

March 27, 2015

A meeting of the Research Committee of the Board of Fire and Police Commissioners was held on the above date at Hillside Family Resource Center, 1452 North 7th Street, commencing at 9:11 A.M.

PRESENT: Commissioners: Michael M. O'Hear, Chair  
Ann Wilson  
Marisabel Cabrera  
Steven M. DeVougas

The Chair thanked Commissioner Wilson for allowing the committee to meet at Hillside. He introduced everyone present and asked those in attendance to identify themselves. He stated this committee was formed as a follow up to the Police Satisfaction Survey conducted by the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee last year. He stated the committee might consider whether to recommend follow-up surveys on an annual or bi-annual basis since there is a baseline now. Future surveys can track how the numbers change over time and show whether policy changes are having positive effects. A core set of questions can be asked each time but new questions can be added as needed to allow the committee to explore more areas in detail and to follow up on some of the issues and problem areas that emerged from the last survey.

On the whole, the survey indicated levels of satisfaction were acceptable but some of the specific questions indicated the need for follow-up. The Chair suggested picking out some of the areas one at a time and looking at them more in depth. The committee can ask the Police Department (PD) to come and speak on specific issues, compare policies from other departments to ours, obtain additional data from other cities as to how well they are doing in some of the areas of concern to us, connect with community groups, and interact more with members of the public.

The Chair suggested identifying an issue at this meeting to handle first. Although there is no specific time table for this work, he would like to meet several times over the next few months. He asked what other Fire and Police Commission (FPC) committees there are. Renee Keinert, FPC staff support, outlined the other committees.

Commissioner Wilson would like to include all concerns from other surveys that have been done since they went to different groups of people. She is also concerned about the complaint process. Commissioner Cabrera was concerned that the survey might not have been representative of the entire population of the city, e.g., Spanish-speaking residents, and that the sample for some of the responses, such as use of force, was too small. The Chair stated UWM can be asked to explain more about the methodology it used (e.g., random digit dialing for cell and land lines). 1400 responses compared to 600,000 looks like a small percentage but if the sample is collected in the right way it is a significant number and is representative. UWM can be asked to identify ways to increase the sample size, although that may be more expensive. Commissioner DeVougas asked if the UWM survey could be linked with the use of force surveys that Dr. Brandl does.

The Chair then asked for input from the audience. Some of the concerns raised were:

1. No public comment was allowed when the UWM survey was presented. Will the Board adopt a policy so citizens can have more input?
2. What is the purpose of collecting this information and what will it be used for?
3. Citizens need to have input but things do need to be done by experts.
4. Extra weight was given to white respondents in the UWM survey. Why was it so hard to get white respondents?

5. The survey needs to be presented to the public via the Commission's website prior to the meeting at which it will be discussed. Establish a separate meeting where the public can interact with the Board regarding the survey information.
6. Will the information gathered actually be used?
7. Information is needed on the citizen complaint processes of the FPC and the PD.
8. The impact of the current PD policy on officer initiated stops should be looked at. Has it affected things like willingness to report a crime or to cooperate in an investigation?

The Chair highlighted four sets of questions in the survey that he believes call out for additional research. He asked other Commissioners to add their topics to the list, and then one should be prioritized for follow-up.

1. Pat downs and searches: Most survey respondents who were searched indicated the police did not have a legitimate reason for searching them.
2. Competency in responding to calls for service: A number of respondents expressed dissatisfaction in this area.
3. Traffic stops: Respondents who felt they had been stopped for no good reason tended to give poor evaluations to the PD. Also, many respondents felt their stops did not last an appropriate amount of time.
4. Complaints to the PD: Few of the respondents who felt they were not treated with courtesy and respect actually filed a complaint.

The Chair stated he would like to focus on the complaint process. It is partly an internal process under the Commission's direct control. Complaints are also related to other areas and can help address issues in those areas. He asked what areas the committee wants to focus on. The other committee members agreed that the complaint process should be looked at first.

Members of the audience suggested doing a follow up on past citizen complaints, following up with satellite locations to make sure they know how to issue the complaint forms and assist complainants in filling them out, ensuring that personnel are always available at PD offices to hand out complaint forms, having the forms available on line, investigating whether complainants of all races are treated equally, and posting closed complaints on line.

Committee members stated they are unfamiliar with the complaint process and would like a presentation by staff to answer questions. The Chair stated they will meet again in 3-4 weeks and have a few meetings to gather information and ideas. A written report will then be formulated and presented to the full Board. A brief summary on the committee's progress will be given at the Board's regular meetings.

Commissioner Wilson moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Cabrera. The motion carried unanimously.

The meeting concluded at 10:20 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,



Michael M. O'Hear  
Commissioner

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