

Canton, Georgia

*110 Academy Street
Canton, Georgia 30114*



Minutes - Final - Final

Tuesday, April 27, 2021

6:30 PM

Virtual Joint Meeting with Public Safety Citizen Advisory Board

Public Call In: 1-617-675-4444 PIN: 400 070 103 2396#

Diversity and Inclusion Task Force

1. Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 6:35 pm. Present from Diversity and Inclusion Task Force: Hill, Reveles, Bird, Aragon, Slaughter. Present from Public Safety Citizen Advisory Board: Kalasky, Padgett-Harrison, Magee, Waterman, Busbee, Parham, and Kessler. Also present were Chief Stephen Merrifield and City Manager.

2. Presentation by Police Chief Stephen Merrifield to Discuss the Diversity of the Canton Police Department, Interactions with Diverse Populations, and Community Outreach

*Public Safety Citizen Advisory Board approved their last minutes (March 3, 2021)-
-Kalasky moved to approve, Waterman seconded and it passed unanimously.*

*Diversity and Inclusion Task Force approved their last minutes (March 16, 2021)-
-Hill moved to approve, Aragon seconded and it passed unanimously.*

Merrifield discussed the Canton Police Department's complaint process. He noted that certain complaints are handled through the routine chain of command, such as asking a supervisor to review complaints about courtesy or the discourse of an interaction. Complaints related to guilt of an individual are not handled by the Department but should follow the court process. The City also utilized an internal investigation process related to professionalism complaints. In 2020, Canton PD answered over 20,000 calls and there were only 9 complaints. None of the complaints were related to use of force.

Merrifield discussed the Canton Police Department's survey program. A volunteer conducts a review of around 100 surveys monthly from closed cases/citations or general contacts. The survey looks into the courtesy of the contact, resolution of the matter, and ability of the Department to provide respect. The Department routinely scores 95 percent or greater that agree with such statements.

Merrifield noted that the initiated contacts by the City matched generally the diversity of the population of the community and that data is required annually through the federal government.

Ms. Aragon asked about concerns related to the Hispanic Population. She asked about the Federal 287g Rule related to detaining undocumented immigrants. Merrifield noted that the Canton Police Department is not charged with handling federal immigration work. Mr. Kessler also noted that the County Detention Center is run by the Sheriff and that Cherokee County has no agreement to enforce 287g.

Merrifield noted that the Department has 57 employees. Of those, 9 are Hispanic in heritage, 2 are African American, and 10 are female. Several are bilingual.

Parham asked if the diverse employees were supported as it relates to mistrust in some racial groups. Merrifield noted that all of the employees, and especially the minority employees, are heavily involved in community policing and bring great attitudes to the hard work.

Hill noted that the Diversity group would like to begin hosting events soon to create more dialogue on diversity, including community dinners. Aragon stated it would be good to highlight the diversity of the Department on social media.

Kalasky stated that the Public Safety group would like to begin hosting community activities such as the Citizens Police Academy, Stop the Bleed, Active Shooter training, and other courses for the public.

Merrifield noted that the Department has had good luck working with local churches, including a recent Friends and Family Day with St. Paul AME. He noted that efforts are underway for a larger Friend and Family Day next April as well as a multicultural international day this August at Etowah River Park.

Bird stated that she would be happy to assist with the event planning and has resources. She also noted her appreciation for the Police Department social media work.

Kalasky suggested that the Department also continue working to get in front of local kids.

Padgett-Harrison suggested using the message boards to point to the Department's social media.

3. Adjourn

The group stood adjourned at 7:15 pm.