



**PUBLIC SAFETY COMMISSION  
MINUTES**

**REGULAR MEETING  
Monday, October 1, 2018**

**The Public Safety Commission convened a meeting Monday, October 1, 2018 at City Hall 301 W. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street in Austin, Texas.**

**Chair, Rebecca Webber** called the Board Meeting to order at 4:09p.m.

**Board Members in Attendance:**

|                |               |
|----------------|---------------|
| Rebecca Webber | Noel Landuyt  |
| Brian Haley    | Daniela Nunez |
| Kim Rossmo     | Preston Tyree |
| Ed Scruggs     |               |

Absent - Commissioner Rebecca Gonzales  
Commissioner Michelle McCurdy  
Commissioner Sam Holt

**Staff in Attendance:**

Troy Gay, Assistant Chief, Austin Police Department  
Richard Davis, Assistant Chief, Austin Fire Department  
Jasper Brown, Chief of Staff, Austin Travis County Emergency Services

**1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES** - Commissioner Webber called the meeting to order at 4:09pm and announced the passing of Commissioner Carol Lee. Commissioner Webber commented she (Carol Lee) was a cool, interesting lady and I was glad to meet and work with her. Our thoughts and prayers are with her husband and family. **Commissioner Webber** asked for approval of the minutes or corrections. **Commissioner Nunez** requested a correction on page 5 of the minutes change “American Freedom Act to Freedom Cities Policy” A vote was called on the minutes with the correction and the minutes were approved with a unanimous vote.

**Vote: Unanimous (7members in attendance)**

**Against: 0**

**Absent: 3 (Commissioners Haley, McCurdy, and Holt)**

**2. CITIZEN COMMUNICATIONS –**

- Carlos Leon – Public Information Request received thanks to Attorney General Paxton and Austin Police Chief Brian Manley

- Juliana Gonzales – introduced herself as the new Senior Director of Sexual Assault Services at SAFE Alliance. She expressed thanks to the Public Safety Commission board on behalf of SAFE Alliance for their support and recommendation during the recent City of Austin budget sessions.
- Anthony (Tony) Marquardt – Item #6
- Ken Casaday – Item #6
- Robert (Bob) Nicks – Item #6

**3. Monthly Stats from Public Safety Departments** – Monthly stats from public safety departments – authorized strength by rank, vacancies by rank, overtime hours by rank, call volume by Council District, response times by council District - sponsored by Commissioners Landuyt and Webber

**Commissioner Webber** called for the monthly stats report for the three Public Safety Departments.

**Assistant Chief Davis** spoke on the Austin Fire Department data distributed to all board members that included information on time by rank, response times and current number of vacancies.

**Jasper Brown**, Chief of Staff, EMS – presented updated data on overtime dollars spent; staffing numbers, and commented an EMS class is scheduled to begin on November 15, 2018. He followed up on **Commissioner Tyree’s** request for an explanation of high call numbers in District 9.

**Troy Gay**, Chief of Staff, Austin Police Department – presented on Austin police citywide response times, overtime hours by rank (which was requested by Commissioner Holt), and APD staffing. Troy Gay commented there are currently 1848 positions filled and 63 vacancies. Currently there are 40 officers (recent graduates) on probation status.

#### **4. Update on 86<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislative Session in 2019**

- Brie Franco, City of Austin Intergovernmental Affairs Office presented on upcoming legislative session.

Brie Franco begins her presentation by stating this will be a very chaotic session and there will be a lot of activity with bills regarding city polices.

- Last session in 2017 there were 2,500 bills introduced and 294 passed
- Some of the 2017 bills included the overturn of the city’s ride-hailing ordinance
- This session (2019) predicts a lot of talk of how cities are funded (discussions/governor’s proposal on lowering the rollback rate to 2.5 percent
- Texas cities are restricted to increasing revenue by only 8% per year without voter approval
- A lot of talk on the revenue and bathroom bill in 2019 sessions
- There will be approximately five lobby firms presented to council in October 18, 2018 meeting for approval to hire

There were a couple of questions from Commissioners:

- Is there something we (City of Austin) can ask of the state? (**Scruggs**)  
Response: Normally the system is not to set up to pass proactive legislation. The system isn't designed for the state to do things for cities (Franco)
- Do you see any additional revenue, bills or ideas coming from the legislature to help Austin with mental health issues? (**Haley**)  
Response: No, I don't see any assistance coming in this area and this is not an area that I have paid close attention to. (Franco)
- What is the best way for us as a Commission (City of Austin) to stay informed? (**Nunez**)  
Response: I will provide updates on the sessions to you all and encourage you yourselves to always take the opportunity to let your representatives/officials hear from you. When they hear from you guys it does have great influence. Don't underestimate your value as a lobbyist. (Franco)

**5. Presentation from ACE (Austin Center for Events) on draft rules for Special Events Ordinance** - Alicia Dean, with COA Communications and PIO Office presenter  
Bill Manno Project Manager, Austin Center for Events (formally known as Special Events)

The City Council passed the special events ordinance, which revamps the city's regulations covering special events. Alicia commented although the ordinance was effective on May 21 of this year, it will be officially implemented on April 1, 2019.

Alicia begin with an overview of action/steps taken to present finalize a new ordinance.

- Recap of Special Events Ordinance
- Changes to the ordinance
- Rules Process timeline
- Ordinance set to be implemented April 1, 2019

Some of the key changes to the ordinance include:

- Citizens will have a path to council when they have been denied a permit
- Scalability on fees where possible

Council directed staff to have a robust engagement with all faucets of the community for input on the new rules. Rules scheduled to be posted in November 2018 which allows time for citizens to have an opportunity to provide input/comments.

Biggest challenges that the ordinance is facing is the implementation of a tier system that classifies events into one of four tiers based on their crowd size, duration, physical footprint and use of city resources. The team is looking at fees that are more affordable for the citizen. Another challenge is to improve the application process; creating an application portal where permitting, payment and approvals can be traced electronically. Next steps are to submit the ordinance to City Law department for review. The goal is to have everything finalized by February 2019 and in good shape to accommodate all of the spring activities coming up each spring in The City of Austin.

## 6. Morale within Austin public safety departments – including PTSD

**Commissioner Webber invited the three union presidents for public safety departments to speak first:**

-**Tony Marquardt, President of EMS Employees Association** commented he felt measuring employee morale was not really quantifiable, but there were some positive changes that had come about at EMS that impact morale like the upgrading of equipment and increasing of staff that are important to morale. He thanked the Public Safety Commission for their support in the past with various recommendations to council that helped provided positive results and upgrades for EMS staff.

- **Robert (Bob) Nicks, President of Austin Firefighters Association** commented that a response to a recent firefighters survey showed that low morale was something that 87% of those surveyed believed the new Fire Chief would need to address. There is a big disconnect between rank and file and the command staff of Austin Fire Department. He felt things are starting to trend upward and hopefully the new chief will be able to address morale issues.

- **Ken Casaday, President Austin Police Association** commented the morale is the worst he's ever seen in 21 years, and part of the issue stems from the loss of its city contract last December 2017. Numerous officers have quit APD to work for other nearby police departments since the loss of the contract. There is a feeling amongst the officers that they are unfairly punished while others (mgmt.) go unpunished and he cited the DNA Lab issues. In addition there is a feeling amongst the officers that when the City Council did not support their shift pay premiums that they really didn't care about them. Recent turnout at the annual APD awards ceremony was lowest it's ever been, and Ken feels this low attendance is an indicator of current low morale.

**Commissioner Rossmo** commented when there are problems with retention and hiring and when standards have to be lowered for hiring those are big warning signs that something is not right within the departments. He would encourage the unions and department agencies to cooperate and develop effective surveys, which would produce results that would help both sides. This has been done elsewhere and has shown helpful results.

**Commissioner Tyree** commented he supported having this item on the agenda because of the feedback he has received during conversations he has with police officers. The public needs to be informed of this morale issue and it something has to change. **Commissioner Landuyt** commented he encouraged all sectors to use a survey because it is helpful for management and staff while at the same time there tends to be more participation when both sides work together to create the survey.

**Chief of Staff, Troy Gay** added that Chief Manley has as one of his goals to work internally to address morale and is promoting a Health & Well Being program for all APD officers. The program is headed by our Sr. Chaplin, Rick Randall and he is the Sr. Training Specialist for this new program. The program is divided into work groups under Rick Randall:

1. Identification
2. Education and Risk Reduction
3. Treatment (what assets are available to help the officers)
4. Organizational Wellness
5. Policies and Procedures group

In November 2018 we plan to report our recommendations to Chief Manley. I think Austin has an opportunity to be cutting-edge when it comes to this aspect (focusing on addressing health and wellness proactively) of employee wellness, per Rick Randall

**Jasper Brown, Chief of Staff EMS and Richard Davis, Assistant Chief AFD** shared information/updates on programs their departments have implemented to help boost employee morale.

**Chief of Staff Troy Gay** clarified that in 2017 we did see a slight uptick in violent crime, but in 2018 we are actually on the down". Our overall reduction this year is between 3 and 4 percent.

**8. Future Agenda Items:**

- Revisit employee morale in Public Safety departments in December 2018
- Trend and current status of opioids

Adjourn @ 6:00pm