



**PUBLIC SAFETY COMMISSION  
MINUTES**

**REGULAR MEETING  
Monday, December 6, 2021**

**The Public Safety Commission convened a hybrid in person and videoconferencing meeting Monday, December 6, 2021 at City Hall 301 W. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street in Austin, Texas.**

**Commissioner Nelly Ramirez** called the Board Meeting to order at 4:06 p.m., standing in for Chair Gonzales.

**Board Members in Attendance:**

Kathleen Hausenfluck  
Nelly Ramirez  
John Kiracofe  
Rocky Lane  
Cory Hall-Martin

Rebecca Webber  
Amanda Lewis  
Rebecca Bernhardt  
Michael Sierra-Arevalo  
Queen Austin

**Board Members Absent:** Chair Rebecca Gonzales

**Staff in Attendance:**

Joseph Chacon, Chief, Austin Police Department  
Robin Henderson, Assistant Chief, Austin Police Department  
Teresa Gardner, Assistant Chief, Austin/Travis County Emergency Medical Services  
Rob Vires, Chief of Staff, Austin Fire Department

**Citizen Communications** - Citizens signed up to speak: none

**1. Approval of Minutes** – Commissioner Ramirez called for approval of the minutes by asking for any edits/changes, questions concerning the draft minutes of the November 1, 2021 meeting. Hearing no edits from the board, she deemed the minutes approved.

**2. NEW BUSINESS**

**a. Public Safety Organizations Quarterly Report – Austin/Travis County EMS** (sponsors: Commissioner Hausenfluck and Gonzales) 4:08-4:16

Vice Chair Ramirez welcomed Teresa Gardner, Assistant Chief, Austin/Travis County Emergency Medical Services to the meeting and invited her to begin the EMS quarterly stats presentation. She stated it had been a long time since she'd presented and was happy to see everyone. She began with presenting the response performance by month, with districts and response times for Priority 1 incidents. She acknowledged they had already been presented with this information and offered to answer any questions the Commissioners may have had.

One questions was asked:

What makes Priority 1 in compliance, what's the timeframe?

Asst. Chief Gardner responded that the time frame was 9:59 for their highest priority incidents, such as cardiac arrest.

There were no further questions on this topic.

Asst. Chief Gardner presented an update on staffing. She elaborated on current staffing levels, vacancies, and projections for incoming staff, including promotions and academy cadets. There were Q & As from commissioners regarding filling those vacancies and onboarding new staff, and what obstacles to filling those positions may exist. Asst. Gardner responded that there were currently 14 cadets, that academy levels may fluctuate due to the holidays, and that they were reviewing applications to be able to move forward with more candidates after the holidays. Commissioner Lane asked how EMS was preparing for another potentially extreme winter and what EMS may be looking for in terms of compensation changes. Asst. Gardner couldn't speak on compensation changes, as negotiations had just begun. For the winter, they're looking at possibly reducing overtime asks and evaluation staffing levels.

**b. Legislative update (sponsors: Commissioner Ramirez and Gonzales) 4:16pm-4:46pm**

**Speaker(s):**

-Brie Franco, Director, Intergovernmental Relations Office, City of Austin

Franco presented on three bills, all of which passed and are now law. The first was SB69 Excessive Force and Duty to Intervene, specifically related to chokehold bans. This was one of the few reforms to apply statewide that came about after the George Floyd protests. The second was HB 1172, Victims of Sexual Assault. This came from the Austin delegation. Victims of sexual assault are now allowed to have an advocate from a sexual assault program in the room when reporting to police. The third bill was SB22 COVID Presumption. The Governor considered this an emergency item. There is a presumption that if a first responder contracts COVID-19 while employed, it was presumed as a scope of employment. Austin Fire, EMS, and APD stated that this is how they were already functioning, and the bill had no impact on processes.

Chief Chacon spoke on HB1172. He stated that APD have already implemented policy changes to ensure compliance. He stated that, with City Legal's approval, Victim Services Counselors are authorized to have the initial conversation with a victim. He stated that APD partners with SAFE Alliance to provide those advocates. Due to low resources, there is not always an advocate. In these cases, an APD Victim Services Counselor will be present. Also included in the bill, anyone can receive a forensic medical exam within 120 hours, regardless of history with APD. Responding to questions, Chacon stated that there are no provisions remaining that would allow APD to deny an exam. Additionally, there will be no polygraphing in sexual assault cases. Chacon stated APD had previously allowed Victim Services Counselor in the interview room.

With regards to SB69, Chief Chacon stated APD has had a prohibition on chokeholds being used for the purposes of making an arrest or restraining a subject. They can only use these restraints when deadly force would be authorized. Responding to commissioner questions, Chacon stated that APD is improving teachings on chokeholds in the Academy. Chief Chacon would have to check with an Academy trainer on whether a knee-to-the-back method was still being taught. With regards to the section on duty to intervene, APD has updated policy to include stronger language, stating that an officer who sees another officer using unreasonable force has a duty to intervene if they have a reasonable opportunity to do so, verbally or physically. There is a provision to report it to a supervisor as well. Failure to report to a supervisor or intervene may result in suspension up to indefinite suspension. There are no options to report anonymously within the Department, but anyone, including APD employees can complain anonymously via the OPO. Data going back to 2017 regarding officer complaints of excessive force. Chief Chacon stated he would have to check.

Austin Fire stated this did not apply to them, but they would step in if necessary. EMS stated they would also intervene if necessary.

**c. APD Training – Ongoing office training and Academy Curriculum** (sponsors: Commissioner Sierra-Arevalo and Bernhardt) 4:47pm -5:23pm

**Speaker(s):** -Robin Henderson, Chief of Staff, Austin Police Department -Anne Kringen, Division Manager Training, Austin Police Department

Chief Henderson stated the Asst. Chief Johnson and Cmdr. Vallejo were present to provide additional information as needed. Chief Henderson provided an update on the pilot class that started in May (the 144<sup>th</sup>). There are currently 72 cadets. Demographics include:

- 10 women (13.8%), 62 male (86.2%)
- 1 Asian
- 10 African Americans
- 30 Hispanics
- 2 other
- 29 White
- 31 have some college education
- 26 have bachelor's degrees
- 5 have a master's degree
- 23 have prior military experience
- 10 have prior law enforcement experience
- 28 individuals left the academy: 1 was terminated, 2 left for PT failures, 10 for personal reasons, 4 for academic failures, 4 for illness, 6 for injury and 1 for medical reasons.

Curriculum changes include:

- Twice as many PT hours (around 80 hours)
- Over 30 hours of community engagement (hours in which community members come in during curriculum)
- 2 week Community Connect curriculum in which cadets are out in the community prior to attending the academy

- Weaving in DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion), adult learning and de-escalation. This includes coursework and role-plays.
- Changes are ongoing, as this is a pilot program

Also important is understanding where instructors are in terms of building training capacity.

In response to questions on DEI, Kringen stated that some curriculum is mandated by TCOLE (Texas Commissioner on Law Enforcement). Additionally, Cadets have gone through Joyce James' groundwater analysis training about institutional and structural racism, as well as history of race and policing. All instructors and leadership have also gone through the groundwater analysis training as well.

Commissioners requested a list of the units that were reviewed before they were taught at the most recent academy, units reviewed after they were taught and any that were not reviewed as part of the reimagining process. Kringen stated they were looking at review processes for the pilot curriculum. Kringen stated TCOLE is interested in the new APD curriculum and updating their basic policing curriculum. Asst. Chief Johnson also stated cadets who left due to illness or injury have been invited back into the next cadet class. Kringen stated that differences in background of cadets (military, education, etc) are accounted for via allowing each cadet to identify their own strengths and needs for improvement and allowing trainers to work with them individually. Kringen will follow up on ongoing training for officers, outside of the TCOLE hours. Kringen will follow up with Joyce James on feedback and outcomes from having community members come in, especially when conversations are very challenging and cadets may not be responsive to training. Most cadets are not from Austin. Kringen will follow up on demographics of trainers. Kringen stated that field training officers have gone through the groundwater analysis and have been updated on trainings the cadets are going through. There are about 45 instructors in the academy. They don't rotate but they do assist each other. Kringen stated that APD is aware of some studies on what brings in more women recruits, however they struggle to retain women throughout the hiring, training and employment processes. They are looking at research for increasing female applicants.

There were no further questions.

**d. EMS Chief Hiring Update** (sponsors: Commissioner Gonzales and Commissioner Ramirez)  
5:24pm -5:29pm

**Speaker(s):** -Rey Arellano, Assistant City Manager

ACM Arellano presented an updated on the recruitment process for the next EMS Chief. He met with the consultant, which had identified 37 applicants. Applicants were sorted into those who met minimum requirements, those who did not, and those who they recommended to move forward. He requested some additional information and expects to have a list of candidates to interview in the next week.

In response to questions from Commissioners, ACM Arellano stated he did not have demographics on the applicants, but expected to have that information soon. He stated there will likely be an opportunity for candidates to interact with the community via an open house, as well as opportunities for engagement with stakeholders throughout the interview process.

### **3. Future Agenda Items 5:30-5:33pm**

Commissioner Ramirez stated the PSC is backlogged til October on agenda items. There is a form for commissioners to submit to help prioritize items.

- Labor negotiations
- 911/311 operations
- Operational impact of moving 911 and Forensics back to APD
- Raid at the Workers' Defense Project

### **Adjourn @ 5:33pm**

Motioned to adjourn by Commissioner Ramirez and seconded by Commissioner Sierra-Arevalo  
Vote: Unanimous