

Ad-hoc Committee on Police and Community Relations

Community Forum Public Comments – October 10, 2015

General Session:

Dr. Karen Johnson opened the general session with the 2 questions for the community.

What has been your experience with the Olympia Police Department? How can Olympia Police Department better serve you?

Sarah Rucker – Senior services of South Sound

Have had to call OPD on occasion to help homeless or mental health public when community center staff are unable to help. Response from OPD has always been professional.

Was very disappointed with events of shooting. Would like to see OPD learn what its like to be a person of color in the US (and all white people, not just police)

Referenced book.....

Warren Carlson

Experience with PD in South Africa

They renamed their Police Departments as Police Services. Remarkable how different their outlook was in providing “services”. (no matter the interaction) different demographic of people applying for jobs as well. Different mentality.

No name given

“please forgive my nervousness. I have trauma related to police”

Poor, gay, of color. Have been called many racial slurs, had guns drawn, been slammed to the ground for nothing. Its not possible for the police to provide safe service. They should be disarmed and gotten rid of. “Strong communities make police obsolete.”

No name given

Took in a friend that was an alcoholic. He became abusive and she called the police. The police officer did not file a report and stepped in front of her when she tried to re-enter her house. She ran into him because of this and ended up pushing him. He pushed her down to the ground, hand cuffed her and charged her with a felony. She had to call the police again on another occasion as she was having issues with her son and the same officer showed up. He pulled out his taser and teased her with it.

Nat Jackson – 40 yr community member (group up in Louisiana)

Doesn't want to be here today.

Referenced book.....Challenge

We've come a long way, but not far enough. Came away from his childhood in Louisiana with a positive attitude.

Primary concerns:

We enact laws for body cameras not for the sake of providing evidence, but that the technology is available and we are moving forward with the times.

More respect among the PD understanding implicit racism.

Police officers shouldn't investigate themselves (including other agencies)

Disappointed that prosecuting attorney did not allow public at press conference.

Need to get rid of "evil intent" law. Allows police officers to do bad things and know they can get away with it.

Referenced white boy that was tased. If he would have been black, would they have killed him?

Doesn't want to be in that mindset. Worries about his black grandsons in this community.

"live to change the law" for progress

Change question to "how can African Americans trust the police?"

Reagan – 30 yr Olympian

Wore black socks to PE in high school to support Hispanic group. Almost failed PE due to negative response.

Spoke about fear factor when walking down the street at night and different types of people are walking down the street towards him.

Spoke about government officials saying "race is not a factor". Its not realistic and means that person has not done their work in understanding implicit bias. Police officers see the worst of society and need to deal with the issue of not projecting those experiences onto others they contact.

Merrell (?) Williams

Was a drug addict for 24 years. Recently graduated from SPSCC

Anger comes from trauma piled on trauma. Anger needs release so she is glad for this space today.

Had an experience in Tacoma with an officer that was escalating until his superior came on the scene and was able to solve the issue.

Everyone has biases based on our socialization.

Cultural competency should be an ongoing training

Media also gives us biases. Media is the other thing that needs to be changed.

Stacy Woodsen - Lives in Olympia, originally from Philadelphia

...judged by 12, carried by 6

If you come to a place where you have to defend yourself, its you or them

No name given

Professional life was in juvenile justice

On board with police chief

No organization is perfect, never will be

We have a model chief in Oly compared to other cities. He has his head in the right place. But the OPD still needs our support and input

Kathy

Systemic issues, institutional issues. What are the guidelines for disengagement? For shooting? For leaving the vehicle? Etc in OPD training.

Mustafo Fowler – new to Oly (1 yr), from Orlando

Shared a story about parking and getting out of his car. Officer asked if he'd put money in the meter multiple times. He responded "yes" each time he was asked. The officer proceeded to follow him into the store and around for about 20 minutes.

Later he had an opportunity to talk openly with another officer

- Officers should hold each other accountable, just like people in the community do (re: reporting crimes when they see it)
- Have positive interaction with people they pass by (like human beings)
- Be compassionate and understanding

Ken Michael – 78 yrs in Olympia

His grandpa and great grandpa built this building (Risen Faith Church). They made their home available to black people that couldn't find hotel rooms "available" when they came to town. He supports OPD. No place is ideal, but can always be improved. The shooting findings were 3 for 3 (all investigations came up with the same conclusion). How many shootings would have happened if they people involved had obeyed the 1st command they were given? Not many. Trouble starts after that point.

Gabby Clayton

14 year old son came out that he was bisexual in the 1980's. They were supportive of him and he went to a support group at Evergreen. He was sexually assaulted on his way to a group meeting at some point by a gay man. It was eventually reported to the police and they did nothing. They were eventually able to find where the person was and his name and the police arrested him. Later, her son and friends were beaten by 4 other students while walking near school grounds. Those students were caught & charged. Her son never felt safe again after that and committed suicide a month later. She works with LGBTQ teens in the community now. Deals with a lot of youth that have experience with racist, homophobic, etc police. Asks PD to be members of our community. Don't judge the people you deal with, recognize you are providing a service to those you come in contact with.

Alex Clayton

He and his wife ran a soup house years ago. Dealt with a man with mental health issues that came in and grabbed a butcher knife. Had to call PD and they disarmed the man without use of force or weapons drawn.

Today, that's not the case. They go right for the gun.

Wendy

Has been in a collision and was treated very well by PD. Very appreciative.

Has been obsessed with police use of force for some time.

Has a friend who's son (mixed race) had a gun drawn on him for stepping out of his vehicle when pulled over for headlight out. Same young man has also been stopped for license plate light too dim and had his car searched.

Spoke of Tyrone Johnson incident with Ryan Donald.

She stated several times how very upset she was.

Knows someone training with WSP and they are taught how to profile people.

Referenced Works in Progress newspaper (current issue)

Proposals for new additions to use of force laws

Tom M – Behavioral health worker

Thanks to committee for allowing this space for today.

Part of Oly Cop Watch

Rule #1 – keep an uplifted spirit

Rule #2 – look in the face of reality

What is committee's viewpoint?

There needs to be balance:

- Citizens review board

- Balance of power

- As well as screening for new police officers

Taking testimony at Traditions Café every week on Thursdays from 4:00 – 5:00

No name given

3 factors

Somebody's not reading the reports on the actions of the incident. If the person shot was white would we be here?

This was not a racial incident. There are racial issues in our country, of course.

These forums are needed in our community but would be very different if this wasn't a black/white incident

Leslie Cushman

Implicit bias is very real.

We need body cameras & dash cameras

We need an external review of incidents

Internal review was unfair

Prosecutor needs to drop the charges

Police chief should not have stated that race was not an issue

No name given

Next forum focus – latino/Hispanic

Need to include youth and homeless at a future forum

Caroline Lacey – City of Olympia employee

Responding to comment that people of color are not following officers orders

Why is that happening? Community should look at why that is.

Mustafo Fowler

Responding to why men of color don't follow officer commands

His relatives have gone through the same things that are mentioned here today. They are afraid of getting beaten up, killed, or evidence planted on them. Not having the bigger picture seen that you're a human being. Afraid that they will be automatically seen as a criminal. "what might happen to us?"

Dr. Johnson closed out General Session

Break Out Sessions:

How can the Police Department positively engage with people in the community, particularly African Americans?

Information – police forums – why/what do they do?

Lacey experience – meet & greet

Community needs confidence in adequacy of screening new hires for racism/triggers, cultural competence

Enough emphasis on alternatives to violence?

Being white, I do feel safe w/police

White male, feel safety from police not my problem. Doesn't threaten my status, but knowing others have problem diminishes overall sense of security for others.

Two way street, what does public need to do to be safe

Trust: inside/out, outside/in. Warriors vs guardians

Can Black people be recipients of guardian services?

Work on facing up to implicit bias

Address laws Police use of force

Trust – slow to build, quick to lose

How could PD earn, gain trust?

Implicit/explicit bias training. Good curriculum?

Make sure officers hear people's stories. Makes it more real

Perceived pressure that officers support one another

Give the whole story on officer history (not just info that supports officer)

Why hasn't dept addressed pattern of poor judgement?

Is dept having conversations about "Black Lives Matter"?

Culture – What is it like?

Develop accountability systems to check behaviors – make it difficult to act poorly ("steal" – acctg. Model)

Policies, procedures to evaluate every interaction – race a part of the interaction? Other hate crime?

Two way street – Escalate respect.

Change the law – remove “evil” intent

Body & dash cams

Whites need to be involved in fairness for blacks

Officers posture – “going by the book”
Defensive stance reduces trust

Independent investigation – don’t let law enforcement judge law enforcement

What would it take to change:
Evil intent
Investigative practices

Out of county prosecutor make charging decision

React quickly to clues of bias or inappropriate conduct

The vision of the Olympia Police Department is to provide policing services through trust and partnership:

What would that look like to you?

How can the Police Department better meet your expectations for an ideal department?

Understanding

Trust – through reading, etc
Community – their resources, procedures

Provide “police services”
From warrior to guardian

Officer in full uniform with pistol – a different message than just a uniform
Where officer was sitting may have affected willingness to talk today
Could change this rule

Training to include “service” – to the community such as homeless or other service provider
Exhibit service

Example – service at OPD to pay ticket
Officer did not even look at her until she said “what is your name?” and then officer responded

County in jail = 70% for drugs, many others for mental health

Houston – officer trained in metal health and not in uniform
Changes interaction

If drugs, drunk, mental issues – then may not follow the first command as was suggested
Train in ways of handling situation so they do not escalate
If they want to be trusted need to change general order for escalation of force (GO 1.3.1)

General Order requires drawing gun to “de-escalate”

The machine (rules) is working exactly as designed

Tap into people working to shift policing to non-violent policing
Change paradigm

Cincinnati – example, show the policing of civil rights era as part of training to educate officers about what African Americans have in mind about interacting with police

Include in training the cultural views/understandings of policing

Top down – if message is that we are learning about African American community thought from this incident – “model the learning from the top down”
Dynamic shift for the City

All have to learn (of themselves) about racial bias

If “partnership” then police need to drop guard and get to know us and we get to know them
Example – “fortress” of city hall OPD design

Some say “if you live in one of the cool places, then you will be safe
We live here and not safe
Need to change the culture of the OPD

Culture shift. B.A. is taking with Chief and others
Intentionally shift culture to guardians for all
Change thought process
Need to get to implicit bias

Need process/training in OPD to assure officers are treating everyone equally

Partnership – take lead on having real , truthful discussions in community about racism

At GRUB, in partnership with strategic planning
Those receiving services
On ad hoc committee, focus is limited and not full strategic planning

Officer suggested best to meet in small groups and hear best from young folks (instead of organizational representatives)

Need to understand how to collaborate with OPD
Officers may mistrust community

Metaphorically – need to take down culture of policing generally
Not individuals, but the “fortress”

Suggestion – involve community in strategic planning process
Oversight of police conduct, esp. review of deadly force

At this forum – said that more didn’t come due to being scared of police being at forum

Shifting cultures – methods, policies that need to cascade through organization. This community has a lot of resources on collaboration, dispute resolution, etc

If the City of Olympia wants something to get done, it gets done. Need to state what we need to change

In mental health, obliged to take “least restrictive measure.” Not sure if police have same directive

State law needs to change re: malice

The closer we get to person-to-person is the better. Example of request for restitution with young people who caused damage – police not interested in facilitating that

If police feel part of community, then less likely to take action based in fear

Need resource that say how the department is formed – everything

“Can’t reach candidates during hiring” said the Chief.....well then try harder

“The Olympia way”.....well it ain’t working, change it

In all these community forums I see the same faces. Such a large community, they don’t see it as their problem

A lot don’t trust the City. Forum at Traditions this week may not be the same people

Observation – on the left we tend to use jargon language. Today has been “from the heart”. Keep doing this

Need WSPC, Chief’s, etc to take ownership if they want to build trust and support change in law. And guild too. We need to be speaking to the guild

What do community members need in order to feel safe when interacting with the Police?

First thought, benefits of training cultural diversity – through trust
Some about customs

How can you gain trust of African Americans?

Re: Chief Roberts – need powerful person with influence and top
He's working hard

People can be heard – how can we invite people to speak to Chief
Genuinely invited to hear
Officers need to be confronted
Chief will make every effort to make right

Multi-juris meeting with churches
Would PD put on community function and invite people of color?

Why don't we obey?
Fear
Negative approach

Invite input – get to know people

Woman treated with excessive force

Police take initiative to reach out

Why aren't police here?

Police need to want this conversation

Part of problem
Police on defense
Don't want to listen
Chief needs to lead on this

Super helpful if police would recognize and acknowledge their biases
Legally blind black man followed home by police. His crime, taking the bus
Multiple occasions

Growing up – relationships very important

Police in big cities know people – police

Coaching/sports/swimming – positive experience

Relationships between police & youth – teach how to interact instead of lumping all
Build relationships
Easier to understand points of view
Different looking people around Oly
Where do police live
Important to know where we are

Got to change the law – evil intent law – malice
Cops could kill us all if felt threatened

Intimidation of uniform
Supporting officers means support must be unconditional

Two young men shot – police spoke to variety/chamber/business people
Said case was open/shut before report was released
Family needs to raise \$500k – shot 5 times in back
Speak with authority
Change the law
Why is ... so important? Terrifies me if race was a factor in shooting
Respect is what people want
Police don't have that respect for all in community

Another person said report was released to gain public support
Olympia mayor must work with us to change the law/....
Work with us to change the state standard on use of force
Work with us

Bottom line is Oly is racist – I've seen things like the 1950's

200 killings by police and disproportionately Black/mixed kids

Absolutely want to change the law

Help Bryson and Andre

Police must let down their guard

If they want to engage they must be part of the community. Not a façade

Teen files -

Work with teenagers who hated to get familiar as the people they hated
Never thought about gay people having mothers who loved them

Question – you'd need people that wanted to engage
Not afraid
Actually arrogant
Does OPD want to change
Police protecting white Olympia
No here

Screening to eliminate

Dynamic – judged by 12 or carried by 6
Form of

If confrontation is expected it will happen. Olympia not the place for 12/6 – its wrong

Jumping rope – someone called cops said Black man swinging belt

Lacey – officer came

“put down rope” – put rope down

Scrutinize report called in, cop should have used judgement

Re-evaluate report

Officers on foot.....

Lt. Kelly – leaders said kill ...

Police have some syndrome

If leaders are focused on stats

Charged with “cleaning up street”

Everyone is my enemy

National toxic stew of racism – attitudes are formed

Can OPD change on this context? Warrior mentality

State/local law change – why are Black men not obeying – don’t

React to power

Westside boys – never thought they’d be shot

In Philly – that was 1st thought – perception is reality

Anyone who looks different – badge not total protection

Negotiators survive on relationship

It would

10/10/15 Community Forum Notes

Alejandro Rugarcia

How can the police Department positively engage with people in the community, particularly African Americans?

- They should say first why they stopped you the first time vs get out of the car.
- Police have to have the initiative to open a conversation
- They need to want to have a conversation
- Are they really listening to what people are really saying?
- What needs to be done to make OPD be part of these conversations?
- Where are the officers, instead of being here
- Why do people follow people when they are going to their houses?
- Group up relationships with people
- Educate the community about their practices

- To have a real relationship with the community by being in the community and not to be so isolated
- Avoid the power of intimidation vs bring more officers to the situation
- I want to talk with out my word being dismissed or bad understand it
- It is terrifying that their decisions are based on race. Also we need the respect of the people, the police / wrong to have a report 3 weeks after the incident.
- Families should not have to pay \$1000.00 to get defended
- Lack of information distribution, change the law
- I want the mayor of the city to change the law “malice and good faith”
- Ways to change the racism in the Olympia area
- Helping. they have to engage with us, it is a force that does not engage.
- Police have to know who we are
- Teams files about audio
- Have to have a police dept that wants to engage African Americans. They are arrogant.
- If I was a police officer.....they should be here
- Screen police officers that we identify they have hate problems for some community members
- Screening the reports, evaluate the reports, really focus
- Interacting with people in the streets and working closely with social workers!!
- There is unfortunately that we are in an intoxicated, racist environment, change that warrior mentality. Blacks do not have the power to give officers because the deep slavery from the history.
- Reaction change from the public towards to their interactions
- Get in touch with their bios as Black people and why their behavior
- Having conversations about race and racism
- Treat people with dignity and respect
- Treat them as they do to with people
- Having Black officers in the police department
- Only 3 Black officers? 2 administrative
- Keeping walk around and you will find it
- Be more courteous
- Melt the barrier/ wall of the implementation of the (?) people to change the culture. In the agenda Monday
- The police should change the realm of population, being police officers
- Balance the culture of the police/community
- Of just obey only the authority
- Timberlan all African American Olympia School District not

Closing

InterFaith Community

Community connection to continue with Police/Community relations