

Howard County Racial Equity Task Force  
Personal & Public Safety Meeting Minutes  
Chair: Allison Sayers  
March 18, 2021

**Panelists Present** – Allison Sayers, Richard Gibson, Jonathan Branch, Maya Carey, Marcus Harris, Zikora Akanegbu, Rahel Petros, Gus Bibum, Jumel Howard, Eduardo Ribiero, Zainab Chaudry Lauren Marra (Facilitator), Ashley Alston (D2), Michael Harris (D2).

**Not Present:** N/A

**Opening:**

Allison Sayers completed attendance and introduced the meeting and speakers (listed below):

Major James Marshall, Howard County Police Department

Lieutenant Terrence Benn – Patrol Division

Lieutenant Erika Heavner – Family Crimes & Sex Assault

Lieutenant Michael Johnson – Education & Training

Lieutenant Christopher Valentine – Internal Affairs

*Lauren began with an overview of the meeting plan*

- *Notes that a document with the police department's responses to the group's submitted questions was sent in advance of this meeting*

Major James Marshall began his presentation

- Representing Chief Myers in her absence
- Been with the Police Department for 27 years
- Reorganizing the Police Department beginning April 12<sup>th</sup>
  - He will become the Deputy Chief of Field Operations
    - Oversee Patrol

Councilman Dr. Opel Jones greets the group

Lauren opened the floor for questions

- Allison- How is the police data accessible (aside from having a meeting of this nature) to members of the public?
  - Major Marshall asked for clarification if Allison was referring to data on arrests or data on crime in general
    - Allison is asking about the racial breakdown aspect

- Major Marshall- He is unsure off the top of his head how much of that information is included in their annual report from internal affairs.  
Asked Lieutenant Valentine if he could speak on the issue
    - Lieutenant Valentine- The data is not currently online, but they are having discussions about putting it online and accessible to the public. Howard County Data Dashboard is available to the public with some statistics. He will look further into that and get back to Allison.
- Allison- Do you know how often these (referring to Lieutenant Valentine's statement) statistics are generated? Yearly, quarterly, etc? Can the data be generated for something like this?
  - Major Marshall-
    - They track statistics monthly, which some are reported to FBI as a federal requirement. For public release, depending on the type of report, those things can always be requested through the Public Information Act. He understands Allison is referring to having the data in an easier format. Also, understands that the interest of transparency is important. States that there are many things that he would have to get back to the group on. He is, however, taking notes to relay back to Chief Meyers.
    - Clarifies that Allison is asking for an annual arrest data broken down by race and gender that would be for public release.
      - Allison- Yes, correct. Also wonders whether there is a publicly accessible website, absent a Public Information Act request
        - Lieutenant Johnson- Goccp.maryland.gov is Maryland's website for race-based traffic stop data analysis and is broken down by county. It is updated every year since its implementation in 2001. Howard County had been tracking it before it became a State law.
- Maya asked if they could go over the Early Identification System and how that works. Also wants to know how that would work if complaints are made among officers. **Refers to Police document shared**
  - Lieutenant Valentine-
    - The Early Identification System (EIS) is a system that they had for years in Howard County. If an officer has 3 or more use of force incidents within a 6-month period, or they have 2 or more Internal Affairs investigations within a 6-month period, it triggers an EIS alert, which he receives in Internal Affairs. He would then analyze and review each use of force that the officer has done.
    - As Internal Affairs, he reviews all uses of force that come through the agency.
      - However, in EIS alerts, he specifically looks at each use of force that has been triggered by the EIS system just to make sure that there aren't any patterns or trends that stand out as issue that would need investigation
    - When they receive the EIS notification, he has contact with the Commanders and determines whether there needs to be a follow up.
      - This could include reaching out to the Office of Education and Training or counseling for the officer
  - Maya asked a follow up- Why is it only within 6 months period? Is there a bank where you can see publically which officers have gotten a use of force complaint against them? Do you look at complaints made other than use of force, such as racial slurs or

degrading language? Does the 6-month period start over or is there a trail that follows the officer? Is there someone who looks at all the complaints together regardless if they are not within time frame?

- Lieutenant Valentine-
  - The EIS is a separate system from complaints. It does not reset; it is rolling as it collects data. It doesn't look at any racial bias complaints or any other complaint. It is just use of force and administrative investigations within 6 months.
  - The complaint process is separate
- Allison- How does the use of force get triggered in the system? Is it from a person's report? Is there a form they fill out indicating that force was used?
  - Major Marshall-
    - Officers self-report use of force. States that he does not want use of force to be misconstrued as excessive amount of force. "Use of Force" in its purest form is the mere presence of an officer. They track use of force for things like pointing but not necessarily firing a weapon, hand strikes, etc.
      - These types of things would trigger a EIS warning. It is a proactive approach.
    - Anytime you must use even a minimal amount of force to effect an arrest, they require that the officer put in their report. Then, it is reviewed from the officer level, and it goes to district commander/captain or in some cases the Deputy Chief
  - Allison- If an officer using force but isn't reporting, there won't be a trigger
    - Major Marshall- Conceivably yes. They rely on officers to report. Incident reports are separate from use of force report. They analyze use of force to make sure it is appropriate
- Zainab- Is there a mechanism to ensure accountability and diligence that officers are self-reporting accurately
  - Major Marshall-
    - In the absence of body cameras, they would have multiple officers on the scene and they rely on the officer's integrity to report their use of force because they want to make sure that the reporting is consistent with all the officers. There is no use of force that looks good. Sometimes, they have circumstances where there is no other choice. They always strive to use the minimal amount of force as necessary.
    - Situation in which you would use force:
      - To effect an arrest
      - Prevent an escape
      - Protect themselves
      - Protect someone else
    - Integrity is something in which they look for when hiring officers. They do their best to hire the best candidates.
    - **Referring to document shared**
      - There are statistics that address internal vs. external complaints and investigations. Some of the investigations come from internal sources, they do not solely rely on the outside people to tell them that are doing something wrong

- Zainab- How is the content in the police training vetted and is it followed up every X amount of years? Or is this only taught while the officer is going through the recruit academy.
  - Lieutenant Johnson-
    - He oversees all the entry level training, in service training, training of lateral police officers that come through their academy, firearm section, in service section, and all the academy instructors
    - They have several courses that focus on de-escalation,
      - One course has been around for over 20 years
      - They send their instructors to that trainer school
      - It is updated every so often
        - HCPD stays on top of the updates
        - HCPD sends out instructors for renewal
    - HCPD has implemented a program called ICAT, meaning integration communications, assessments, and tactics
      - Focus of ICAT is dealing with people who are in mental health crisis who armed with something other than a firearm
      - Provides officers with more adequate training for these situations
      - 2-day program, where every recruit that goes through the academy gets this training
        - Instructors are certified instructors in this
      - Howard County has had several instances and they have been able to successful de-escalate the situation without anybody getting hurt
    - Mandated a CIT training, which is a crisis intervention training
      - 40-hour course
      - Advanced user course
        - Officers do not receive this training in the academy because they lack the experience from having been police officers and helping people who are in crisis to make the most of this training
        - Officers have had a 1 or 2 year of experience
    - All the courses are monitored throughout the academy
      - They give the verbal de-escalation training early on and the recruits apply what they learned in every practical scenario they go to
      - Run numerous practical scenarios throughout the 6-month period, reinforcing the skills and tactics learned
      - Also reinforce the officer's ability to develop a rapport with a person, not being confrontational, and managing that person's emotions to allow them to calm down, so they can resolve situations without having to use force
    - Active listening training
    - Communications training with deaf or hard of hearing, so that there isn't any miscommunication that could lead to use of force
- Zainab- Is there any kind of diversity training as it pertains to diverse faith and ethnic communities (example: Jewish and Muslim families/individuals)? If not, could the Task force work with HCPD to figure out a way to make it possible
  - Lieutenant Johnson-

- Officers get a week of diversity training, where they cover classes in cultural awareness, hate bias, bias-based policing, autism awareness, dealing with individuals with developmental disorders, the LGBTQ+ community, Spanish community
    - Implemented a program called Lunch and Learn, where they would bring in speakers, coordinated through their outreach section, to sit in a lunch setting with the recruits. The bring in people from the African American community, Korean community, the deaf/ hard of hearing community, Indian community, Muslim community, and LGBTQ+ community.
      - This is an opportunity for the individuals from our community to share their experiences with law enforcement with these recruits. If they shared negative experiences, they would talk about how it impacted them and how it impacted their community. Also, it is a way for recruits to ask them questions (could be about cultural norms).
      - These are open conversations and instructors are not controlling it
      - Have had a positive response back from this particular training from the President of the Maryland Directors Associations
        - Meet quarterly and he put the other academies in touch with the people HCPD Academy used
    - They are constantly looking to improve their training. He would like Zainab to email him with her ideas on additional training
- Zainab- Does HCPD engage in international trainings for police departments? If so, under what context?
  - Lieutenant Johnson-
    - In the past, they have had other officers from different countries come visit with us for several months at a time.
    - There was a time that they participated in a officer exchange program and sent officers overseas
    - He does not know if it has been recently, particularly with Covid-19
      - There weren't allowed to travel out of state for training
  - Zainab- The concern with that some of these countries where the training takes place have engaged in extensive human rights abuses and violations against minority populations, and some officers are coming back to U.S and implementing those same tactics
    - Lieutenant Johnson-
      - He thinks that the only place that an officer was sent is the U.K.
      - Any use of force training or application must be approved through the education and training division, Office of Law, and the entire chain of command staff
        - There is no way that an officer can visit another agency in the State, take training from them, and come back and start implementing what they learned without being approved through these channels
- Jumel would like to submit his questions in writing for them to be answered later

- Zikora- What requirements are there to be met to classify something as a hate bias incident in Howard County? If it is classified as a hate bias, what is HCPD's protocol and next steps?
  - Lieutenant Benn-
    - Will become Southern District Commander and is currently assigned a night shift patrol
    - Refers to Hate Bias Incident as a HBI
    - Have to understand the distinction between someone perceiving an incident and a crime
      - If someone perceives an incident as HBI, then as an agency, HCPD will document it as what they perceive to be. However, that does not necessarily mean that a crime has been committed. There must be some factors to support your assumptions
    - Once something is deemed a HBI, then the area supervisor must respond to the scene. They will take photographs to ensure that it is what the officer presented to them. Watch command will be notified along with the district commander.
    - The case cannot be closed out until a follow up is completed along with the district commanders signing off on that closure of the case.
    - Depending on the severity, it will be thoroughly investigated
  - Zikora- If someone reports a HBI and the HCPD does not classify it as such, will they be contacted by HCPD to dispute or correct the claim?
    - Lieutenant Benn-
      - They would never contact someone to dispute their claim. However, they can shed light on the situation. Based upon the information, they can provide to close the disposition of the case
    - Major Marshall-
      - A lot of their policies that explain their processes for handling various types of incidents on their website: [hcpd.org](http://hcpd.org)
        - They do have a section specifically for HBI
- Eduardo- Is there any reason to believe that our policemen in Howard County participated in the Capitol riot? Do people keep track of social media by law enforcement agents (example: in the cases that they use it for racial rhetoric)?
  - Major Marshall-
    - They are not aware of any of their officers being present at the Capitol riot on January 6<sup>th</sup>.
    - In regard to social media, they have a Code of Conduct policy that is available on their website.
      - Social media can be tricky because police officers do have 1<sup>st</sup> amendment rights, but they don't want anything that they do poorly reflect the agency
        - They have had incidents in the past where employees have posted inappropriate comments and poorly reflect the agency (not necessarily racist). They do monitor those things
- Jonathan- Do you think that having a social worker or mental health professional to respond to an incident with you is helpful?
  - Major Marshall-
    - He thinks it is helpful
    - HCPD has mobile crisis teams that respond to many calls for service with them

- He knows that there is a lot of talk with increasing the availability of mental health professionals to help them with their job, and HCPD is all for that
      - But there are certainly circumstances where there is physical danger. In those instances, mental health professionals would not take the police's place, but they are welcomed to work with the police.
      - Working on a project now with their 911 Center, where if somebody calls with the mental health crisis in a case that would prompt a police response; in some cases, they can refer those calls to mental health resources instead of sending a police officer.
    - They are always looking to evolve
    - Have had the Mobile Crisis Team for at least 15 years
  - Lieutenant Johnson- adds that in many cases, it is the mental health professional that calls for the police
    - Based on his experience, a majority of the calls that dealt with a mental health crisis, came from the counselors, doctors, etc who could not handle that individual anymore
- Rahel- **Refers to shared police document.** How can the disproportionate amount of Black people stopped (traffic stops) and field interviews be explained? What has HCPD done to try to mitigate this issue?
  - Major Marshall-
    - This is a tough question. Some of those stops are self-initiated.
    - The number one complaint in the 27 years that he has worked at HCPD is about traffic violations, particularly speeding
    - They focus their resources on traffic enforcement (they do not enforce criminal law).
      - Depending on the circumstance, the race may or may not be known prior to the stop, which is the same for Field Interview Report (FIR). They respond to those places and times where they are getting those calls
      - Bias based instruction in the academy
  - Lieutenant Benn-
    - When officers are responding to calls for service, typically they are called in by citizens and you are dealing with quality of life concerns.
      - They document that they had an exchange. Not all calls necessarily arise to an incident report
      - Based upon the person who is making the call, a lot of the times it determines the demographic of the person they are going to be exchanging with
        - FIR is typically brought on by calls from the constituents
  - Major Marshall-
    - 50% of the traffic stops that they make, they document race, ethnicity, gender, and the county where they are from
    - 50% of the traffic stops that they make are people who live outside of Howard County
    - He thinks part of the data is a reflection of the population of Baltimore, Washington, Metropolitan area, not necessarily specific to Howard County

- Rahel- Refers to police document shared. What are the proactive steps in recognizing this data and its disproportionate trend? Also wants to clarify if FIR only occur when a call is made.
  - Major Marshall-
    - FIR most common circumstance is when an officer encounters somebody on foot.
      - Describes a scenario when an individual is at a store after hours. Asking this individual question is an example of FIR
  - Lieutenant Valentine-
    - In internal affairs, as far as working with the Office of Human rights and Equity, when a person makes a complaint, they do not have to make it directly to HCPD. Then those complaints will be funneled to HCPD.
      - They investigate every complaint thoroughly
    - Proactive steps:
      - EIS system
      - Monitor traffic stopping
      - Take racial bias complaints very seriously and investigate thoroughly
      - They also look at what is drawing an officer to a certain area
- Rahel- FIR are still disproportionate. If this data is truly being reviewed and there are proactive steps taken, where is the outcome of those steps? She acknowledges that time could be a factor
  - Major Marshall-
    - Mentions how this subgroup requested data on reports on marijuana and other FIR data
    - If there was a citizen complaint on drug use and the officer did not find anything criminal about it, then a FIR would still be conducted. They are required to document all of their stops
    - He recognizes that the numbers do not look good, but these are the number that they are reporting. They are not holding anything back. They are responding to calls for service
    - Always looking for ways to deliver, effective, efficient, and constitutional policing
- Allison clarifies the extent of FIRs. Do we know the data on FIR based on calls and the FIR based on officers stopping?
  - Major Marshall-
    - He will go back and look, and he will try to get the answer
    - Shares a story about his time serving in West Columbia
    - They are meticulous about their reporting and documentation

Lauren kindly asks if people could write down any follow up questions and they will send it to the HCPD. Officers are also invited to send information and/or ask questions

Lauren wraps up and thanks the HCPD and group members for being here

Allison reminds the group of upcoming events

- Meeting on April 8<sup>th</sup> 5:00pm-7:00pm
- Meeting on May 13<sup>th</sup> 5:00pm-7:00pm

**Allison adjourns the meeting**