

**Public Safety Advisory Commission – Columbus, GA**  
Monthly Meeting Minutes

**Date:** 4/21/2022  
**Location:** Virtual Meeting  
**Start time:** 4:00 PM  
**Adjournment time:** 4:55 PM  
**Next meeting:** May 19, 2022  
**Meeting Recorder:** Annalisa Shelling

**Members Present:**

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| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> David Rohwedder, Chair | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Donald Watkins  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pete Temesgen, Vice-Chair         | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Stan Swiney     |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Byron Hickey           | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lisa Branchcomb |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Belvin Millner         | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alexander King  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Scott Taft             |   |

David Rohwedder opened the meeting. He spoke about the SWOT Analysis and how one of the main concerns of the Columbus Police Department was the District Attorney. He mentioned that Stacy Jackson has recently been appointed to be the District Attorney. Donald Watkins stated that this will be good to have someone that supports law enforcement. David mentioned the Columbus Police Department's Retention Committee. He emailed a copy of the Retention Committee's suggestions to all members of the PSAC. Donald Watkins stated that one of the suggestions (facial hair) could be removed from the suggestions now. He stated that CPD is now allowing beards. He also mentioned that CPD needs to consider improved police uniforms.

The City Council Meeting that included Lt. Ralph Dowe's FOP Survey Presentation was mentioned by Donald Watkins. He stated that the FOP's Survey Report was sent to Mayor Henderson prior to that meeting. He also stated that Chief Blackmon should have known what would have been mentioned at that council meeting. Byron Hickey stated that during the meeting the City Manager and the Mayor deflected what was really being said and pulled the race card.

David Rohwedder stated that the mission of the Public Safety Advisory Commission is to make recommendations. He stated that he considered doing Open Records Requests to see how far back the retention issues go. He stated that this is not a shot at Chief Blackmon. He would like to make recommendations to

Chief Blackmon, Mayor Henderson, and the City Council to administer a survey “the right way” by the PSAC.

Stan Swiney stated that he feels the working relationship between the Columbus Police Department and the Muscogee County Sheriff’s Office could be better. It was stated that the relationship between the two agencies has never been good, even with the previous administration.

Byron Hickey stated that we have a public safety issue. He stated that this issue affects officers and citizens in our community. He feels the reality is something is going on with retention and the PSAC needs to get to the bottom of it. He stated that the number of officers on the street is a huge concern and if an officer gets hurt or killed the commission will think “what could we have done to prevent this?” Byron stated that his wife is a police officer that testifies in serious murder cases, and he also worries for her safety. He stated that he feels it is time for the PSAC to go before City Council. He stated that he would like the PSAC to get on the Mayor’s Agenda not the Public Agenda.

Byron stated that he saw a billboard on Manchester Expressway advertising for East Point Police with a starting salary of \$55k. He stated that Columbus has completed several pay studies in the past, and nothing was ever done with the study results. He stated that there is money to fix the pay compression issues, and it is just not being done.

Donald Watkins stated that he would like to know where all of the funds from 2009 – Present OLOST are? He stated that he had a conversation with Councilor House about OLOST.

Alexander King stated that the PSAC should be able to provide resources and recommendations / ideas to public safety.

David Rohwedder suggested that he could write a letter to Mayor Henderson, City Council, and Chief Blackmon. This letter would state the concerns of the PSAC, discuss what the commission feels should happen, and discuss issues of the retention problem. He stated that this is not about attacks on Chief Blackmon. He stated that PSAC is a group of citizens that cares about public safety. He also stated that the commission is diverse, and this is not racially or politically motivated.

Each member of the PSAC that was present for the meeting agreed with the letter being written. No one opposed. Each member agreed to sign the letter. Donald Watkins stated that the letter should give a timeline and then all information should go public. Then it was suggested a 90 day period for the city to review it. Byron stated that he feels there should be a 30 day time frame. Lisa Branchcomb stated that she felt maybe a 60 day time frame would be good. Members then stated it would probably take 30 days just to get the letter prepared and then the city would need additional time to respond. Byron stated that he didn't feel this should drag out.

Meeting Adjourned at 4:55 PM