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New policing recommendations approved encourage transparency, public engagement

By Pippa Fisher



Photo Pippa Fisher

the death of George Floyd at the hands of police officers in Minneapolis in May. It was the second meeting of a specially formed task force.

City Council Member Cam Burks explained that, although this task force focuses on the police and is separate from the newly formed racial equity task force, it would feed into the latter.

City Council Member Steven Bliss acknowledged the value of having a deep conversation around the subject. "It is a very important dialogue," he said.

Alldritt answered questions at the July 21 meeting arising from a previous meeting and from the deluge of emails from the public, including explaining current training programs, the procedure for hiring police officers and their diversity, how complaints are handled, requests for public oversight committees, mental health training and responses, and the budget.

Srivatsa explained the public safety subcommittee would be holding open meetings quarterly to receive updates, increasing opportunities for interaction with the police chief, herself and the subcommittee members.

The chief will also submit a quarterly, rather than annual, summary report to the council and the public, allowing for increased transparency.

In the area of mental health, Srivatsa is working with the County Public Managers Association and the County Health Department to explore alternatives to law-enforcement responses to mental health issues.

With increased accountability the goal, in the event of an internal affairs complaint filed against a police officer, the city manager would meet with the chief when the complaint is filed and at the conclusion of the sheriff's internal affairs investigation.

The chief will evaluate adding additional training to the department's current mandatory courses in crisis intervention, de-escalation, implicit bias, and cultural and racial diversity through the sheriff's office. Alldritt said he hopes to come back with a specific plan in three months.

As with the previous subcommittee meeting, robust attendance included plenty of public comment. Burks and Bliss have both said it's very clear a large part of this involves listening.

As Burks observed, between the two meetings there had been over five hours of discussion, "And it's just a start. It's moving in the right direction."

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