

WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL held on November 15, 2021

Discussion: Police Reform

Mayor Jordan started the meeting at 8:00 p.m., held virtually via Zoom.

In attendance were: Councilmembers Colin A. Byrd, Judith F. Davis, Ric Gordon, Silke I. Pope, Rodney M. Roberts, Kristen L.K. Weaver, and Mayor Emmett V. Jordan.

City Staff present: Tim George, Assistant City Manager; Rick Bowers, Police Chief; Tim White, Police Department; and Bonita Anderson, City Clerk.

Also present was Mr. Zirkin, Public Safety Advisory Committee (PSAC).

Mayor Jordan provided introductions and outlined that the process of the meeting would be conducted by reviewing the spreadsheet, incorporating the comments of Council, Police Department, and Public Safety Advisory Committee. He noted Mr. Zirkin's recommendation to add Proposed Police Reform next Regular Council meeting agenda.

Councilmember Byrd recommended on October 11, 2021, that the police department update its policies to include a definition of de-escalation in General Orders 616-02. He suggested modifying General Order 618 to state that officers should use only the reasonable force necessary to achieve lawful objectives and apply de-escalation techniques when possible. He recommended establishing a system to identify officers likely to use excessive force, providing them with retraining or reassignment if necessary, and requiring a referral to the state's attorney's office to investigate any officer involved in a fatality. Mayor Jordan noted that the Public Safety Advisory Committee (PSAC) supports these recommendations. Chief Bowers confirmed that this system is already in place under General Order 431, the Early Intervention Program.

Mayor Jordan outlined several critical areas for improvement in police policies during a recent work session. The focus includes enhancing the language in General Orders to prioritize de-escalation tactics, ensuring retraining or reassignment of officers who have used excessive force, and protecting whistleblowers. Additionally, there are calls for the limited use of no-knock warrants in compliance with 2021 state police legislation, which mandates that officers identify themselves during forced entries and ensures comprehensive reporting on juveniles charged from 2017 to 2019, broken down by race and gender. Other significant points included allowing civilians to lawfully record police incidents and ensuring proper documentation and review of all complaints.

Council held a detailed discussion on necessity and implications of no-knock warrants. Chief Bowers clarified that while the police department cannot execute these warrants, they can choose not to participate if procedures are violated. He stressed that no-knock warrants should be reserved for extreme situations. Mr. Roberts advocated for a complete ban, arguing that safer alternatives are available. Council agreed these warrants should only be used in dire circumstances to prevent loss of life or evidence tampering.

Council addressed the timeline for releasing body camera footage, proposing a 14-day deadline to allow for the redaction of unrelated personal information. Chief Bowers noted that a quicker

release could be possible in serious incidents, such as fatalities, based on ongoing investigation needs. He also reminded officers of their obligation to ensure their body cameras are functioning and to report any malfunctions, emphasizing that there have been no known instances of officers intentionally turning off their cameras.

Council also addressed personal data collection during Stop-And-Frisk procedures, deciding to table a proposal due to the department's current limitations in capacity. Chief Bowers provided clarification on the legal grounds for police detainment, distinguishing between stops that require reasonable suspicion and consensual searches that require agreement from the individual involved. Although there are existing protocols for providing information on citations, council is exploring additional notification methods to enhance clarity for the public.

Mr. Byrd proposed a General Order that would require referrals to the state's attorney's office to investigate officers whose actions lead to fatalities. This recommendation has the backing of PSAC, and Chief Bowers confirmed that it is consistent with state law. Modifications related to no-knock warrants are also under review, with Mayor Jordan advocating for changes to the Duty to Intervene policy to incorporate protections for whistleblowers.

There was a discussion among council regarding no-knock warrants were recognized. While some expressed hesitance, others, such as Ms. Davis, acknowledged their potential necessity in certain criminal scenarios. Chief Bowers reiterated that the revised procedure now mandates a minimum waiting period of 60 seconds after knocking before executing a No-Knock warrant, emphasizing the commitment to safety and legality in law enforcement practices.

Council continued to discuss important changes to police interviews with children, aiming to improve transparency regarding disciplinary records. Their goals include ensuring public access to certain internal affairs records and clarifying the definition of "Complaint" within police procedures. Mayor Jordan emphasized the significance of these amendments in order to align with best practices and meet community standards.

Chief Bowers underscored the importance of timely access to body camera footage, suggesting that all recordings should ideally be released within seven days. He also highlighted the need for disciplinary actions against officers who fail to activate their body cameras without justification. The discussions concluded with plans to investigate these matters further, demonstrating the council's ongoing commitment to enhancing police accountability and transparency.

Mayor Jordan appreciated everyone's efforts, Ms. Davis shared updates on upcoming meetings and community events. Council is dedicated to implementing meaningful reforms that enhance the relationship between law enforcement and the community, emphasizing safety, transparency, and accountability.

The meeting ended at 11:24 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Bonita Anderson

Bonita Anderson
City Clerk