



**PUBLIC SAFETY COMMISSION  
MINUTES**

**REGULAR MEETING  
Monday, November 2, 2020**

**The Public Safety Commission convened a videoconferencing meeting Monday, November 2, 2020 at City Hall 301 W. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street in Austin, Texas.**

**Commissioner Gonzales** called the Board Meeting to order at 3:04p.m, and took a moment to thank Commissioner Lane for reminding her of Transgender Day on November 20, 2020. She shared a couple of readings about Transgender Day that explained the contributions and importance of why this day is celebrated.

**Board Members in Attendance:**

Rebecca Gonzales

Kathleen Hausenfluck

Nelly Ramirez

Rebecca Webber

Rocky Lane

Daniela Nunez

**Board Members Absent:** Chris Harris and Rebecca Bernhardt and William Kelly

**Staff in Attendance:**

Troy Gay, Chief of Staff, Austin Police Department

Jasper Brown, Chief of Staff, Austin/Travis County Emergency Medical Services

Rob Vires, Chief of Staff, Austin Fire Department

**Public Communications** - Citizens signed up to speak on agenda items only:

There were no citizens signed up to speak.

- 1. Approval of Minutes** – Commissioner Gonzales asked for comments/edits of the October 5, 2020 Public Safety Commission meeting minutes. Hearing no edits or corrections to the minutes, Commissioner Gonzales deemed the minutes approved.

## 2. OLD BUSINESS

### a. Proposed Decommissioning and Reusing Land at Austin Police Department

**Headquarters** (sponsors: Commissioner Gonzales and Webber) 3:25pm-3:55pm

#### **Speakers:**

- Connor Kenny, Past Chair Planning Commission
- Pete Valdez, Director of Downtown Austin Community Court

**Connor Kenny** introduced **Pete Valdez** and asked that he begin his presentation on what is the role of the Community Court and the type of services the court currently provides to the community. Pete commented the Community Court is a court of law, and in addition to the primary function is a social services provider. There are various services the Community Court provides:

- Some of the homeless they encounter have a criminal background that go beyond a Class C Misdemeanor; which means they must be served in a different/higher court of law.
- Community Court funds some support of 59 housing units where they can directly place homeless individuals.
- In 2016 the Downtown Austin Community Court became a member of the HOST (Homeless Outreach Street Team)
- Current wait list for case management is over 200 people

Pete introduced Alex Gale with City of Austin Real Estate Department and asked that he share the current efforts underway to lease a larger building as a future home for the Community Court. Gale commented the Real Estate department has submitted a 10 year lease with option to buy at the end of the lease on the November 12, 2020 council agenda for approval by city council. The location of the lease is on East 2<sup>nd</sup> street and would become the new home for the Community Court if approved by council. This lease building space would allow for possibly some other agencies to be housed there and allow for Community Court to offer some daytime services.

Questions from the board:

What is the number of case managers needed to get 200 people off of the waiting list?  
**(Webber)** Response: 8-9 additional case managers would be needed **(Pete Valdez)**

If the lease is not approved during November 12, 2020 council meeting, would there be a new line of a lease? DTACC needs are more immediate than the timeframe of re-imagining of APD Headquarters building? **(Ramirez)**

Could additional case managers be housed someplace else in the meantime? **(Webber)**  
Future case managers could become mobile in city vehicles and that would allow them to go into the community. **(Pete Valdez)**

**Connor Kenny** asked if the Community Court could be removed from the list of possibly using APD Headquarters with the lease for a new building to house the court almost finalized.

There was continued discussion on what to consider going forward on the planning of reuse of the headquarters building and what the board should consider going forward.

### 3. NEW BUSINESS

**a. Public Safety Organizations Quarterly Report – Austin Fire Department (sponsors: Commissioner Hausenfluck and Gonzales) 3:55pm-4:10pm**

**Speaker:**

**-Chief of Staff Rob Vires, Austin Fire Department**

**Chief Vires** presented the Austin Fire Department’s 4Q FY2019 and FY2020 comparisons. The call volume has decreased by roughly 4% and can be attributed to COVID-19 pandemic. Things like cancellation of large events, teleworking reduced traffic, limited capacity for shopping and dining are all results/effects from the pandemic.

**The opening of Station 49** in April 2019 helped to reduce response times by a minute.

**The opening of Station 50** in July 2020 proved to be a significant cost savings to the community due to an improved insurance rating with the addition of a fire station.

The **Travis County Fire Station** update was as of September 2020 , Travis Country is on schedule after a groundbreaking in June 2020.

**Automatic Aid-** this program that will allow for the dispatching of calls across jurisdictional lines; completion expected in early 2021

**Chief Vires** discussed the department’s vacancies and how Austin Fire is handling classes/training during the COVID pandemic for cadets as well as firefighters on duty. Class #128 graduated 33 new fire fighters.

**Commissioner Hausenfluck** asked if there was anything COVID related that he has observed that the board could/should be addressing and to please update the board during his next presentation.

**b. Call Diversion Program Project – Mental Health Response and how the program is working in the Communications Center (sponsors: Commissioner Gonzales and Webber) 4:10pm-4:40pm**

**Speaker:**

**-Andy Hofmeister, Assistant Chief, Austin/Travis County Emergency Medical Service**

**Jasper Brown, EMS Chief of Staff** introduced this item and asked Assistant Chief Andy Hofmeister to begin the presentation. Andy introduced Marissa Aguilar, Practice Manager, Integral Care and Ken Murphy, Lieutenant, APD who were joining him in presenting on Crisis Call Diversion.

Background on the program from Andy Hofmeister:

- The Crisis call program started as a result of six recommendations from the Meadows Report. One of the recommendations was to triage 911 calls to see if there was a better way to route mental health calls. In the FY19-20 four of the recommended items have been completed. Developments in the FY20-21 is now five of the six recommendations have been completed and the funding has been approved to fully implement the six Meadows Report Recommendations.

Marissa Aguilar provided an update on when the Crisis Center Counselors (C3) joins the call and what options they have to best help the person on the phone whether it be hospitalization is needed or substance abuse services are needed. Their gathering of as much information as possible and informing the officer so that he/she is better prepared to respond to the call and situation can be deescalated. Since October 19, 2020 all three agencies have communication thru Solo-

communications. Counselors are available to take calls from APD 7days a week from 8am to 12am, Saturday, and Sundays from 10am to 8pm.

**Lt. Murphy, APD Communications** shared data on the number of received by APD where mental health was a factor. From December 16, 2019 – October 26, 2020 there were 1,133 – 911 calls diverted to EMCOT Clinician. And 9292 were true diversions (meaning no officer was dispatched). APD Communications is experiencing 200 successfully transferred calls per month. The types of calls appropriate for C3 transfer along with 911 calls ineligible for C3 transfer were explained to the board.

Andy Hofmeister closed the presentation by sharing the next steps in the Crisis Call Diversion program and asked for questions from the board.

**Commissioner Lane** – how is the language barrier addressed from callers who did not speak English? Lt. Murphy explained a translator is used/incorporated on the call along with the clinician.

**Commissioner Nunez** – Would homeless, substance abuse issues qualify for this service as well? Lt. Murphy responded “yes” and they could be transferred to the triage. We are tracking the number of individuals experiencing homelessness the we(APD, EMS, & C3, Crisis Calls Diversion) are serving.

**Commissioner Ramirez** – When would counselors be available 24/7? Marissa Aguilar responded “this physical year”

#### **c. Approve 2021 Calendar for Public Safety Commission Meetings (4:40pm-4:55pm)**

**Commissioner Gonzales** called for a vote to approve the 2021 calendar.

Vote was unanimous

Yes- Hausenfluck, Ramirez, Webber, Lane, Nunez, Gonzales

Absent: Harris, Bernhardt, Kelly

-Abstain: 0

#### **4. Future Agenda Items (4:55 -5:00pm)**

- Legislative Update

- Racial Profiling Report – Office of Police Oversight

- Anti Transgender Violence

- DNA Update

- Austin Fire Department COVID-19 update

- Social Media Policy

- Reoccurring Update on Crisis Call Diversion

**Commissioner Webber** requested there be some sort of apology from APD for the officers photographs with White Power signs, and if no apology is received that there be a future discussion item on the agenda.

#### **Adjourn @ 5pm**

Motioned to adjourn by Commissioner Hausenfluck and Commissioner Webber seconded

Vote: Unanimous

Y: Ramirez, Gonzales, Lane, Nunez,

Abstain: 0 Absent: Harris, Bernhardt, and Kelly