discussed the concern that so many people showed up to the meeting last week with other groups in town and worried that the city was just trying to push this through without input. Councilor Swenson stated there were meetings prior to the council meeting last week and the city learned that they didn't bring everyone to the table and there have been some amendments made. DC Morris said that change was needed and if we brought every single person to the table, nothing would ever get done. Ultimately, we (the city) come forward with legislation, we see what works, what we can change, we just need get something out there and work on it from that.
- Williams stated there was a lack of representation at the table for people in the community and that it seemed underhanded and that the ordinances will affect those people directly. Councilor Swenson said nothing changed with the labor union and regarding the unhoused – they are working with CHUM. At some point the CHUM director stated he was not consulted about this - DC Morris states he was wrong and that he was. There is lots of info out there that's not true.

B) Approve questions for the City Attorney:

DCRB approves of the list of questions for the City Attorney. DCRB is requesting a response in writing so we can refer to the documents as needed. Laura reached out to the City Attorney's office – they are looking at their schedules and will try to attend either next month or the month after.

C) Board Retreat:

A chance for DCRB to get together not at a meeting and get to know each other, come up with goals. We need to decide on a date – most people can do a Saturday – Williams can do that if it's a later part of the day. Powless will talk to Franklin. We will need to decide on a date and then let Laura know so she can publish it, as it is open to the public.

7. **Announcements and Community Correspondence:**

- NONE

8. **Additional Public Comment:**

- Family Freedom Center diversion program wants DPD to talk to kids. Witherspoon said the next one starts Aug 5th and there are 15 kids registered. Restorative Justice includes 10 hours of community service and 10 hours of goal setting, self-esteem building and introducing resources to them. DC Morris said that is definitely something the PD would be interested in helping with and to speak with him after the meeting to discuss details.

9. **Board Member Comments and Questions:**

- Powless asked about bylaws being emailed to DCRB – Laura said she already has to send so many documents each month, that sometimes they don't all go through in one email. Underthun stated she has a printed copy and will always have it with her. Powless stated that's something that we could use on the DCRB page on the city's website so we could all access it anytime.
- Powless asked if we could get signage in the building, on elevators, etc. Laura stated we can't as the City Clerk's Office has said none can be posted – but that it is posted each month in the main common area on the 1st floor near the elevators.

10. **Adjourn:** Maas motion – DeRosier-Holshouser 2nd – Adjourned 7:02pm

*Minutes taken by Underthun during meeting - 07/24/2024
Typed by DeRosier-Holshouser - 07/25/2024