

Joint Police Advisory Council
Thursday, August 6, 2020, 5:00-6:30 pm
Via Zoom
Minutes

JPAC Members in attendance via Zoom: Chief Powers, Chief Pyle, Chad Barnhardt, Jackie Wolf, Kim Rouse, Andrew Chiki, Ally Rapp Lee, MaryKathyrine Tran, Sarah Grace, Liesl Gyurko

Guest: Ariel Tarosky

1. Police Hiring Practices

Jackie asked the chiefs how the APD and the OUPD screen for job applicants with extreme ideologies and participation in extremist organizations?

Chief Powers explained that the answer is complicated. All Americans have first amendment rights of free speech and free association. And what one person considers to be an extreme ideology but not seem extreme, or even controversial, to someone else. Extremism can be challenging to define. That said, people cannot always act on their beliefs lawfully. And the OUPD does do thorough background investigations on all job applicants. Investigations include home visits, chats with applicants' neighbors, and checking references that candidates have not necessarily supplied. The OUPD also conducts a community stakeholder interview session with each applicant. Psychological assessments aim to weed out applicants who have a predisposition for embracing extremist attitudes and biased views. After hiring, the department tracks any use of force and biased enforcement actions of all officers. In other words, the OUPD screens thoroughly at the front end and monitors at the back end. Chief Powers noted especially that officers have the right to comment on matters of public interest but that, for example, posting racist messages on social media platforms would affect their ability to be a police officer.

Chief Pyle is similarly confident that the exhaustive interview processes conducted by the APD screen out undesirable applicants. The APD background process takes 90 days. The APD also has stringent policies after hiring that prohibit certain behaviors. **Chief Pyle** added, "Nothing about our agencies would attract an extremist applicant. We are not good fits for their ideologies." The current APD hiring process has been in place since 2005 and **Chief Pyle** is confident that the process weeds out problems.

Chief Powers added that officers working and living in Athens take pride in remaining neutral and objective. The focus in both police departments is on police service in general. Both departments are good at weeding out people who use policing as a soap box for advancing their agenda.

Sarah noted that both agencies are doing their best as far as hiring practices are concerned but that people are unpredictable. And people can be radicalized after being hired. She asked the chiefs what their response would be if they learned one of their officers had participated in the insurrection in Washington D.C. on January 6.

Chief Powers: We would open an internal investigation and make a recommendation. If criminal activity were involved, discipline could include firing.

Chief Pyle: I would attempt to terminate any officers as swiftly as possible if they had been involved in criminal activity at the capitol building on January 6.

2. COVID/Public Health Reporting & Enforcement

Spring House Parties/Outside Gatherings

Chad introduced **Ariel Tarosky**, Director of Sorority and Fraternity Services, who joined the meeting to learn how best to communicate with students about large gatherings violating the 10-or-more-people gathering prohibition during the pandemic.

Chief Pyle: Gatherings of 10 or more people are still banned by the health department. We will not allow those gatherings in front yards or public spaces. We will not let a fest-style situation to occur. We will be proactive in order to prevent those gatherings. On the other hand, if the governor lifts the gathering ban, we likely will have spring fests. But I don't foresee the governor lifting that ban before the end of the semester. And we think people will abide by the restrictions.

Ariel explained that students have expressed concern that their calls to the police reporting gatherings have been brushed aside.

Chief Pyle reported that the police have not been getting many complaints. But anyone is encouraged to call. He told Ariel that if she sends him the date and time of the call she said was ignored he would check on it. Officers have been instructed to take the calls seriously and act on them.

Round Table

MaryKathyrine: Take Back the Night will be conducted virtually this year.

Kim: Take Back the Night will consist of an hour of survivor speakers and community support will be appreciated. Everyone is feeling isolated right now.

Liesl announced that she and her family are moving to Toledo. This is her last JPAC meeting.

Chad is working with the mayor's and president's offices to fill vacant seats on JPAC.

The next JPAC meeting will be held via Zoom on Thursday, April 1 from 5 to 6:30.