

Pleasanton Police Department  
**Community Advisory Board**  
Tuesday September 27, 2022  
Briefing Room

Department Attendees: Chief David Swing, Captain Kurt Schlehuber, Captain Larry Cox, Sgt. Eric Gora, Sgt. Nick Albert, Administrative Assistant Kim Monfort

CAB Members in Attendance: Tim Barley, Tonya Bass, Gary Davila, Jennifer DeGroat-Penney, Bill Foley, Erica Gallegos, Pinky Mukherjee, Melanie Sadek, Soraya Villasenor

Absent: Gene Litvinoff, Ediambolo Lokoto, Puneet Pamma, Raffiq Rajabali, Sylvia Tian

## **I. Chief's Welcome**

Chief Swing welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Sgt. Albert, who leads the department's Alternate Response Unit (ARU), and Sgt. Gora who leads the Peer Support Team. Chief Swing advised that LaTasha Jefferson has taken a job outside of Pleasanton and therefore no longer qualifies to sit on CAB as she lives out of town as well.

## **II. Police Department Update.**

### **a. Bi-Annual Report to City Council.**

Chief Swing presented the police department's bi-annual report at last Tuesday's City Council meeting. CAB member Bill Foley attended the meeting and commented that it was a great presentation, well received by Council. In particular, he felt the information shared relative to the ARU was very informative. With regard to PUSD students in crisis, only 2 of 32 contacted were placed on psychiatric detentions. The rest were referred to alternative mental health care options by ARU. The number can potentially go down even further once clinicians come on board early next year. Mr. Foley further shared that the ARU came up in conversation at a meeting he attended at the Senior Center today and Sgt. Albert and his unit received lots of positive feedback

### **b. Command and CSI Vehicles**

The second presentation by the department at the City Council meeting was for approval to purchase a command vehicle and a crime scene investigation vehicle. The entire purchase of both vehicles is expected to be covered with COPS Grant funding which the department has been setting aside for several years. Pleasanton Police Department is one of only three cities in Alameda County that does not have a Command Vehicle. The vehicle can be utilized for a wide range of incidents including search and rescue, disasters, special events, and as a backup

dispatch center. Council approved the purchase of both vehicles. Delivery is expected to take about 22 months from the date of purchase.

c. Coffee with a Cop

Coffee with a Cop will be held October 5<sup>th</sup> at Peet's Coffee on Main Street. Chief Swing invited CAB members to attend as its a great opportunity to engage with department staff and the community.

d. Shop with a Cop

Shop with a Cop will be held Saturday, December 10<sup>th</sup>. This event was tremendously successful last year and is sponsored by the Pleasanton Police Officers Association Charitable Foundation. CAB member Villasenor shared that PUSD selects recipients from each school in the district. Parents will be given money to buy gifts for their children as well. CAB member Gallegos suggested POACF gifts include sports classes such as gymnastics or karate. Chief Swing welcomed CAB to participate in this event.

### **III. Old Business**

No issues were raised.

### **IV. New Business – Mental Health and Officer Trauma**

Capt. Cox introduced this topic and shared that officer trauma and mental health were not discussed when he began his career. Over the years, awareness has increased, particularly after 9/11. Capt. Cox shared parts of a video called The Resiliency Project, which was founded by Nick Wilson, who was a police officer for 13 years before medically retiring due to injuries sustained on the job. Due to the excessive exposure to trauma, Nick found himself with a PTSI diagnosis which led to self-medication, a DUI and rehabilitation. His story of resiliency and fighting for his life is heartbreaking, yet inspirational. He started TRP to break stigmas and give back to First Responders, so no one suffers in silence the way he did.

In 2011, former PPD Police Chief Dave Spiller saw a need for peer support and mental health support. The department began working with nationally recognized psychologist Beth Dansie founder of The Psychological Services Group which provides psychological support services to law enforcement and fire agencies. Beth helped the department start a peer support program. The department contracts with PSG to provide mental health services to personnel.

a. Peer Support

Capt. Cox has been affiliated with the peer support program since its inception in 2011. Sgt. Gora joined the program in 2012 and has led the team for the past several years. Department peer support team members consist of sworn and professional staff who are nominated by their peers. PPD's team networks with

teams within and outside of Alameda County. They also partner with Public Safety Family Counseling Group. Peer supporters are available 24/7.

b. Officer Trauma

Sgt. Gora shared that 35% of law enforcement suffer from PTSD or PTSI. On average, officers experience more than 3 traumatic events every 6 months. In 2017, 129 officers died by suicide. In 2019, 228 officers died by suicide. As a profession, law enforcement is seeing an increase in medical retirements related to psychological injuries.

1. Cumulative and Event Specific

Sgt. Gora and Sgt. Albert shared some of their own experiences of trauma on the job. They provided an analogy of a new officer starting with an empty backpack. With each traumatic event experienced, a brick is added to the backpack, until it is too much for the officer to carry.

Sgt. Gora and Sgt. Albert are very proud of the culture shift at PPD relative to the stigma of mental health. They described how, for traumatic events, staff check in with the officers involved within eight hours. For large scale critical incidents, a Critical Incident Response debrief is held within 72 hours for all employees involved in the incident, including dispatchers. Each incident is unique, and each response is unique.

Officer wellness is critical and affects the employee's family as well as the community. It is also important for recruitment and officer retention.

2. Resources Available

In addition to peer support, clinicians specific to law enforcement are available to staff. The department has also started including families of employees in treatment. Clinicians also participate in the debriefs.

c. Community Trauma

Chief Swing spoke about how traumatic events, such as traffic accidents and critical incidents affect the community. CAB member Penney relayed that Axis Bridge is a resource for the community. CAB member Gallegos shared her own personal experience of trauma.

d. Discussion and Ideas

CAB member Foley was glad to hear that dispatchers and community service officers are included in the debriefs.

CAB member Penney, who specializes in the treatment of trauma, and who was involved in the formation of the Alternate Response Unit, stated that the department is doing a wonderful job. She suggested the department consider EMDR treatment as well. Overall, CAB members were pleased to hear how the

department is addressing the mental and physical health of employees and support efforts to treat trauma.

**V. Next Steps**

The next CAB meeting will be held Tuesday, November 22, 2022

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.