

St Cloud Community Policing Agreement Educational Forum Notes
St Cloud City Hall Council Chambers

10/24/2017
6 pm - 8 pm

Commissioners Present: Eunice Adjei, Sarah Drake, Jama Mohamed, Rachel Wexelbaum, Jonathan Wong (Minnesota Department of Human Rights Information Officer)

Panelists: Heidi Hovis (Minnesota Department of Human Rights Enforcement Officer) Jeff Oxtan (Assistant Chief of Police, City of St Cloud), Monica Segura-Schwartz (Hispanic Committee, St. Joseph Church / Asemblea Derechos Civiles / Community Member), Freddie Walker (African American Male Forum / SCSU Multicultural Student Services)

Forum started 6:02 am

History of the Document

Dr. Walker provided a brief history of the St Cloud Community Policing Agreement. He was part of the original group to initiate the process and document in 2004. Eleven members of the community, as well as the police department, got together to address the racial profiling taking place in St. Cloud. St. Cloud at the time had a small percentage of people of color in the community, but a high percentage of racial profiling according to a survey of police departments conducted by the state of Minnesota in 2003, as well as an SCSU survey conducted in 2005 by Dr. Robinson and his students that recorded police bias.

Work on the agreement took place from July 2004-August 2005, with the original agreement signed by the St Cloud Police Department and the involved community organization representatives on August 8, 2005. Community organization representatives included:

- St Cloud Police Department
- African American Male Forum
- Hands Across the World
- Higher Ground Church of God in Christ
- Hispanic Business Association
- ISALAH's Great River Interfaith Partnership (GRIP)
- Nu Way Missionary Baptist Church
- Refugee Employment and Social Services of Lutheran Social Services
- Resurrection AME Zion
- St Cloud Area Somali Salvation Organization (SASSO)
- St Cloud Korean Baptist Church
- United Migrant Opportunity Services (UMOS)

The initial intention of the document was to address biased policing. The group working on the policing agreement at the time also started talking about recruiting and hiring officers of color, as well as training of officers to ensure that they were performing their duties fairly and impartially. Lots of discussion took place with the police to answer the question, how do you we address biased policing? Those engaged with the

Community Policing Agreement wanted to make sure that their communities knew what to ask for and what to say when they were stopped by the police or about to be arrested. The group also addressed immigration in the document, and how the police should address and treat immigrants. This initial document was the product of those discussions.

Prior to the St Cloud Community Policing Agreement, City of St. Cloud passed an ordinance establishing the Citizens Review Board. <http://www.ci.stcloud.mn.us/793/Citizens-Review-Board>

Dr. Walker was the first African-American person to sit on the review board. The original purpose of the review board was to see if there were any discrepancies in how the police handled certain cases.

Dr. Walker stated that the St Cloud Community Policing Agreement is a living document, and that people from a wide variety of communities (including those listed above) come together to discuss and update the agreement, with a focus on the principle of Fair and Impartial Policing.

Current State of the St Cloud Community Policing Agreement

Officer Oxton and Pastor Albert of Isaiah GRIP met to discuss the Community Policing Agreement. They started work to revise and review the document picked up again in January 2017.

A review of the Community Policing Agreement was prompted by many things that have changed since 2005. Some organizations involved in the original Agreement no longer exist, and others have been added. The core group is still trying to determine who else should be reviewing the agreement, as the focus of the St Cloud Community Policing Agreement has expanded from improving relations between police and people of color and immigrants to other populations as well.

Multiple open meetings were scheduled where people could discuss the agreement and give their feedback. Round tables based on particular sections of the agreement were organized. Three subgroups formed to address Bias, Compliance, and Community Relations.

The organizing around the St Cloud Community Policing Agreement has been community-driven. The St Cloud Police Department said that the community should drive the organization of this. Ms. Segura-Schwartz said that each person involved with the agreement has a responsibility to bring other people to the meetings, which has delayed the process as things have to be explained multiple times and new revisions are made.

The group is close to finalizing the document. There are still some things to review, as well as deciding what entities should sign it. The group also wants to write up the historic recognition of the agreement.

Ms. Hovis stated his is an agreement—not law—simply parameters for how we want the police to behave and how we want to behave with the police.

Officer Oxton stated that the document has weight in that it led to police policy specific to the document—it has impacted how police officers are trained.

Report from the Community Relations Sub-Committee

Ms. Hovis stated that this is a collaborative effort and that anyone can participate. There is no top-down leadership. She stressed that this is a fluid document, and hoped that there would be more frequent reviews of the document than in the past.

Ms. Hovis stated that the Community Relations Sub-Committee wants the police to be part of community events, and wants to extend the invitation to the police to build trust. The group strives to craft this agreement in such a way that will reflect a reciprocal relationship between the police and the people.

Report from the Compliance Sub-Committee

Ms. Segura-Schwartz clarified sections of the document and what had to do with policies and procedures. Information about community organizations assisting in the complaint process will be removed from the document due to the Community Police Review Board. Members of community organizations can serve as liaisons to help people contact the police to file reports, but are not necessarily elected people serving on the review board.

A member of the audience, who identified themselves as a member of Community Policing Agreement, Compliance Sub-Committee, stressed that in this complaint process, there is also an appeal process.

Jeff Oxtton stated that the complaint process is important, and that the police want to hear these complaints and make people feel comfortable reporting. The police department allows community members to help people file complaints; Officer Oxtton gave the example of someone reporting to their pastor, and the pastor calling the police to come to the church where they can record the complaint with the pastor present.

Ms. Hovis stressed that the new document would be available to everyone for viewing soon.

Questions and Answers

Q: How do people find out about these meetings? Is it too late to join?

A: It is not too late—call the Police Department for more information. The next meeting is on Thursday November 16th, 12 pm -2 pm, at the St. Cloud Police Department.

Ms. Hovis stated that the document will be reviewed every year, for new ideas and concepts. The Agreement provides for a yearly community forum to discuss the Agreement.

Meeting schedule based on when people who show up say that they can participate. Meetings are often scheduled at the end of the current meeting. This is a volunteer group so there is no delegated person to handle scheduling or announcing of meetings.

There is one email list of regular participants handled by Reverend Alberts.

Q: Concerns regarding notice provided via email. Not everyone who may be interested in attending gets an email. This, in addition to meetings scheduled during working hours, impedes participation.

A: The group will take the feedback on scheduling some evening meetings for those who are currently working.

Q: Re: Police Citizen Review Board: Based on my experience working with people in the community, I would like to know, how many citizens have had their case reviewed in their favor? In the past 8 years, I have seen very little positive coming out of the review board—what are the statistics coming from the police review board to show results over the years?

A: Not every case will go to the Citizens Review Board. Chief Anderson determines which cases the Review Board will review and make recommendations pursuant to the City Ordinance. The City Ordinance is available online and provides information on cases reviewed by the Board.

The Citizens Review Board is established by and follows the City Ordinance. The Review Board can only give one of three recommendations on any case: Unfounded, Not Sustained, or Other. The Citizen's

Review Board issues an Annual Report pursuant to City Ordinance.

<http://www.ci.stcloud.mn.us/DocumentCenter/View/12209>

In some cases, according to Dr. Walker, complaints were unfounded due to the citizen's own actions.

The Citizens Review Board exists by City Ordinance. Members of the Board serve 1 year, 2 year, or 3 year terms. Members are appointed by the Mayor and then approved by the City Council pursuant to City Ordinance. <http://www.ci.stcloud.mn.us/DocumentCenter/View/367>

The Citizen Review Board reviews cases according to the City Ordinance and not the Agreement. The Citizen Review Board reports are shared on the police department website.

Q: Central Minnesota is evolving. What substance would the document have with state troopers and the Sheriff's Department? How does it carry weight across Stearns County? Racial profiling comes from the Sheriff's Department and state troopers. How will you make the agreement more inclusive of other police departments working in St. Cloud?

A. Other entities are working with the Sheriff's Department, as well as police departments in Waite Park and Cold Spring. This work is primarily being done by Asemblea De Derechos Civiles. Otherwise, no, the agreement does not currently cover these entities; it is limited to the St. Cloud Police Department in response to their history of racial profiling.

The panelists were in agreement that reaching out to other law enforcement agencies was important, but this would entail that those entities would be receptive.

Q: (Directed at member from the audience who identified themselves as a member of Asemblea De Derechos Civiles) When meeting with the sheriff, are you including the medical director and DOC in these discussions? It would be a good thing to consider as the DOC governs the jail, and there have been numerous complaints regarding denial of medications. Someone from the DOC from Minneapolis needs to come out with the policies and procedures that govern the jail, too.

A: Member from the audience who identified themselves as a member of Asemblea De Derechos Civiles stated that their group was meeting with the Sheriff said they would consider those recommendations.

Q: How is it possible to see the new "finalized" draft? How do we improve accessibility for the process and the document?

A: It is the responsibility of each person involved with the community policing agreement group to reach out to others and invite them to the meetings. Panelists will bring back concerns regarding improving accessibility to the working groups.

Panelists felt the working group would probably be open to alternating meetings dates/times to gain participation. The group will also investigate technologies that will allow for public viewing and chatting about the document while not taking away from those who wish to engage in face to face work.

Q: Public meeting members' suggestions to improve outreach / accessibility included announcing meetings publicly by putting them in the paper and on the City website's event calendar; social media presence; better placement of the agreement in the city website as it is very difficult to find; and use of a wiki and Google Docs to work on the agreement in a collaborative, accessible manner.

A: The final agreement will be placed on the city website as well as the St Cloud Times so that it is accessible to everyone. It is also available in Spanish and Somali.

The panelists acknowledged that outreach could be improved and said that everyone is still welcome to come. At the same time, different communities have ebbed and flowed in their participation during the history of this agreement.

Q: Question about complaint process: Page 5, #2b in the document: Who is the officer appointed to assist in preparing the initial complaint?

A: This section will be revised. There will be a Sergeant in Professional Divisions who will do it. The unit will stay consistent but the person assigned might change. The phone number of that unit will be added to that section.

Q: How do you measure the success of this document?

A: Once a year, there will be a public meeting to discuss exactly that. What has been done, not done, what needs to be revamped. No formal data gathering; just once a year to report on what needs to be revamped. This document has 12 years of life into it. Since then, the police department has evolved. We want the document to be as inclusive as we can.

Ms. Segura-Schwartz shared working on the Agreement has helped her understand the police department better and their challenges. She said the committee has had discussions on how can we measure bias in policing, but the problem is very complex. The panelists shared they, individually, do not always see eye to eye with law enforcement, but they have developed a relationship where they can communicate and continue the work of the Agreement. The Compliance Sub-Committee has met with Chief Anderson and Officer Oxtan.

Q: Question for Officer Oxtan: What is the police commitment to this agreement? Has it translated to a lower rate of racial profiling?

A: The communication efforts that have gone into place with this have led to policing that should reduce profiling. Discussions about data collection continue.

Q: I moved here in 2008, and every time I have been stopped by the police in St Cloud, each one has given me a business card at the end of my transaction. Then I found out about the police agreement in 2017, and it says right there that the police have to give people a business card at the end of the transaction. I found out that many people of all races and immigration statuses are not getting these business cards.

Q: Someone in the audience shared the same experience of not receiving a business card after a police stop.

A: Officer Oxtan said that the officers are trained to give business cards and they all get business cards. He said the police department wants to know if this is not happening.

Dr. Walker said that it is our right as citizens to ask for police ID. Not everyone knows this, however, and not everyone feels empowered enough to ask.

Ms. Hovis said that all comments and suggestions will be taken back to the community policing agreement, and that they must focus on inclusivity, transparency, and accessibility.

Next Community Policing Agreement meeting:

When: Thursday, November, 16th, 2017. 12:00pm to 2:00pm.

Where: St. Cloud Police Department

Purpose: Continuing the Conversation, Reestablishing the Commitment

Forum adjourned at 7:38 pm.