

Police Budget Advisory Board
Minutes from September 15, 2022

Present: Amara Dunn (AD) (chair), Andrew Spink (AS) (secretary), Michele Neary (MN), Jonathan Millis (JM), David Strickland (DS) (alternate), Stefanie Newcomb (SN) (City Comptroller)

Absent: John Lynch, Frank Gaglianese (City Council liaison)

Minutes from August 25, 2022 were discussed. AD made minor corrections to AS's draft. Minutes approved 3-0 with MN abstaining.

The people who were present all introduced themselves, as this was the first meeting with SN as comptroller. SN said she has seen the local law that formed the board.

AD gave a brief overview of the PBAB.

DS had question of the status of the alternate.

SN said she thought an alternate can vote if regular member absent.

AD: We had not been having alternate vote even in absence of regular member.

AS says it's unclear because on the Police Review Board, Erica Collins asked the mayor, who said the alternate cannot vote because they were not appointed as a board member and alternate was not mentioned in that local law, which is also true of the PBAB legislation.

SN: I will try to get an answer to this.

AD summarized the PBAB and its function, which was mostly a repeat of the introduction to the PBAB given at the July 2022 meeting:

The PBAB is members, plus alternate, and City Council liaison. The Chief only comes when we request. The PBAB is only advisory, and only an advisory board, has not actual power. Clearing up misconceptions: PBAB is not set up to defund GPD, and doesn't have the power to do that. We've learned a lot about budget reports over the last year. We have a Google drive that keeps all the changes and notes we make for ease of reference. We also have a spreadsheet about data regarding last 10 years of budget reports. We're interested in learning more about more about GPD. We're more interested in learning the costs of the GPD to the city. We're interested in anonymized reports as to the amount of settlements paid in lawsuits related to police. This is also a space to explore new ideas. We write a recommendation to submit to City Council during budget season. Last year we didn't make our proposals until after budget proposal, but now we've done it before. We're still awaiting the results of the DCJS study.

SN says there are a lot of emails about DCJS study. It's currently on the supervisor's desk to be finalized. Back in May there was a 6-8 week timeline, but there's been a delay. We still don't have the report despite our best efforts.

AD: It's hard to track types of police phone calls now, but it's my understanding that there is new system is being implemented to better track that.

SN: Yes, that's right. We're implementing a system to better track things like location of officers and vehicles, but still a way off from producing useful reports.

AD: Should we be sending questions about the DCJS to Erica Collins or SN?

SN: Send to both Erica and myself for the time being.

AD: There is to be no public comment at our meetings per the local law. We still need to follow open meetings law.

SN: It's not mandating to have virtual meeting option, though City Council is keeping it going. Certain types of sessions cannot be attended virtually. This meeting can be virtual, but it's not required. The only real requirement is posting the time and place.

AD: We can't accept public comment, but any resident can contact a member of the board if they have input. It is ok to have conversations by email but votes must be in person.

SN: I am six weeks on the job and we're in the depths of budget preparation. We're 85% done with budget and taking two different approaches. City manager will present a budget to Council but we're preparing a secondary budget if Council does not want tax increases. I've been in communication with Chief. I asked people for three things, their needs, their wants, and their wish list. The number for office furniture the Chief proposed was high according to PBAB, so I talked to Chief about those numbers. We try to always provide the needs (which are covered by taxpayers) and some of the wants (covered by state funding and grants), and wish list (covered by donations and state funds). It's not that wish list items are covered by taxpayer dollars, but we have a conversation and an approach. One of the things that came out of the conversation was renting from 5-Star since I used to work at Hobart and William Smith. Some of the furniture is on the wish list, but some things are more important, like lockers, and a fridge for evidence. We're trying to work with HWS to get furniture that no one wants and see if they can donate it. Some things are needs, like chairs for interviews. I'm trying to reach common ground on budgets. I usually talk in buckets of money and common language. Your conversation on contracts was interesting, but I hadn't talked to the Chief about it. Please feel free to ask me questions. Going forward, my approach is to have monthly budget discussions with department heads. We recently had a totaled car in an accident. I'm trying to make budget less of a daunting task next year by having monthly conversations. I acknowledge there are certain things I don't understand, but there's usually an explanation for everything. Erica mentioned doing a budget class or workshop, and I'm open to that if this group wants it (after budget season).

AD: Does the third Thursday at 6 PM work?

SN: Yes, usually, just tonight I have to leave early.

SN: The budget will be presented on YouTube on 9/21, along with budget workshops, on 9/26, 10/5, 10/19, and 10/26.

MN: What is our role once budget is approved?

SN: Reviewing monthly budgets, start researching things for next year. Once we're past budget approval, we're really looking toward 2023.

DS: How much of the budget is just continuing from last year, versus researching things and looking at other model cities?

SN: I'm not a proponent of just saying we should spend something this year because we did it last year. We should be looking at what other people are doing. I want to make sure things look more logical. I don't want to have things just dumped in "miscellaneous" or "office supplies." Information should go in correctly. My approach is to evaluate each department and see what they need. For example, I want to have a standard practice on vehicles. We want to research what worked.

SN left the meeting at this point due to family obligations.

AD: Next on agenda is discussion, let's formulate bullet points of what we want to talk about.

DS and JM indicated support for ideas of researching ideas to assist City.

AD previously emailed the PBAB with ideas about our relationship with comptroller:

- I envision PBAB could be a source of new ideas; could help with researching possible ideas for improved efficiency
- Hoping the comptroller will be able to answer our questions and help us learn more about how our City budget (or other City budgets) work, as well as provide useful summaries of current GPD expenses.

JM: I liked the approach of not asking police to be budget people.

DS: Maybe we could make some charts and graphs based on city budget reports.

AD The budget report shows what account the expense was charged to, not what it was used for. For example, vehicle maintenance money was already used up, so you need to take it from a different line. We don't see how much office supplies actually cost.

AD: I would like to be able to find out what category something is, not just what account it might be charged to. Right now, it will show you a total for "office supplies" that aren't actually office supplies and might be something else because you can't overspend on a line. I want to see if there's a way to generate a report that shows what category things should have been in.

JM and AD both expressed support for this idea.

AD: However, the state has budget categories that are fixed.

MN: Yes, some lines cannot have anything moved from it.

DS: Would it be bothering the Chief to request different types of budget reports?

AD: I think that might actually come from the comptroller.

JM: Maybe this board can help relieve some of the burden. I want to be creative and try to make this better and help get them more money.

AD: I liked the way the comptroller divided things into needs, wants and wish lists.

JM: I'm curious about the prior budget trainings that were given for the city.

AD: We do have old slides from Adam Blowers (prior comptroller). Do we want a workshop or academy?

DS: I think yes, but Stefanie is busy. Though I think it's good, and would like to see it come back.

AD: We almost got a training in January, but Adam left.

AS: I remember Adam's slides were kind of interesting, but an actual training would have been a lot better.

AD: I had a lot of questions after reading the slides.

AS: I liked the idea of dividing things in needs, wants, and wishes, since at our last meeting the PBAB was divided about certain things, such as whether we should recommend one vehicle or two, and I kind of threw up my hands because I didn't have enough information about what was a need or a want.

AD: Is there currently a policy for turnover of vehicles?

JM: I felt like the answer to that was no.

AD: Adam told us there was a new vehicle every year, but then it stopped and now we're catching up. That was the sense I got, and I got the sense that the Chief asked for things he knew he wouldn't get. The idea of needs, wants, and wishes is helpful for everyone realizing where they stand in negotiating.

DS: Though all parties, departments heads, comptroller need to be honest about what actually is a need, want, or need.

AD: Anything we need to do between now and next meeting?

DS: How much time do we have to review the budget report?

AD: I have usually requested them on the first day of the month, but we usually don't discuss at the meeting unless something important came up. We have just been adding our comments to a google doc.

AD: We should think about what we need to research.

DS: We can assist with data collection. For example, once I participated in data collection in counting how many cars went by on a certain intersection.

AD: When the DCJS study was started, there was a lot of question about whether it was sufficient. When it comes out, we should have a conversation about whether it tells us what we want to know. Originally the City thought about spending money on studying policing but decided to do the free study first.

Next meeting Thursday 10/20. MN cannot attend and AS is at a legal conference but would have remote capabilities. MN would not have remote capabilities.

AD: I will look into remote capability. I don't know what the agenda would be yet.

JM: I will ask Erica about how to get connected to network at City Hall.

Adjourned.