



City of Columbia, Missouri

Meeting Minutes - Draft

Citizens Police Review Board

Thursday, September 14, 2023

6:00 PM

Work Session

Conference Room

1A/1B

Columbia City Hall

701 E. Broadway

I. CALL TO ORDER

Board Members Present: Brandon Barnes, Stephanie Coleman, Reece Ellis, Douglas Hunt, Cheryl Miller, Xavier Lee Scruggs, and Jamie Thornsberry

Excused Absence: Rhonda Carlson and Steven Jeffrey

Unexcused Absence: None

Staff Present: Sgt. Julie Ray, Officer Adam Ward, Toni Messina, De'Andre Thompson, and Rose Wibbenmeyer

Councilpersons Nick Foster and Betsy Peters were present.

Members of the public were present.

Reece Ellis called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

II. Welcome and Introductions

Reece Ellis welcomed attendees and there were introductions.

III. Discussion of the Following Topics:

Review of Policy 300

Attachments: [Police Policy 300](#)

Officer Ward displayed the current policy 300. Reece Ellis asked about the last review date of 2021. Reese Ellis asked upon what they modeled the policy. Officer Ward discussed the police department's former use of Lexipol and the police department's current research into best practices in policy development. Officer Ward also discussed CALEA accreditation.

Attendees discussed their views on policy 300.

Reece Ellis asked about the choke hold policy.

Reece Ellis asked when the different portions of the policy were put into place. Officer Ward said that he can pull up the archive documents.

Reece Ellis asked if the City could have a more restrictive policy than state law.

Doug Hunt asked what happens after the Board makes a recommendation to the police chief and the city manager. Doug Hunt asked if the Board can see how the board's recommendations get incorporated into the policy. Officer Ward said that there is not a formal process for the public to provide input into the policy. Officer Ward explained the internal process for police officers to make suggestions for policy changes. Brandon Barnes commented that Officer Ward's description of the process did not include any public input in the process. Officer Ward confirmed that the police department's internal processes did not provide any opportunity for the public to provide input into proposed policy changes.

Cheryl Miller asked about notice. Reece Ellis said that he would like to request public input into the policy review process. Sgt. Ray said that years ago there were some public meetings on police policies. Susan Renee Carter said that she attended some of the meetings until the pandemic and then the meetings were discontinued because of the pandemic.

Brandon Barnes asked about the definition of de-escalation in the police department's policy. He said there is a large chasm as to what an officer considers de-escalation compared to the citizens view of de-escalation. Jamie Thornsberry said it was in policy 300.3. Brandon Barnes said that what they are seeing in the videos may meet this definition of de-escalation, but not be what the public believes is de-escalation. Brandon Barnes said that the policy and ethos is escalation from the citizens perspectives.

Susan Renee Carter said that under the PERF standards de-escalation would be communication, distance, not by taking control and escalating the situation. Anthony Willroth said that the definitions need to be clarified. Chriss Jones said that de-escalation needs to include falling back and not holding your ground if that is PERF's definitions of best practices.

Brandon Barnes said this is great, but is the department willing to listen and maybe make some policy changes. Stephanie Coleman said that this is our hope that the police department will listen. Brandon Barnes said that he believes the citizens will want that in a new police chief.

Rebecca Shaw said in 300.2 it says "when possible". Rebecca Shaw commented that the very first act should be to de-escalate because it is safer for the officer and the citizens. Susan Renee Carter said that she was trained to step back first, lower your voice, keep at a safe distance. Susan Renee Carter said that approach helps people to

calm down. Susan Renee Carter said the training should include how they approach.

Brandon Barnes said that the police officers have annual training on de-escalation. At Brandon Barnes' request, Officer Ward explained some of the terms referred to in the police department's definition of de-escalation. Officer Ward explained that command presence may mean making yourself loud and vocal or making yourself bigger. Tactical repositioning could mean falling back, going forward, or something else. Officer Ward says it depends on how the officer interprets it. Brandon Barnes said he thought it was a great answer because Officer Ward said it. Brandon Barnes asked about how much they are trained annually on de-escalation.

Reece Ellis asked about the evolution of the definitions.

Mehrdad Footingham asked about a company out of Utah and the Boone County Sheriff's Department.

Officer Ward said he thinks that the police department moved away from Lexipol to develop more unique policies.

Mehrdad Footingham recommended the Board to be involved in making corrections.

Jamie Thornsberry asked about the process for changing the policies. Officer Ward explained the internal process. Doug Hunt said that the process Officer Ward described does not begin with citizen input. Doug Hunt suggested thinking very hard about how to integrate input from citizens to the police department so that the citizens are heard. Doug Hunt said that most of their recommendations have arisen out of things they are seeing by auditing the files. Jamie Thornsberry said that the board picked these policies based upon what they are seeing in the audits.

Anthony Willroth asked about the second paragraph of 300.2. He wondered how the severity of the crime committed should be factored into the use of force.

Reece Ellis read from the Las Vegas police department's policy related to least amount of force. Reece Ellis said that the police department's policies do not have the least amount of force language. Susan Renee Carter and Anthony Willroth concurred.

Susan Renee Carter said the courts look at the policies and trainings when evaluating the officer's conduct.

Cheryl Miller felt that the policy was so vague. Stephanie Coleman said the definitions should be clearer to help citizens understand.

De'Andre Thompson commented on his research on the use of force continuum and mentioned an example from Tacoma, Washington, and felt that such an approach can provide clarity on what that means. De'Andre Thompson said he is working with the police department's diversity equity and inclusion officer on this research.

Rebecca Shaw cautioned to consider people who are not able to comply. Susan Renee Carter said she believes it is redefining what our expectations are.

Reece Ellis referred to 300.2, and what he has found in other communities and how it compares to the police department's policy. Several members of the public discussed examples of problematic police interactions.

Doug Hunt suggested highlighting the expectation and then go into the policy.

Reece Ellis asked about retaliation anywhere else in the policy book. Officer Ward and Sgt. Ray said policy 1020, and that it may also be mentioned somewhere else within the policies.

Sgt. Ray introduced Toni Messina to talk about community meetings. Reece Ellis suggested that there be a public input process like the federal agency, and that the public input process occur prior to the police chief approving the policy. Toni Messina explained the old process. Reece Ellis said that the Board could make some suggestions on policies. Toni Messina also discussed using BeHeard Columbia for providing notice and obtaining feedback.

Mehrdad Footingham felt that the culture of law enforcement is to not correct the officers but rather try and cover it up. Mehrdad Footingham said citizen input is needed. (Toni Messina left the meeting at 7:12 p.m.)

Mehrdad Footingham said that the board does not have real authority and the board should have more authority. Chriss Jones said that the city council has a model change pending before them. Chriss Jones said that the community needs to start pushing for the model change again because the board and the police department need to be equal partners. Susan Renee Carter and Mehrdad Footingham agreed.

At 7:16 p.m. Reece Ellis declared that there would be a break until 7:30 p.m.

The meeting resumed at 7:32 p.m. Reece Ellis discussed section 300.10, rendering medical aid. Reece Ellis suggested language from Las Vegas, officers will not restrain subjects in a manner which compromises their ability to breathe. Chriss Jones and Susan Renee Carter concurred with Reece Ellis' suggestions.

Chriss Jones suggested use of will rather than shall. Sgt. Ray referenced policy number 306.4.4. Susan Renee Carter suggested more will and less shall.

Chriss Jones talked about chemical agents and the use of chemical agents around children. Chriss Jones suggested to be mindful of use of chemical agents around asthmatics and children. Reese Ellis said that some departments had language about use of chemical agents around innocent bystanders.

Cheryl Miller said the word "shall" is too vague and felt that "will" has more mandate. Doug Hunt said "must" could be used.

Reece Ellis discussed choke holds and how the policy describes choke holds. Reece Ellis felt that the language in 300.13.1.c should be revised by striking through everything after prohibited.

Chriss Jones says one hour a year of mandatory de-escalation training is insufficient and would prefer one hour per quarter on de-escalation.

Brandon Barnes would like to see what de-escalation training looks like. Chriss Jones agreed. Doug Hunt said that he will be attending the training sessions upcoming and may have insight for the board. Susan Renee Carter said that most de-escalation training is 8 hours for the first training and four hours each year thereafter per PERF.

Review of Policy 447

Attachments: [Police Policy 447](#)

This item was not discussed.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

Reece adjourned the meeting at 7:55 pm.