

**COMMUNITY HEALTH AND EQUITY  
COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEETING  
MARCH 29, 2021 2:00PM  
VIDEOCONFERENCE**

<b>Members Present:</b>	Councilmember Ana Sandoval, Chair, <i>District 7</i> Councilmember Robert Treviño, <i>District 1</i> Councilmember Jada Andrews-Sullivan, <i>District 2</i>
<b>Members Absent:</b>	Councilmember Rebecca Viagran, <i>District 3</i> Councilmember Shirley Gonzales, <i>District 5</i>
<b>Staff Present:</b>	David McCary, <i>Assistant City Manager</i> ; Monica Hernandez, <i>Assistant City Attorney</i> ; Alma Lozano, <i>Assistant City Attorney</i> ; Nancy Cano, <i>Office of the City Clerk</i>
<b>Others Present:</b>	Dr. Doshie Piper, <i>University of Incarnate Word</i> ; Christian Reed-Ogba, <i>Chief Operating Officer and Owner, EHCÜ Public Relations</i> ; Martin Henderson; Vanessa Westley, <i>Chicago Police Department</i>

**Call to order**

Chairwoman Sandoval called the meeting to order.

Chairwoman Sandoval reported that in June 2020, Mayor Nirenberg charged multiple Council Committees to provide an analysis on different issues. She added that this Committee was charged with reviewing best policing practices to help promote racial and gender equity across the community, and to review mental health de-escalation measures. She stated that the goal of today’s meeting was to open up the conversation about racial equity in policing that would inform recommendations to the FY 2022 City Budget.

Assistant City Manager David McCary reported that the Office of Equity (OOE) provided support and guidance in equity and had 50 City-wide Equity Committee Members and Equity Trainers to facilitate the City’s long term and short-term embedded equity goals across all City departments, including the Police (SAPD) and Fire (SAFD) Safety Departments. He noted that SAPD had 5 Equity Trainers and SAFD had 8 Equity Trainers that would undergo further training in May 2021. He explained that the Budget Equity Tool would allow the OOE to engage with all 39 City departments to promote equity, align department services with marginalized communities, and to re-align historic red-lining practices that occurred in the past to lessen their impact today and beyond. He added that each department would execute an equity work plan in conjunction with the OOE and the Office of Budget and Management to ensure that every City department understood its role and equity for FY 2022 and beyond.

Councilmember Andrews-Sullivan stated that the panelist speakers would provide insight and expertise knowledge in the areas of policing through the eyes of the community. She highlighted the City’s historic efforts to achieve equity when the City Council voted to declare racism a public health crisis on August 20, 2020.

Chairwoman Sandoval highlighted Dr. Piper's intimate experience with SAPD as a former member of the SAPD Chief's Advisory Action Board (CAAB) and for her work with the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing Implementation Committee which established the six pillars of professional policing in conjunction with her .

**1. A series of discussions on improving racial equity by policing by:**  
**A. Dr. Doshie Piper, University of Incarnate Word**

Dr. Piper reported that the way to move toward a more equitable policing was to incorporate practices that had already been tried and proven. She added that incorporating restorative justice in policing required Police Officers to be intentional in their approach, as follows:

- Building support
- Find natural allies
- Avoid being labeled
- Listen to those who disagree
- Put victims first
- Be firm on values and vision; be flexible on practice
- Be aware of assumptions and stereotypes

Dr. Piper stated that Police Officers should initiate outreach to individuals and communities that they did not typically engage with, which could appear to be controversial and conflicting at times. She explained that by being flexible in practice, police departments gained leeway; and by building a broad base of support for restorative justice principles and practices, police departments would cultivate natural allies and garner even more support. She noted that numerous community and advocacy organizations outside the criminal justice system were established to support racially marginalized and oppressed groups in fields. She referenced the Texas Organizing Project (TOP) which was founded on equity, and noted that its mission statement was to bring Black and Latino Texans together to fight for real change. Dr. Piper recognized the interfaith Community Action Network organization for its efforts to engage with Police Officers as equals with community members in participatory grassroots conversations.

Dr. Piper stated that it was necessary for correction agencies to invite community members and organizations to share input and feedback on discontent with police practices. She indicated that when correction agencies failed to extend such invitations, it indicated that they did not welcome input from the public, which would lead to community members and organizations imposing their input through protests.

Dr. Piper reported that restorative justice principles were implemented in many other systems, but were not commonly implemented in policing and the criminal justice system, nor in broader public policy. She noted that police departments were traditionally hierarchical organizations in nature and the restorative justice model called for a participatory approach in decision making, and patience during in the process was needed. She emphasized that every citizen should be given the opportunity to voice

their opinion of a community's vision of restorative justice and policing practices and the goal was to minimize the discrepancies between racial and ethnic groups and how they are policed.

## **B. Christian Reed-Ogba**

Christian Reed-Ogba recounted her personal experience with policing. She shared that she was an business entrepreneur originally from Detroit, Michigan and was now based in San Antonio for the past ten years. She stated that as a Black woman and business owner, she actively served as a member on several community boards throughout the City and among the Black community. She added that she served as a Panelist on a Board that included Police Chief McManus, and she was able to share offline discussions with him on profiling and policing on the Eastside, and how some of her hosted events were policed versus other events that she had attended in other parts of town that did not have police presence. She stated that Chief McManus introduced her to her neighborhood SAPD Safety Officer whom she invited to her home which was located in a mixed low-income housing and commercial area. She stated that the Police Officer was very pleasant except that he initially asked her and her husband if they had any weapons in the home and after a brief visit, they never heard from him again.

Ms. Reed-Ogba relayed a policing experience where she hosted a very popular high-profile public event series entitled, "Good People, San Antonio," that was sponsored by the City. She stated that Grammy-award winning artists were featured at the event held on the Hays Street Bridge and several adjacent streets. She pointed out that the City required her to secure six off-duty SAPD Officers for the event, which was the largest amount of Police Officers she ever had to hire for the numerous events she hosted on the most prosperous sides of town. She explained that due to an unknown logistical error, a total of twelve off-duty Officers from the Bexar County Sheriff's Office and SAPD worked the event in plainclothes. She stated that at midnight, several officers approached her and her husband and informed them that that if they did not pay the additional \$1,000 for the extra security that there would be a problem. She recounted how Police Officers refused to accept next day arrangements or payments by check and one Police Officer would distinctly cover his ID badge. She stated that she was given no alternative but to drive with a friend to a local ATM while the Police Officers detained her husband on the sidewalk and did not allow him to move from there which prevented him from overseeing event operations. She added that as soon as the Police Officers received their cash payment, they immediately left the event even though there were still at least 100 people in attendance. She reflected how on the next day, she realized how scary the situation was and what could have happened to her and her husband if they did not bring back cash to the Police Officers.

Ms. Reed-Ogba shared another incident wherein her downtown office was situated in the middle of rioters and protests in mid-June 2020 and she placed posters in her windows that said, "Protect Us Too," in reference to a large amount of SAPD Officers that were surrounding the Alamo to protect it, but SAPD offered no protection to her and other business owners situated between Travis Park and the Alamo. She conveyed that it felt like a slap in the face to move her business to downtown San Antonio so as to be active in the community and to not be protected by SAPD.

### **C. Martin Henderson**

Martin Henderson stated that he had experienced racial equity and policing from both sides of the fence. He recalled that in his younger years he did not have positive interactions with police and he was able to make choices later in life that afforded him the opportunity to help others while working in the field of violence protection. He added that he grew up on the Eastside and observed that policing tactics had not changed since the early 80's, and the only thing that had changed was that now everyone had smartphones and were able to capture policing on video. He recounted how police in his neighborhood would only watch individuals that loitered around convenience stores in high crime areas from a distance. He added that a Police Officer's badge and uniform spoke for itself and he felt that Police Officers should actively engage with such individuals by simply approaching them and communicating with them. He noted that residents in an urban community understood and respected the badge. Mr. Henderson called for effective communication in policing and stressed that it was not what was said, but how it was said that sent a message. He encouraged Police Officers to actively converse with persons loitering as they had a propensity to commit crime; once approached by an Officer, they would be identified and would leave the area.

Mr. Henderson reported that he had the opportunity to evaluate policing in Chicago and in Kansas City, and had worked with the Cure Violence Program. He observed that Kansas City Police Department utilized the Cure Violence Program and its Police Officers were aligned with their Chief of Police's endorsement of the Program. He encouraged Police Officers to engage with local advocacy groups and attend community events to gain a better understanding of local policing concerns.

### **D. Vanessa Westley, Chicago Police Department**

Vanessa Westley reported that the last 15 years of her 29-year veteran career with the Chicago Police Department as a community engagement strategist dedicated to community safety. She noted that the term, "public safety," implied that only one entity was responsible for keeping our communities safe. She explained that the reality was that not only Police Officers kept the public safe, but the community did so as well. She added that getting to know your neighbors, those who walked down your street, and watching children were all steps that improved public safety. She stated that the term, "community," was not just a geographic term, but described a place of belonging. She recounted how the Chicago Police Department realized that their local youths had no idea how to engage with Police Officers and took steps toward restorative justice in policing through a program she co-created called, "Bridging the Divide." She explained that the Program was a photo contest that called for Police Officers and local youths to submit photos that captured the two elements of safety and beauty, and over 270 photos were submitted by the Police Officers voluntarily. She observed that the teachable moment came to light when youths submitted many photos with the same images, which conveyed that the Police and the youths were more alike than different.

Ms. Westley noted that the photo contest model demonstrated that communication between Police Officers and local youths outside of a 9-1-1 crisis mode meant more to the youngsters than a 9-1-1 response and bridged a divide. She emphasized that when humanity was made a priority outside of

systemic controls, the policing landscape would change from rugged and dry to pliable and ready for change. She called for change, which was not only necessary, but was very possible, and not easy. She stated that it was the people that Police Officers served that were the experts in change and solutions, and they needed a voice in co-creating strategies without the systemic helicoptering of ideas and change that was brought about without community input. Ms. Westley urged public servants to look at policing through the lens of residents.

Chairwoman Sandoval noted that progress in policing and racial equity could not be accomplished without dialogue between the community, SAPD Officers, and SAPD Command staff. She requested that Assistant City Manager McCary coordinate outreach with City Manager Erik Walsh and Deputy City Manager Maria Villagómez.

Chairwoman Sandoval expressed concern on how progress could go forward in the future beyond the adoption of the FY 2022 City Budget and collaborative joint efforts between the Office of Equity and community groups and task forces would be key partnerships. She noted that Rome was not built in a day and there were thousands of SAPD Police Officers in need of revisiting how to engage with the community.

Chairwoman Sandoval recommended that restorative justice principals and youth circle-keeping models be referred to the Public Safety Committee as topics that were worthy of further exploration.

Councilmember Treviño stated that Debbie Bush, aunt of Marcus Jones, recounted to him that his family had to hear of his death on television and that she could not understand how something as difficult as a death could not be directly communicated to them by SAPD or a City official. He requested that Assistant City Manager McCary relay Ms. Bush's powerful message to Deputy City Manager Villagómez. He expressed that he was confounded by her story and it was painful to think about family members having to experience such a tragedy. He recited a quote from the American novelist James Baldwin, "...If one really wishes to know how justice is administered in this country, ... one goes to the unprotected and listens to their testimony."

Ms. Reed-Ogba noted that by SAPD Officials confirming the death of Mr. Jones directly to the media instead of to his family first, it was a silent way of saying that "these lives didn't matter."

Ms. Westley stated that as society changed, policing changed; and as a result, one-on-one communication with a personal aspect was lost. She noted that Chicago PD utilized victim advocate specialists to intercede on behalf of their detectives to communicate with families.

Dr. Piper concurred that such policing protocols discounted humanity and the life of a person that was suspected of having a weapon. She observed that many families suffered through the same experience of their loved one being labeled and dehumanized. She noted the opportunity for outreach to the family to try to reconcile some of their grief.

Mr. Henderson noted from experience that Police Officers and Police Departments often modeled the traditional responses of their predecessors with the belief that apologies were a sign of weakness in law enforcement.

Councilmember Andrews-Sullivan reported that Council District 2 received an outpouring of emails in the month of July 2020 alone from families that still sought a phone call from a detective for status in their loved one's case, and those families were re-victimized when they had to fight for the information they needed. She noted that SAPD could do better by the families. She asked the panelists for available data that reflected a reduction in inequities through restorative justice. Dr. Piper referenced the My Brother's Keeper Initiative which contained research and data on restorative practices and youth initiatives; she provided other information and said she would follow up with additional data.

Councilmember Andrews-Sullivan proposed the utilization of the City's asset forfeiture program as a budget process for the creation of a youth initiative program to provide a platform for youth to speak on policing, mental health and racial equity and provide restorative justice procedures.

Ms. Westley stated that the Chicago PD did not have a line item budget for their restorative justice program for youths when it was first established. She explained that each of their Council Districts identified a delegate agency within their districts to partner with and the program was funded through a collaborative effort of all the participating agencies collectively contributing to form a budget.

Councilmember Gonzales noted that investment funding to delegate agencies and non-profit partners was needed in order to affect change in the community. She added that community input was needed for input on expectations and funding.

Mr. Henderson noted that smaller non-profit organizations encountered challenges with rigorous bureaucratic processes and it would be beneficial to revamp funding processes as needed.

Chairwoman Sandoval encouraged the Committee Members to reviewing the recommended reading materials previously provided to them by the panelists. She invited the panelists to provide closing remarks.

Ms. Westley called for the Committee to remain encouraged through the implementation process which would take time.

Mr. Henderson stated that he looked forward to seeing the change and offered his assistance to take part in any way he could as much work needed to be done.

Ms. Reed-Ogba urged the Committee to examine all levels of police interaction, not just within a policing respond mode. She encouraged the Committee to stay alert of voices of the residents shared and heard through social media postings and hashtags.

Dr. Piper reminded the Committee and panelists that restorative policing and restorative practices did not undermine procedural justice. She stated that SAPD was very vocal about engaging in compassionate policing and observed that police officers were human, and their roles as social creatures within the community did not detract from their roles in law enforcement.

**Adjourn**

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 9:01 pm.

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*Ana Sandoval, Chair*

*Respectfully Submitted,*

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*Nancy Cano, Office of the City Clerk*

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