

CITY OF SAN ANTONIO

Office of the Mayor Interdepartmental Correspondence

TO: Councilwoman Rebecca Viagran, Chair- Criminal Justice,
Public Safety and Services Committee

FROM: **Ivy R. Taylor, Mayor**

COPIES TO: CJPSS Committee Members; Sheryl Sculley, City Manager; Erik Walsh,
Deputy City Manager, Chief William P. McManus, SAPD; Members of
Mayor's Council on Police Community Relations

SUBJECT: Mayor's Council on Police Community Relations

DATE: April 18, 2017

SUMMARY

The Mayor's Council on Police-Community Relations (MCPCR) was convened as a response to a critical community issue. The group has met five times since September of 2016. At each meeting the council, which is comprised of community members, faith-based leaders, police officers, activists, and elected officials, has worked together to identify ways to improve policing in San Antonio and strengthen relationships between citizens and police. Four key issues to address this challenge were identified: recruitment, training, communication, and community collaboration. With these areas now defined, the council began to meet in committees, seeking feedback from the general community and other stakeholders. Recommendations in each area are briefly summarized below.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The creation of the Mayor's Council on Police Community Relations was in response to a critical community concern in San Antonio, one that is being expressed in communities across our nation. The excessive use of often-deadly force by law enforcement officers on unarmed citizens (often minorities) has eroded the confidence of many US citizens in the police officers whose responsibility it is to keep them safe.

In addition, the recent debate over a contract between SAPOA and the City of San Antonio underscored the need for focused efforts to strengthen the relationship between the police and the citizens they serve.

Although San Antonio has had its share of incidents, they have not to date been followed by violent, destructive unrest. Therefore, one of the goals is to ensure that San Antonio does not

experience that kind of unrest and to restore confidence in law enforcement in those quarters of our community where it has been lost.

To achieve this goal the Council, expanding on the work of the 21st Century Policing Taskforce and its members, will explore and recommend solutions for the challenges that face San Antonio in the realm of police-community relationships. They will do this by promoting understanding between community members and those whose responsibility it is to keep them safe, in hopes of minimizing and eliminating deadly encounters between citizens and law enforcement.

At one of our early meetings, I identified three outcomes that I would like to see as a result of the work of the MCPCR:

- Report to the Criminal Justice, Public Safety and Services Committee with specific recommendations for policy changes that can be considered by the City Council;
- Increase community awareness and understanding of current SAPD reform efforts as well as laws, rules, and precedents that largely dictate outcomes related to police encounters; and
- Initiation of *community led* efforts to support strong relationships with police officers and improved results (i.e. recruitment, engagement with police, educational forums, etc.)

As mentioned earlier, in order to make progress toward these outcomes the committee formed smaller subcommittees to address four areas: Recruitment, Training, Communication, and Community Collaboration.

SUBCOMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

Communication

The communication committee focused on the tools used to effectively communicate between the community and SAPD. Recurring themes in this committee were transparency and accountability, and how both can lead to the de-escalation of high profile incidents involving the police department. The committee suggested the following actions:

- Allocate additional funding to contract with a professional website design/public relations firm to update and maintain the SAPD website, and increase SAPD's multi-media outreach.
- Create a long-range plan to facilitate more face-to-face discussions and dialogue with the public from throughout the community; develop a structure that continues to include current MCPCR members and meets periodically (at least 2-3 times a year) to monitor relations between the public and police and act as necessary based on feedback.

Recruitment

The recruitment committee focused on how to gain a more diverse pool of applicants for the San Antonio Police Department. One desired outcome is to see more San Antonio residents become SAPD officers and work in communities they are familiar with, whether they reside there

currently or have recently resided in those communities. These recommendations include the following:

- Allocate more funding for innovative recruitment efforts.
- Create an SAPD (Civilian) Volunteer liaison at schools to promote SAPD as a career.
- Track the number of students in the Explorer program who become SAPD officers; provide preference points on application and offer incentives for Explorer program alums; create a tracking or outreach program to address the gap between when the Explorer program ends and when students can apply to SAPD.
- Integrate citizens into the design of the SAPD recruitment office and efforts, so that SAPD is aware of the perspectives of different parts of the city.
- Host more community activities with a focus on elementary and middle schools; hold field day at schools to demonstrate cadets' physical fitness test.
- Work with schools to offer credits for HS students wanting to apply to SAPD.
- Support State legislation that would allow preference points for SAPD cadets that reside within the city limits.

Training

The training committee focused on the existing training that SAPD officers receive as well as a review of best practices to determine what training, if any, should be offered to our officers. Additionally, committee members looked at the potential for involving the education system, other outreach efforts and what insights could be provide to the general public regarding the training police officers receive. These recommendations include the following:

- Provide more training for SAPD officers centered on the immigrant community, especially language barriers.
- Make available more ride along opportunities to build relationships with community.
- Mandate more crisis intervention training for SAPD officers.
- Encourage residents to participate in “Shoot – Don’t Shoot” training to better understand decisions that officers make in critical situations.
- Expand opportunities for SAPD cadets to participate in community events; allow these to fall under the existing volunteer requirements for cadets.
- Have SAPD mobile training teams conduct demonstrations at schools.

- Work through community groups to provide education for citizens on rights and responsibilities in making complaints

Community Collaboration

The community collaboration committee focused on what true collaboration looks like, what tools can be used to improve community collaboration, and how we take city-wide approaches into neighborhoods where cultures are different and tensions between police and residents may vary. A key goal was to best determine how to foster dialogue and relationship building within neighborhoods – particularly those suffering from high crime and low economic opportunity. Community collaboration recommendations include the following:

- Refocus Stand Up SA. This existing City of San Antonio violence prevention program has produced mixed results. In an attempt to improve on the successes of the program and leverage its community support, it is being proposed that Stand Up SA integrate with other community collaborations to achieve a reduction in violent crime, through activities that include:
 - hosting community meetings and block parties;
 - coordination of National Night out efforts;
 - assisting with community engagement efforts such as the Neighborhood Watch program;
 - creating Neighborhood Council groups that can act as “Go Teams” when officer-involved shootings occur;
 - exploring the feasibility of transitioning Stand Up SA efforts into the Group Violence Intervention (GVI) program; and
 - determining whether outside agencies or community groups are best situated to lead this type of neighborhood crime prevention effort; funding for these efforts could come from the City, grant funds or foundations.
- Consider the expansion of the SAFFE program including more officers and additional shifts.
- Examine how officer promotions impact community relationships.
- Expand SAPD translation services. Language is often a barrier to reach, engage and effectively serve residents. SAPD should consider the accessibility and availability of materials and education in other languages, in addition to having officers that can communicate in the language for the areas they patrol/serve.
- Create a safe place for COSA residents to speak more openly. Residents feel overwhelmed with police presence when expressing themselves as it relates to community police relations.
- Engage the youth to participate in the conversation surrounding improved police-community relations.

- Publicize existing SAPD efforts such as the Family Assistance Crisis Team (F.A.C.T)
- Require officers to take psychological exams more frequently.
- Allow exceptional officers, determined by outside committee/panel, to train other officers or move into leadership roles.
- Create support groups for officers who have suffered traumatic experiences, on or off duty. One example is Healing Circles.
- Provide trainings for residents such as “Know Your Rights,” domestic violence prevention efforts, and the best way to report incidents.

The above summary provides an overview of the substantive conversations of the MCPCR which were largely facilitated by Dr. Michael Gilbert, of UTSA. In addition to developing these recommendations, the group made great strides in developing relationships between its members which represent a diverse cross segment of San Antonio.

Please provide thoughtful consideration to these suggestions to determine which would be feasible for us to undertake, which require budgetary support, and which could be done in partnership with a community organization.

Submission of this report does not end the work of the MCPCR. It will be necessary for the process to continue. In addition, I recognize that some key future discussion points will include components of our collective bargaining agreement with SAPOA. I believe the MCPCR can provide an excellent forum for those discussions as well.

I appreciate the work and time commitment of everyone involved in this process and look forward to improving relationship between citizens and our SAPD.

Roster of Members of Mayors Council on Police Community Relations

Alan Warrick	City Councilman, District 2
Analco Gonzalez	OCI Group
Andrew Trexler	City of San Antonio, TCI
Barbara Hawkins	State Representative
Beverely Watts Davis	WestCare Foundation
C LeRoy Cavazos	Hispanic Chamber Of Commerce
Cassandra Littlejohn	Sound Mind Concepts
Cliff Burns	SAPOA
Darrell Boyce	San Antonio Fighting Back, Inc.
Dean Fischer	SAPOA
Denise Barkhurst	Big Brothers Big Sisters of South Texas

Dr. Carey Latimore, IV	Trinity University
Dr. Michael Gilbert	UTSA - Dept. of Criminal Justice
Dr. Paul D. Stevens	New Covenant Missionary Baptist Church
Jonathan David Jones	SATX4
Jonathan Delmer	Oak Park Northwood HOA
Marc Harrison	Community Member
Martin Henderson	Fatherhood Matter Inc.
Munirah Small	Moms of Black Boys United
Natalie Garza	Office of Rep. Ina Minjarez
Nehemiah O'Neal	Community Member
Nora Herrera	Community Member
Oliver Hill	NAACP San Antonio Branch
Pastor Benson	Bethany First Baptist Church
Pastor Jerry Dailey	Macedonia Missionary Baptist Church
Pastor Keely Petty	Bethel International Christian Fellowship
Pearl Cruz	Office of Sen. Jose Menendez
Ramon Vasquez	American Indians in Texas / Fatherhood Campaign
Rebecca Viagran	City Councilwoman, District 3
Rev. Eli Bonilla	Abundant Life Church
Rev. Patrick Jones	Greater Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church
Rey Saldana	City Councilman, District 4
Richard Perez	SA Chamber of Commerce, President and CEO
Robert Ratcliffe	SA National Pan Hellenic / Kappa Alpha Psi
Robert Salcido	Pride Center
Ruby Resendez	Community Member
Sean Greene	My Brother's Keeper San Antonio, Project Manager
Taj Matthews	Claude Black Development Leadership Foundation
Tommy Adkisson	Law Office of Tommy Adkission
Troy Ragland	SAPOA
Waheeda Kara	Ismaili Jamatkhana
Walter Perry	Community Member
William B. Johnson	San Antonio NAACP