



Legislation Text

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TITLE:

Follow up on Community Forum on Policing in Carrboro

PURPOSE: The purpose of this item is to provide an update on the community forum and the next steps planned.

DEPARTMENT: Police Department

CONTACT INFORMATION: Chief Walter Horton, 919-918-7397

INFORMATION: On October 6, 2014, a Community Forum on Policing in Carrboro was held and provided an opportunity for positive dialogue and exchange of information between citizens of Carrboro and members of the Carrboro Police Department. Numerous questions and topics were raised, however a few recurring themes were recognized by the police department, the Town Manager's Office, and the forum mediator, Andy Sachs. They are listed below including steps for an Action Plan.

1) Racial Equity Training of Police Personnel

Carrboro Police Department administrators are attending the Racial Equity Workshop sponsored by Organizing Against Racism (OAR) on December 1-2 2014. The police department is also researching other trainings including the Fair and Impartial Policing program suggested by Public Defender James Williams (see Attachment A). Since there is substantial costs for this particular training, CPD has started discussions with other local police departments to share costs and broaden the availability to all police officers.

2) Racial Profiling and Bias in the Police Department

In addition to racial equity training, the police department is looking at what data is collected by CPD and how it is entered in to their Records Management System (RMS) to address the issue of racial profiling and bias. By recording with more detail, the police department can compile more accurate statistical data that can identify if profiling within the police department exists and allow us to alter policing methods to prevent this practice. The police department also plans to meet with the Public Defender's office to discuss and learn more about the data referenced during the forum and using it to help improve CPD record keeping.

3) Fear of Police by People of Color

The Carrboro Police Department will meet with members of the local NAACP chapter and various church groups to plan a discussion between police officers and target groups (e.g. young black males, the Latino community). The focus of these conversations will be to open a dialog between those who fear the police and the officers in the community and will establish a better understanding of each other.

4) Community & Citizen Engagement

While ideas of a Citizen Review Board were carefully considered by the Carrboro Police Department and other senior administration, other methods of community & citizen engagement are effective in creating a positive relationship between police and citizens. Collaboration between the two groups is an effective public safety strategy that can also increase the accountability of police officers and members of the community. Collaborative efforts, if implemented effectively, can reduce crime, address social concerns, and build community trust. Therefore, CPD plans to take the following courses of action.

Very positive feedback from community members touts its success and the need to continue the practice in the future. The police department plans to have recurring community forums twice a year. The next forum is tentatively scheduled for June 2015. The next forum will provide an update of these steps in the action plan.

The police department also plans to contact neighborhood associations, neighborhood watch groups, and other community groups to see if they are interested in police department representatives attending some of their meetings. This will allow more personal and direct contact with officers and an opportunity for citizens to discuss problems or concerns they have about policing in Carrboro and other issues specific to that particular neighborhood.

In the future, the Carrboro Police Department would also like to implement a Citizen's Academy to educate interested community members on police practices and policing in Carrboro.

In the short term, CPD will gather questions from the forum and other general questions regarding police practices and create an FAQ section on our website for citizens to easily reference.

5) Restorative Justice

Carrboro Police Department and other Town Staff recognize the value of restorative justice as a criminal justice system. However, this is best addressed and implemented in the court system. CPD will engage in conversation and collaboration with the Public Defender's office and Orange County court system on the topic to the fullest extent.

The Carrboro Police Department takes the questions and concerns raised by the citizens at the community forum very seriously and have given careful consideration to this follow-up Action Plan. It is our goal to continue to effectively communicate with the citizens and form partnerships within the community. We will provide updates on our progress in these matters periodically.

FISCAL & STAFF IMPACT: Fiscal and staff impacts, as yet undetermined in extent, can be anticipated from implementation of the goals and strategies.

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends the Board to accept this update