



City of Columbia, Missouri

Meeting Minutes

City Council

Wednesday, February 10, 2021

6:00 PM

Work Session with the
Citizens Police Review Board

Council Chamber
701 E. Broadway
Columbia, Missouri

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by the Chair of the Citizens Police Review Board, Pringle, at approximately 6:01 p.m.

II. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

III. DISCUSSION OF THE FOLLOWING TOPICS:

The Chair, Pringle, allowed for Mayor Treece to add any opening remarks. Treece talked about the boards and commission appreciation banquet, how each member dedicated time each month and many hours to their service to the city. There is a unique role to bridge the gap between the police, community, and the city in this position on the Citizens Police Review Board (CPRB). It is rare that all council members are at a meeting like this together, Treece made it clear that Council was intruding on their space, and is appreciative of Fowler for bringing this together.

Williams stated that it has been a pleasure to be serving. Williams is born and raised here, and has seen Columbia change, some for the phenomenal. Williams takes it as a privilege and very seriously to give the voice to the people and bridge the gap between CPD and the community.

Pringle put together a brief history of what brought the board together. The 10th anniversary of the formation of the CPRB was in December 2019. The CPRB came together in 2009, the first appeal was in 2010. Many factors led to it. There was an encounter at the mall where the Mens minority network jumped in and advocated for a review board. This board was initially denied by the City Manager. Back then, CPRB struggled with community outreach. CPRB is a public body that deals with complaints and appeals; the intent is to provide an independent non-partisan lens to those who have issues in the community. Section 21-49 lays out the duties of this board.

Skala added that they were here in 2009 when this happened. Skala is very familiar with the original lens.

Williams shared that they have been to 3 NACOLE conferences and seen how other boards operate. Columbia's board is lacking in some areas. CPRB only has so much wiggle room; they are governed by the City Council. To be a true police review board they should not be governed by council. These are Williams' own feelings. Williams brought up that there are some things that should be more transparent from the police department. Williams mentioned a situation at a gas station where a gentleman fired off a gun and the police were already there, the video on social media made it look like a completely different situation as if the

gentleman was being tackled for no apparent reason. It did not show off that the gentleman had fired a gun a couple of times. A few hours later CPD released the full body cam video to see what happened. There are times where investigations go on and this cannot go on.

Heckman-McKenna added that CPRB has no authority to mandate change, training, or anything for officers. We cannot disagree with Chief Jones' appeal decision and authority. With the NACOLE conference, many boards have that power.

Treece mentioned that would be inconsistent with the enabling authority. Treece reiterated that Council hears when CPRB makes recommendations. To follow up on Williams, Treece believes that they have a Chief [Jones] that is dedicated to the community and to the change. This Chief has wanted to release more information but it has been the prosecutor who has held back on publishing more information. There is a fine line on protecting that person's right to be arrested, facing trial, or anything that may compromise their right to a fair trial.

Gomez said that they think we [CPRB] do have issues with our authority, confusion about where the complaint goes first, we disagree sometimes. It's a complicated process. For the citizens, directly complaining to the system that they are complaining against doesn't make sense. From 2007, a study talks about all of these complaints and 100% of the white people were willing to cooperate but only 70% of black people were. The people who want to complain have to reengage with the police. While that is important, our [CPRB] lack of authority makes us less hopeful.

Pringle said a recurring question they ask complaints is what can we do? And the recurring theme is the citizens don't see that they [CPRB] can help them anymore.

Heckman-McKenna added in regards to the issue of transparency we are making key waves. Questions though, in a 2008 report the CPRB should advise the Chief on educational opportunities like getting the training schedule, we've [CPRB] been trying to get that for 8 months. It's difficult to advise when we don't even have that transparency.

Williams said another thing to look at if you don't see an issue with the board then that's an issue. They are the only African American on this board. City Council appoints these. Nobody can convince me [Williams] that we, African Americans are not applying for these seats. I have fought within myself to not quit this board.

Treece asked how do we improve this for all of our boards and commissions? Treece mentioned that Council gets resumes and does not ask for demographic data.

Skala said to be fair the only time in the 12 years of being on council that we have sat down with a candidate was with the planning and zoning commission.

Gomez said they haven't seen the application in a long time, but asking for applicants' diversity statement would go a long way.

Pringle added that there was an appointee to the board last year that never

came. Pringle asked if there were no applications coming in?

Trapp said this is one of the more active commissions that people apply for. Trapp has tried to appoint diverse candidates, they think it is important to gauge their diversity statements within applications. The CPRB has quality individuals who have a lot of experience. Council has attached it to this lack of independent governance and the way the statute has been created. CPRBs supervision by the City Manager, and the Chief of Police, is insufficient. Some of it is through state law of Missouri. Trapp asked them to please provide specific examples to Council so that they can give a better governance structure. In the interim, or if there are not larger fixes, Trapp encourages CPRB to act independently for your own role. If we need ordinance changes we are open to hearing those.

Gomez said that while they have only been on the Board for a year, they have looked into other things too like developing an education program to bring together the community and the police. They are trying to fulfil those other aspects of our role. Heckman-McKenna agreed and said that is another way that CPRB can perhaps have more power on the board.

Williams added another thing is the diversity and recruitment in the police department. There is only one minority leadership role in the 113 employees that CPD has.

Heckman-McKenna said another interesting thing about recruiting is there are a lot of minorities applying. From 2019 -2020 there were 12.1% of the applicant pool were African American. They make up 10.9% of our community.

Fowler, shared they were surprised what little information was in the report that Pringle shared. Fowler asked how CPRB brings up the recruiting policies of CPD, how does that come before you? Are they met with cooperation or resistance? Pringle answered that the board normally brings that up or Sgt Alpers brings it up. There has been delay, but we have gotten things that we have asked for. Gomez added that they have the perception that things have been delayed. I hope we are not just a resource for the community but also the police. It feels like we are a resource for the community, but the police forget about us. We just want to bring a connection to the citizens to take part in that.

Treece said that Gomez gave a good example for the diversity statement, but asked what can we do for the police department? Gomez shared activities like the community based policing that they created and other areas where conversations are lacking. We [CPRB] can facilitate educational days where the citizens and police are there. Pringle mentioned how COVID has put some risks in there preventing that, all of those interactions we took for granted are now gone.

Fowler added going back to 2011 the First Ward Neighborhoods used to have regular visits from someone from the CRPB who would explain what the process is. Fowler asked, absent COVID-19 is that something that CPRB has been doing? Are we [Council] empowering you [CPRB] to be able to be active and table to spread the word of what you all are doing? Williams answered and said they used to have subcommittees that would do that. It has since then been voted down to do away with those. Williams said that CPRB wants to, but there are funding issues. Issues like taking 8 months to get a banner to be able to use. One thing Williams has suggested is attaching information on the CPRB in the City

Utility bills. However, CPRB has hit roadblocks for that because it has to be submitted at a certain time. We are not able to get the word out the proper way we need to. Williams has also asked about social media, we can't do that due to legal issues. If you're running a business you have to use FITS Facebook, Instagram Twitter Snapchat to get it out there. We're meeting once a month.

Fowler asked if they [CPRB] thought there is enough interest in current members to do outreach in subcommittees? Gomez answered that they have an extremely busy life, you're asking us to do that? You are asking people who are already volunteering their time, to do even more. If you asked us to, we would find the time to but it will be hard.

Fowler mentioned that they and Alex Hackworth attended a conference and asked if Hackworth had any ideas on how to bring some things to the City of Columbia. Hackworth added that there are a lot of the issues identified as being a fundamental failure in outreach in Colombia's policy review meetings. There needs to be more done by people who are going to be affected by policy decisions. Hackworth suggested bringing in more community stakeholders to have a dialogue. Hackworth said they are looking at our outreach report on the CPRB website. As for other comments towards how to increase diversity on the board, Hackworth suggested it may be good to look at data to create a strategic outreach plan to promote awareness of the board to those populations who are most affected by police interactions.

Skala chimed in and took it back to the conversation of power and authority. Going back to the power and authority conversation, it is reasonable when looking at the State for power and authority to look at the state statutes as being possible. There are only a few boards and commissions who are very important and are influential, and you are up there. Planning and zoning and boards of adjustment are two of those other powerful boards. You fall into that category but it is not very well defined due to state statutes. It has to deal with power and authority and aside from those exceptions the City Council does not have the authority to grant CPRB the authority to do that. Treece added they did not even have the authority to fire the Police Chief. Skala said that was right there were State statutes established that caused that issue. Skala continued on saying that the CPRB is asking for things that I am not sure we [Council] can grant. The outreach needs to be improved upon, Skala agreed with that. Skala stated that they resented the fact that Council was being lectured on how much they are being asked to do when they are only getting \$191.30 per council meeting to conduct the City business the way they do. If the CPRB has good reports and research that they have done, they should share it with the Council and if Council sees it as being good things will be passed, Skala said.

Gomez wanted to address the conversation of power and authority. Gomez feels that even though power and authority would go a long way, the ability to develop better relationships can go a long way to achieve the goals of the CPRB. Seeing appeals, creating education initiatives, or to create a relationship between this board and the police would go a long way. A lot can be done when there are open conversations and the strength of our [CPRB] relationship with the community can go even farther when the Police Chief and the police in general takes us seriously. Right now some citizens perceive it to not be very good, so our lack of authority becomes problematic because there is nothing we can do when we disagree.

Fowler shared the story of listening to parents of black children that have the fear that their children are not going to come home safe. With all of the trauma that has been going on in the Country this year, Fowler does not want to lose sight of the fact that we have a community where they are worried and living in fear of interactions with the police. We are still dealing with the issues from 2008. It doesn't help our parents to hear our CPRB saying "we're prevented from having authority due to state law." So how do we build this relationship or bring them into the idea that their kids and families are safe in our community?

Treece interrupted Fowler and shared that children are not unsafe at the hands of our police officers. Williams further interrupted and asked if Treece could 100% say that? Williams shared the concerns they have for their kids and the bias opinion someone may have for them when their skin is black. They cannot take off their skin color, it is their weapon. People are going to judge Williams because of it. I cannot take it off. Treece said that no one has lost their life at the hands of a police officer. Williams interrupted Treece and said "yet". Treece said they appreciate Williams sharing their perspective. Our department has made great strides in the last year alone on how we have made sure to protect our community. I am not denying that it exists. When the things we have seen across the country have not happened here.

Boykin read from the latest response from Chief Jones that the board had received. In what was read, Chief Jones had written "I implore each of board members to familiarize themselves with our policies and applicable case laws....hindsight empathy and emotions are not and cannot be part of a fair and impartial evaluation." Boykin shared that they felt this was disrespectful to the board when they go through and read these policies to make decisions. What should the citizens of the City believe when they see that? If the Police Department doesn't have trust in CPRB, then why should the community have trust in the CPRB that they can help them? Treece this is the only board, outside of the personnel advisory board that has anything to do with the discipline of employees.

Pringle stated that they have spoken with Chief Jones about the letter that Boykin was referencing. Pringle had gone through the history of appeals, and there are about 64 total over 11 years. Of those 64 appeals the board has agreed with the Chief of police 42 times, the board has disagreed with the Chief 9 times, and 13 times CPRB has said they have no jurisdiction over those appeals. These numbers show that this board does in fact review policy and take it into consideration. We do for the most part agree, and there are rarely disagreements.

Treece stated that they appreciate the data aspect. However, when Treece hears that in 11 years only 64 appeals have come to CPRB, out of the total number of calls and personal interactions between the 173 police officers, and about 73,000 for service and another about 73,000 that are self initiated, they've only generated about 11 complaints. Treece is asking the question then, of what problem are we trying to fix?

Boykin posed the question of how many of those complaints throughout the year are actually filed? How many people choose to not go through the complaint process because they don't know about it or trust it? Treece said they do not know those numbers.

Gomez said that they have citizens that do come to CPRB and talk to share their experience of not filing because of fear and concerns of what will happen. Gomez believes that a part of CPRBs responsibility is the real and perceived problems between the community members and the police. Even if there is a small number of people who are uncomfortable, it is still something that should be addressed.

Pringle went back to the conversation of broadcasting, citizens mentioned that they did not feel safe with these meetings being broadcasted. How do we make sure people understand what this board is for? Gomez stated that it all goes back to the discussion of race. Addressing the Mayor's comments of trying to understand why the community should be concerned about national events happening, even though they may not have happened locally. Treece said they understand the fears and concerns that Williams has shared, but is having trouble of painting all police officers as bad officers. Treece said that looking at the past years there are areas where the Columbia Police Department has improved. Gomez agreed that while they have only been here for a few years, they are interested in joint education to understand the implicit biases that people are presented with to ensure nothing that has been happening nationally happens here. Gomez talked about the fears that can happen if you are pulled over, particularly if someone is black or hispanic. If there are more programs where the police get to explain their experiences and people can share theirs, it can go a long way just having those genuine conversations to be informative.

Williams shared that one thing that really helped them was when they did training of being an officer and going into scenarios where they were shot. It helped Williams be able to see the side of police officers and how they handle situations. This gap needs to be filled to really help build the trust that is needed.

Hackworth shared a story of a few years ago when they were walking down the street with a black friend. In this experience they were stopped by a police officer when they were walking around in their neighborhood. Hackworth shared that they disagree with the initial sentiment of the Mayor that there has not been a killing in Columbia by the police of an unarmed black man, that is the bare minimum that we should be trying to avoid. We should not be patting ourselves on the back because we haven't had a death. There are other sorts of experiences that still happen every day that are traumatic. We should not be wondering why people are afraid of the police if they are born into an underrepresented community because all they have to do is turn to social media and they will see what happens nationally and that is more personal. People of color are significantly more likely to suffer severe mental distress after seeing killings. We have to do more than saying "Well we haven't killed any unarmed black people so we must be doing something right." We are battling a national problem. We cannot say that what we have been doing is good enough.

Skala said that while their skin is white and they cannot change that, they have been part of the National League of Cities since 2014. Skala has been associated with Racial Equity in leadership which was given full council support three years ago. What Skala was emphasizing was that they don't want to leave this discussion with the CPRB and them thinking that Council is not doing anything to take these issues seriously. While they understand they do not have the same experiences as members have shared tonight from the CPRB, Skala does understand the seriousness and is doing things to make sure nothing happens in Columbia. We need to consider how we can work together, how we can

communicate all together. That is where the emphasis needs to be is how we can work together.

Gomez shared that is what their proposed community project looks like. Bringing people from the community and the police department together once a month from different work groups. Skala said then they need to share that so Council can talk about it and provide any additional resources needed. Gomez shared that they are working with NACOLE and agrees that communication is needed to succeed moving forward.

Fowler asked specifically about Gomez's report on what the proposed community education program would look like. It was asked if Gomez had a budget or an anticipated budget? Gomez said that would be the next step for them. Fowler asked to hear more about it when there is a clear definition of the cost and the plan so Council can fund it internally if they need to.

Moving forward to wrap up the meeting, Pringle added praise to Gomez's report as it is something that we need to push forward and implement. Another thing Pringle wanted to bring up is that CPRB will be an entirely NACOLE certified board by the end of the year as long as NACOLE is virtual this year. The benefit of it outweighs any cost. Pringle reminded Council of how important this is.

Boykin asked about lifting the restriction against being a candidate for any elected office while serving on the CPRB. CPRB is the only board that has that restriction. Skala commented that they had never seen a case where someone who won election kept their position on a board or commission. Boykin reiterated that the issue is that CPRB cannot currently hold their seats and actively campaign for a seat for City Council. Treece said that is the way the ordinance was written. Council Member Peters asked if anyone knew why the ordinance was written that way? Treece said the police review board provides an independent non-partisan lens and that changes when you run for office you can no longer be non-partisan. Fowler said they understand the non-partisan issue that Treece brought up. It makes sense for City Council, but it does not make sense for Fowler that a truly volunteer position would not have that ability.

Fowler brought up that there was also the issue of zoom streaming for meetings. There was someone who brought up the concern of wanting to bring forward a complaint and being concerned about their own safety and retaliation due to the recording. While there is a benefit for the public to see what CPRB does, Fowler wanted to know where they were standing now. Pringle shared that they have heard from citizens who have requested to go back to recording the meetings. The transcript from the CPRB meetings is one thing but for the public to not be able to attend when they want to is an issue. Gomez added that the CPRB opinion on recording is changing due to citizens' opinion changing. They have heard more because of people not being able to attend due to COVID, and there are more groups than ever who are wanting to listen in and be able to attend. Treece asked if anyone was on the board when the meeting used to be televised? Treece asked to know if there was a shift in candor from the board members if it had been recorded. Grover added there are times when they have closed sessions. They do allow for public comment which helps engage people. Gomez shared how some groups have been bringing in their own equipment to record the meetings and broadcast it themselves. Hackworth said that they have not noticed any differences in candor. But if CPRB is serious about this issue, we need to meet people where they are at. Boykin shared that most people they

have heard speak at the podium during CPRB meetings would still speak if the meeting were broadcasted. Treece asked if CPRB feels the meeting being held in Council Chambers inhibits or intimidates any one from the public speaking? Gomez answered absolutely, but it is more the formality of the setting that makes it intimidating. Williams pointed out that many people have come and sat in the chairs in Council Chambers and have not said anything to them ever.

Fowler then asked the Mayor what would be the best way to proceed with this request? Treece said that it may be a resource issue, and a scheduling issue to have it in Council Chambers to be livestreamed in real time. It may be more of a complex issue to ensure that it can happen. Treece asked if it had been voted on and reached a consensus for CPRB? Boykin said that everyone had approved the idea of broadcasting meetings. Treece offered to work on it with the Chair of CPRB and mentioned that Council would be able to discuss it further at their meeting on Monday.

Skala reiterated how important the CPRB is to the function of the City.

Pringle closed the meeting by thanking Council for joining and being able to talk to everyone for the betterment of the community.

Looking back at the initial intent in formation of the CPRB

NACOLE certification processes and continuing education update

Complaint process review

Visibility / Outreach of the CPRB

- Meeting minutes vs verbatim transcript
- Streaming/recording of CPRB meetings
- Table-ling at community events
- Speakers bureau
- Recruiting new members especially People of Color
- Lifting the restriction against being a candidate for elected office
- How shall we measure outreach success?

Data collection review (time permitting)

Review of enabling ordinance (Article III of Chapter 21 of the City Code)

Strengthening mutual respect between CPD and our residents/citizens (wrap up)

IV. ADJOURNMENT

Pringle adjourned the meeting at approximately 7:38 p.m.

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