

CITY COUNCIL CONFERENCE MINUTES

December 14, 2021

The City Council of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met in a conference at 5:30 p.m. in the Municipal Building Executive Conference room on the 14th day of December, 2021, and notice and agenda of the meeting were posted at the Municipal Building at 201 West Gray 24 hours prior to the beginning of the meeting.

PRESENT:	Councilmembers Foreman, Hall, Holman, Lynn, Peacock, Schueler, Studley, Tortorello, Mayor Clark
ABSENT:	None

Item 1, being:

PRESENTATION FROM THE CENTER FOR POLICING EQUITY REGARDING DATA COLLECTED FROM THE NORMAN POLICE DEPARTMENT.

Mr. Kevin Foster, Police Chief, said the Norman Police Department (NPD) has been working with the Center for Policing Equality (CPE) since 2018, who has been examining data provided in the NPD's Open Data Portal over the last few years. He said tonight, CPE representatives will be presenting their report findings. He said the report revealed some significant successes for NPD and understanding that disparities exist in our society is one thing, but getting to the root cause of these disparities is much more difficult. He said there is a myriad of complex social issues that have led to disparities in Norman's society and pinpointing items that may help mitigate these disparities is a monumental task. He said the NPD is committed to looking at and analyzing its data to determine if there are steps NPD can take to improve the department. The rarity of incidents involving force and the low levels of severity contained in the data demonstrates the departments commitment to protecting life and preserving human dignity. He is excited about the report and looks forward to continuing NPD's relationship with the University of Oklahoma (OU) School of Social Work to dig further into the data. He said there is a quote from the President's Commission on Law Enforcement that talks to the enormity of this and where law enforcement falls in social issues that states, "The fact is, of course, that even under the most favorable circumstances, the ability of the police to act against crime is limited. The police did not create and cannot resolve the social conditions that stimulate crime. They did not start and cannot stop the convulsive social changes that are taking place in America. They do not enact the law they are required to enforce nor do they depose the criminals they arrest. The police are only one part of the criminal justice system, the criminal justice system is only one part of the government, and the government is only one part of our society." He introduced Mr. Shawn Eldridge, CPE Implementation Specialist, to present information to Council.

Mr. Eldridge introduced CPE colleague presenters as Mr. Christopher Mebius, Data Acquisition Manager, Ms. Lucy Odigie-Turley, Editorial Director, and Mr. Jiadi Chang, Community Engagement Coordinator. He said other colleagues on hand to answer any question that may arise include Dr. Kerry Mulligan Vice President of Data Driven Interventions and Mr. Michal Burbank, Senior Director of Law Enforcement Initiatives.

Mr. Eldridge said tonight Council will be presented information regarding CPE's partnership with NPD and department context; overview of the Data Gap Analysis; overview of Justice Navigator findings and resources; and next steps and recommendations. He said CPE conducts work powered by science; produces analyses identifying and reducing causes of racial disparities in public safety and advocates for large-scale and meaningful change; uses data to build a fairer and just system; partners with law enforcement and communities; and aims to bridge the divide of communication, intergenerational mistrust, and pain.

Mr. Eldridge said CPE and NPD have been working together since July 2018, and partnered to examine policing practices and behavior from January 1, 2016, to June 20, 2020, as well as to participate in the National Justice Database (NJD). The NJD is the largest collection of recorded police behaviors as it relates to the outcome of interaction with citizens with the idea to build trust and confidence back into the law enforcement community. He said CPE analyzed data provided by NPD with the goal of examining whether some racial groups in Norman experience more frequent or burdensome police contact than other groups, identifying any racial disparities in police interactions with the community, and providing areas for further investigation that NPD can use to address any identified disparities. The results of the study show racial disparities in NPD interactions with community members in use of force during the study period. He said NPD serves a community of roughly 128,000 people and employs over 164 sworn police officers.

Mr. Mebius said incident data requested from NPD includes: When - date/time; Where - street address/coordinates; Why - reason for stop, reason for search, etc.; What - arrest, use of force, citation, etc.; and Who - race, ethnicity, gender, etc. The Data Acquisition Team reviews the data and asks the department questions, such as what Column A represents, what do these values mean, and why are some data points missing? The Data Acquisition Team compiles a Data Gap Analysis to compare data provided to data requested and determines which research questions likely can be answered based on the data provided. Norman's Data Gap Analysis summary on traffic stops shows demographics (i.e., race, ethnicity, gender, etc.) of people stopped were available when a misdemeanor municipal ordinance violation occurred; however, the data did not include demographics for stops resulting in other dispositions (e.g., arrests, no action, etc.). In order to analyze stop data, CPE requires every stop, regardless of the result and the race of each person stopped.

Ms. Odigie-Turley said in regard to use of force, required data was provided for four out of five sets of analyses. Analyses by work unit and race was not possible because the following variables were not available, 1) patrol beat (A, B, etc.) and 2) officer assignment (patrol, traffic, enforcement, etc.). When analyzing use of force, key questions include the following:

- Who was subjected to force?
- Was there a difference between racial groups in the rate and types of force?
- How much of the racial disparity can be explained by crime rates, poverty rates, and neighborhood demographics?
- How much of the racial disparity is not explained by these three factors?

Between 2016 and 2019, NPD recorded a total of 267 use of force incidents and the number of use of force incidents recorded each year with complete data varies from a low of 49 in 2016, to a high of 65 in 2019. The use of force incidents by racial group includes 17% of all use of force incidents recorded between 2016 and 2020 were against black people who made up 4.7% of the population of Norman; 3.4% of all use of force incidents recorded between 2016 and 2020 were against Latinx people, who made up 8% of the population of Norman; 4.1% of all use of force incidents recorded between 2016 and 2020 were against Native people, who made up 3.6% of the population of Norman; and 71% of all use of force incidents recorded between 2016 and 2020 were against white people, who made up 72% of the population of Norman.

Statistical analysis showed that neighborhood crime rates, poverty, and share of black residents explained 50% of the frequency of use of force while 50% was not explained by these factors. Ms. Odigie-Turley said not all factors are in the control of the agency, but those in control of the agency may be a question of policy or culture. The most common force types recorded overall were Takedown, Taser Discharge, and Holds. Black people were more frequently subjected to force in incidents involving all of the three most commonly recorded force types, relative to their size in population.

Next steps include how to understand your local police department, a glossary of terms, which law enforcement agency or agencies work in the community, and identifying risk factors and develop targeted interventions.

Mr. Eldridge said CPE met with a wide range of community members, many of whom are involved with nonprofits, business, government, and community service. He said CPE intended to meet with as many community members as possible and made sure to meet with people from groups most impacted by disparities in policing. He said next steps will include diving deeper into the data, connecting with and listening to the community, and investing in existing resources.

Chief Foster said NPD accepts some of the CPE findings, but is disappointed the NJD platform does not provide additional information beyond what was made available in the open data portal since 2016. He said NPD has done some great work over the last few years that includes responding to 428,000 calls for service and within these calls of service, NPD used force 267 times, which is 0.6% of the time force was used. He said this number is so low, it cannot be said that it is representative of the larger community and the department staff is working with OU who have stated they would not be able to publish the findings due to the low numbers. He said the low number of incidents and low severity, shows that training and de-escalation strategies are working. He said officer's descriptive characteristics, such as age, years of employment, and race, played no role in the use of force, which again show great training and field supervision is the cause of consistency between age and years employed. He said in NPD's partnership with OU it was determined that racial disparity and use of force reports were found in three key areas, 1) calls for disturbance, 2) suspicious person call, and 3) call to a fight. He said suspicious person calls were really more disparity against whites and disparity of color happened in fight calls and disturbance calls. He said these low yearly totals show that NPD is 586 times more likely not to use force than to use force and on fight calls officers are 148 times more likely not to use force than to use force. This also shows that training and de-escalation strategies are working.

Chief Foster said NPD is trying to determine actions it can take that may reduce some of the disparities that are occurring in the community. He said one action can be reaching out to the community to improve relationships, and hopefully, reduce fear and mistrust. This is one reason for the recent restructure to form the Community and Staff Services Bureau and the Community Outreach Division within this Bureau is tasked with reaching out to the community and working with them to address crime, fear of crime, and other social harms in the community. He stressed that there are many things that contribute to disparities in policing, in medicine, in education, in social services, in government, etc. He said this does not necessarily mean there is something wrong with the people in an organization or with the organization itself. He said NPD is not afraid to put its data out there to work with its partners to determine if there are things it can do better and ways it can improve to make the community safer. What NPD does not like is some media outlets and individuals trying to sensationalize data and draw their own conclusions for attention or clicks on a website. He said all this does is induce more fear and separation in the community and that is not helping. He said nobody is perfect and NPD officers make mistakes, but when mistakes are made officers are held accountable based on a totality of the circumstances that happened. He said police officers are held to a very high standard and Norman employs some of the best police officers in the nation; however, NPD has fired or suspended officers when necessary. The goal is to make a safer and better community and citizens need to know NPD will continue to do everything possible to keep them safe regardless of any circumstance.

Councilmembers thanked Chief Foster and representatives of CPE for their presentation and some have concerns regarding the unexplained (50%) use of force data, but found the overall information helpful. Councilmember Lynn was disappointed in how the data was presented and suggested the same information could have been provided in a different form and would tell an entirely different story. They commended NPD for taking steps to address disparity issues.

Items submitted for the record

1. PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Norman Police Department: Justice Navigator Assessment," prepared by Center for Policing Equity dated December 14, 2021

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The meeting was adjourned at 6:29 p.m.

ATTEST:

City Clerk

Mayor