

Joint Police Advisory Council
Wednesday, June 11, 2020, 1:00-2:30 pm
Via Zoom

Minutes

JPAC Members in attendance via Zoom: Chief Powers, Chief Pyle, Chad Barnhardt, Jackie Wolf, Toby Stock, Jordyn Zimmerman, Kim Castor, Karen Dahn, Josh Thomas, MaryKathyrine Tran, Sarah Grace, Maria Modayil, Liesl Gyurko, Andrew Chiki, Molly Burchfield, Amanda Graham

Guests: Henry Wood, Aaron Reinhard

This was the second special meeting called by JPAC since the killing of George Floyd to discuss race and racism in the United States, particularly as racism pertains to police departments, police officers, and policing.

Chad opened the meeting by reading the JPAC charge.

Chief Pyle thanked everyone for being able to meet on such short notice. He is working on securing a location for the class on History of Racism in the United States being developed by Ohio University historians. The class will be required of all APD and OUPD officers.

1. Police/Community Forum

Chief Pyle introduced Henry Wood, an Athens City native who reached out to the APD to ask to be part of any conversations on solutions in policing. The first step in the process will be a policy/community forum, which is a format that both police departments have used for years.

Henry Wood said that, as one of the more senior members of the black community in Athens, he wanted to be proactive and work with the APD, OUPD, and the sheriff's office so all three organizations can better address community issues. Henry has already met with Chief Pyle; he looks forward to meeting with Chief Powers.

Chief Powers will arrange to meet with **Henry Wood** to get his perspective.

Henry noted that many OU students come from communities different from Athens and consequently come to Athens with very different preconceptions about police behavior. Henry anticipates holding a police/community forum this summer and another one shortly after students return to campus in the fall.

Chief Pyle noted that the city does have the technological capability to host forums if the forum has to be conducted online due to the pandemic.

Henry observed, however, that face-to-face forums are always more effective.

Chief Powers suggested using Walter Field House where we could practice physical distancing.

Sarah suggested considering both formats—online and in person because so many people want to talk right now.

After a discussion among JPAC members about the relative safety of meeting in-person versus online, **Chad** suggested a hybrid approach. If OU allows us to use the Walter Field House for a community/police forum, perhaps we should hold an in-person meeting there and, if we also can stream the meeting, others could participate from a distance.

Liesl urged doing something now rather waiting until students return to campus.

Both **Chief Pyle** and **Chief Powers** agreed they are eager to talk to any community members seeking discussion. **Chief Pyle** will try to find space at the Rec Center for a community forum, **Chad** will check with OU about space.

Jordyn noted that a community/police forum might present an accessibility barrier because Covid-19 is hitting communities of color much harder than white communities.

Chad noted that is exactly why we need a hybrid, in-person/online format for community forums.

Karen told JPAC members that members of SURJ (Standing Up for Racial Justice) approached her to ask how JPAC can provide more community oversight of the police.

Andrew Chiki suggested putting out a question/answer statement explaining, for example, the APD and OUPD use-of-force and de-escalation policies.

Chad asked **Maria** and **MaryKathyrine** to write a draft that JPAC could issue as a statement.

Chief Pyle reminded everyone that the Athens mayor and the Athens City Council president should review any statement issued by JPAC because JPAC is not designed to be a civilian review board.

Aaron Reinhard urged that the forum be held sooner rather than later.

Josh agreed. **Sarah** noted that a forum would amplify JPAC's presence and be a venue for making police policies public.

2. Course on History of Racism in the United States

Jackie described the course on the history of race and racism in the U.S. that she is designing with three other OU U.S. history professors (Brian Schoen, Katherine Jellison, and Robin Muhammad) specifically for APD and OUPD officers. **Jackie** noted that change begins with education. This class is the first step in a process. (**Note:** the class is still in the early stage of development and the description that follows is subject to change.) Thus far, the course is designed to have five 90-minute class sessions. The first four sessions will be held two weeks apart beginning with Session 1 in late July. Each session will be held twice—the morning class will accommodate the night shift and the evening class will accommodate the day shift. **Session 1 led by Brian Schoen:** Broad introduction to the course, including the invention of race. U.S. history from the slave trade through white backlash to Reconstruction. **Session 2 led by Katherine Jellison:** 20th century structural racism. The role of white women in fostering racism. Formation of a system of racial, political, and economic inequality embedded in American law and institutions. **Session 3 led by Jackie Wolf:** Race and Racism in American Medicine. From forced sterilizations to the Tuskegee syphilis study to why Covid-19 disproportionately affects the black community. Fear of medicine in the black community analogous to fear of the police. **Session 4 led by Robin**

Muhammad: History of Policing as a Profession. The use of policing as a profession to uplift or subjugate racial and ethnic groups. History of Race and Racism in American Policing. **Session 5** will be a follow-up discussion within six weeks of Session 4, led by all four historians.

Aaron expressed his concern about the efficacy and monetary cost of the class.

Chad explained that both Chief Pyle and Chief Powers wanted their officers to be educated about racism.

Karen urged that the class be limited to police officers only.

Sarah asked if it would be possible to make the class available to the public in some manner.

Chief Powers explained that there already is discussion about how to make the class available to the public. He also explained that he and Chief Pyle plan to couple the history class with training being developed in conjunction with the Voinevich Center. Neither endeavor—the class or the training being developed by the Voinevich Center—is a “one and done” solution. This is only the first stage of a long-term investment. The history class in particular is a unique way of beginning to address the issue of racism in policing; history informs all that we do. In establishing a history foundation first, we can move forward with a process that will be ongoing.

Henry agreed that looking back at history would be worthwhile.

Chief Pyle observed that he has never known of a history course on racism in the U.S. for law enforcement and that focuses on policing.

As the course develops, there will be more information about the class at subsequent JPAC meetings, including how the class will be made available to the public.

Next JPAC meeting, via Zoom, Wednesday, June 24 from 5:30 to 7:00