

Minutes of the REGULAR MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Wednesday, November 17, 2021

Committee Members Present:

Barber, Chamblis, Cummings, Ferguson, Fredson, Gonzalez, Johnson, Lee, Lilligren, Lindstrom, Muse, Sterner, Vento, Wulff, Zeran, Zelle

Committee Members Absent:

None

CALL TO ORDER

A quorum being present, Chair Zelle called the regular meeting of the Council's Committee of the Whole to order at 4:02 p.m. on Wednesday, November 17, 2021 on the following roll call vote:

Aye: 15 Chamblis, Cummings, Ferguson, Fredson, Gonzalez, Johnson, Lee, Lilligren, Lindstrom, Muse, Sterner, Vento, Wulff, Zeran, Zelle

Nay: 0

Absent: 0

No response: 1 Barber

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Council Members did not have any comments or changes to the agenda.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

It was moved by Sterner, seconded by Vento to approve the minutes of the November 3, 2021 regular meeting of the Committee of the Whole. **Motion carried** on the following roll call:

Aye: 15 Chamblis, Cummings, Ferguson, Fredson, Gonzalez, Johnson, Lee, Lilligren, Lindstrom, Muse, Sterner, Vento, Wulff, Zeran, Zelle

Nay: 0

Absent: 0

No response: 1 Barber

INFORMATION

1. Metro Transit Police Work Group Update

Council Member Chamblis, Chair of the Metro Transit Police Work Group, gave a monthly update of the group's work. She shared an overview of topics covered since the October 20, 2021 Committee of the Whole update, as well as a reminder of upcoming work plan items. Since the October 20 meeting the group has met once, and the November 5 meeting focused on employee perspectives. Topics included an overview of recent employee feedback and an employee panel. The employee panel was comprised of employee representatives from the Metro Transit Safety and Security Committee, the Metro Transit Equity and Inclusion

Team, ATU, TMSA, LELS – Full Time Officers, and LELS – Supervisors. Panel member comments included significant concerns about their safety and security, employees who require police assistance feel response time is slow, MTPD officers leaving for other departments, the current situation is not unique or isolated to Metro Transit, structures for accountability and leveraging partnerships to address systemic issues are important, and panelists offered several ideas for improvements. Work Group Chair Chamblis gave an overview of the current work plan progress; the work group is currently in phase 2 of the work plan: review existing policies, practices, and procedures and identify potential recommendation.

Council Members had comments on the work group progress and survey results, including the candor that the employees had when giving feedback.

2. Metro Transit Police Update

Captain Erin Dietz, MTPD, and Leah Palmer, MTPD, gave an update on the Metro Transit Police Department. Palmer began by sharing that the Met Council, Metro Transit, and MTPD leadership hear what employees and those that testified during the work group are saying. They have identified opportunities for improvement, including: department-wide communications from top-down, concerns about department attrition rate and staffing, outcomes of police work, and support for police from leadership. The survey also revealed strengths that MTPD will build upon: tools and technology, and mission, motto, and values. Palmer also shared information about the national landscape for policing. Many believe George Floyd's murder was a breaking point for both community and police. There are also record numbers of officers leaving urban departments locally and nationally, due in part to the defund the police movement, feeling unsafe and unsupported, lack of resources, and the "Clinton Cops" retiring. The number of MTPD officers has slowly been declining since March, with a total of 173 full-time and part-time officers as of October 2021. Palmer shared that the department has been able to maintain the diversity of the department despite fluctuations in staffing, at approximately 46-47% people of color. Women comprise 23% of full-time officers. Palmer shared charts including staff attrition, PTSD claims by year, with an increase in PTSD claims in 2020 and 2021, crime data, and operator assaults. Palmer also shared information about calls for service, priority types, and response times. To support officers MTPD is currently advocating for administrative citations, has installed monitor screens in 200 buses, is exploring contracted security to support MTPD, is expanding the community service officer (CSO) program, providing development and expansion of the RTIC to support patrol operations, providing body-worn cameras for officers and CSPs, has increased authorized strength, increased health and wellness, is reprioritizing resource deployment, increased Text for Safety staff and house, and added a dedicated investigator for operator assaults. Recruitment strategies currently include career fairs and college outreach, a partnership with Marketing, exploring possible hiring incentives, and ensuring standards for officers continue to be met.

Council members had questions and comments about what Council members could do to support officers and be engaged, how to more effectively retain officers, attrition issues, what MTPD leadership is doing to show that they care about officers, and staffing levels for shifts. Council members also discussed crimes, operator assaults and the effect of the installation of plexiglass guards on the decline in assaults, and the role of leadership in officer retention.

ADJOURNMENT

Business completed; the meeting adjourned at 5:59 p.m.

Bridget Toskey
Recording Secretary