



**PUBLIC SAFETY COMMISSION  
MINUTES**

**REGULAR MEETING  
Monday, April 5, 2021**

**The Public Safety Commission convened a videoconferencing meeting Monday April 5, 2021 at City Hall 301 W. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street in Austin, Texas.**

**Chair Rebecca Gonzales** called the Board Meeting to order at 3:03p.m.

**Board Members in Attendance:**

Rebecca Gonzales	Michael Sierra-Arevalo
Rebecca Webber	Rocky Lane
Kathleen Hausenfluck	
Nelly Ramirez	
Rebecca Bernhardt	

**Board Members Absent:** Queen U. Enyioha and Amanda Lewis

**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:

Carlos Leon – Capital Metro Male Bus Drivers

- 1. Approval of Minutes** – Chair Gonzales asked for any edits/comments to the minutes for February 1, 2021 presented. Hearing no comments/edits the minutes were deemed approved.

## 2. OLD BUSINESS

**a. Vote on recommendation in support of Council Resolution No. 20190619-092, gaps and opportunities for improvements of mental health services for public safety first responders (sponsors: Commissioner Gonzales and Webber) 3:25pm-3:35pm**

Chair Gonzales introduced the item by sharing a little background from the February 1, 2021 meeting. A mental health presentation was made to the Public Safety Commissioners during the February 2021 meeting because of the directives in Resolution 20190619-092. During the February 2021 meeting, the commissioners agreed on voting in support of the mental health items recommended for improving the Mental Services for all first responders. The February meeting ended before a vote could be taken and it was agreed that the vote would be taken at the March 2021 meeting, however that meeting was cancelled due to the winter storm.

April 5, 2021 meeting the recommendation was put up for a vote, and there was discussion prior to a motion to vote.

- Commissioner Sierra-Arevalo requested clarification on funding for Dr. Glenn
- Commissioner Lane- commented on concerns he was hearing from the public on items/things needed since the winter storm. Things that were more for overall improving quality of life care
- Commissioner Webber questioned the purpose of the recommendation and who drafted the list of recommendations to improve/close gaps in mental health care for 1<sup>st</sup> responders
- Commissioner Webber also questioned the policy on use of CBD oils for 1<sup>st</sup> responders

Jasper Brown, Ronnelle Paulsen, Rob Vires and Troy Gay all weighed in on responding to the questions from the board. Chair Gonzales reminded the board that they were voting on recommendations they agreed upon at February 2021 meeting and additional items to improve 1<sup>st</sup> responders mental health services could be address/added in for discussions in future meetings.

Chair motioned to vote on the resolution before the board today and a vote was called.

Vote: Recommendation passed on 6-1 vote

Commissioner Ramirez seconded the motion to move forward with a vote today.



PUBLIC SAFETY COMMISSION  
RECOMMENDATION 20210405-002a

Date: April 5, 2021

Subject: Recommendation that City Council Support Improvements to Mental Health Services

Motioned by: Chair Rebecca Gonzales

Seconded by: Commissioner Rocky Lane

**Recommendation:** The Public Safety Commission recommends that the City Council take action to support the findings of the report outlining the gaps and opportunities for improvement of mental health services for Austin's first responders.

**Description of Recommendation to Council:** City Council passed Resolution No. 20190619-092 directing the City Manager to develop a report outlining the gaps and opportunities for improvement of mental health services for our first responders.

Therefore, The Public Safety Commission recommends that the Austin City Council move forward with the recommended improvements to the mental health services including:

- Establish a City-sponsored fund to retain a psychiatrist for first responders.
- Establish protocol for Mental Health days.
- Specialized training for public safety leadership on handling mental health issues for first responders.
- Develop and administer training on social-justice-informed mental health care.
- Hire 2 Full-Time employees to assist psychologists and Peer Support coordinators.
- Additional funding for Peer Support activities.
- Revisit departmental policies to accept the use of CBD oil for first responders.
- Implement annual behavioral health check-ins for first responders.
- Increased funding allocation for Dr. Tania Glenn & Associates, PA.
- Coordinate a joint statement from City leadership, Associations, and Department management that commits to limitations on sharing mental health treatment information and that seeking therapy will not have negative repercussions on a first responder's career.

**Rationale:** The Public Safety Commission believes the mental and physical health of our first responders is key to the safety of the citizens of Austin.

**Vote:**

For: 6 (Commissioners Ramirez, Lane, Sierra-Arevalo, Bernhardt, Gonzales and Hausenfluck)

Against: 1 (Rebecca Webber)

Abstain: 0

Absent: 1 (Commissioner Amanda Lewis)

Attest: *[Staff or board member can sign]*

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**3. NEW BUSINESS**

**a. Public Safety Organizations Quarterly Report – Austin Police Department** (sponsors: Commissioner Hausenfluck and Gonzales) 3:35pm-3:55pm

**Speaker:**

-Troy Gay, Chief of Staff, Austin Police Department



PUBLIC SAFETY COMMISSION  
RECOMMENDATION 20210201-002a

**Date:** February 1, 2021  
**Subject:** Racial Profiling in High Discretion Searches  
**Motioned by:** Rebecca Bernhardt

**Seconded by:** Rebecca Webber

**Background facts:** —APD has been collecting racial profiling data since the state law passed requiring its collection in 2001.  
—Throughout the time that APD has collected data on racial profiling, the data has consistently shown that Black/African American drivers are significantly more likely to be searched by APD at a vehicle stop than White/Caucasian drivers, and significantly more likely to be arrested.  
— 2019 data shows that Black/African Americans were three times more likely to be searched and approximately three times more likely to be arrested than White/Caucasians.  
— 58 percent of searches of Black/African Americans, amounting to 1,124 searches, were high discretion searches, where law enforcement had a lot of discretion in whether or not they chose to search the vehicle. By comparison 34 percent of searches of White/Caucasian Americans were high discretion searches, totaling 755 searches.

**Recommendation:** We recommend that the City Council direct the City Manager ensure that any high discretion searches resulting in the discovery of drug or controlled substance contraband that would normally result in arrest not be referred to the district or county attorney’s offices for prosecution. The following policies should be enacted as soon as possible:

1. The definition of high discretion search includes both consent searches and searches conducted because the officer “smelled marijuana” or “smelled something suspicious.”
2. Officers cease conducting high discretion searches at vehicle stops.

**Vote:**

For: Commissioners Gonzales, Nunez, Ramirez, Bernhardt, Sierra-Arevalo, Hausenfluck and Lane

Against: None

Abstain: Webber

Absent: William (Bill) Kelly

Attest: *[Staff or board member can sign]*

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**2. New Business**

**c. Provide feedback on the report responsive to Council Resolution No. 20190619-092, highlights gaps and areas of improvements of mental health services for public safety first responders. (Sponsors: Commissioner Gonzales and Webber)**

**Speaker:**

**Patricia Bourenane, Executive Assistant to ACM, Rey Arellano, Safety**

Patricia Bourenane introduced herself, Dr Ronnelle Paulsen, Assistant Chief Austin Fire Department ,and Rick Randall, Wellness Director, Austin Police Department,

The presentation to the Public Safety Commission on Resolution No. 20190619-092 that directed the City Manager to develop a report outlining the gaps and opportunities for improvement of mental health services for our first responders. Work was begun in Fall 2020 to gather input from the Human Resource Department, First Responders and Public Safety Associations. The group also worked to get input from Dell Medical Group.

Presenting their findings on Mental Health for 1<sup>st</sup> Responders to the Public Safety Commission and requesting feedback is a part of the directive in Resolution No. 20190619-092. Some of the gaps in Mental Health services for 1<sup>st</sup> responders are:

- Need for a contracted psychiatrist to provide psychiatric treatment
- City's insurance limitations with connecting to mental health providers and substance abuse treatment
- Mental Health days for first responders
- Need for enhanced training for leadership within the departments in understanding the mental health needs of their employees
- Peer support increased funding

Commissioner Gonzales thanked the group for the presentation on Mental Health for 1<sup>st</sup> responders. Commissioner Webber inquired on the group's plan to implement a timeline to fill/close some of the gaps in mental health public safety workplace. Assistant Chief Paulsen commented once their work of gathering and compiling feedback from various sources, they will prepare to go back to council to ask for the necessary funding.

Patricia Bourenane shared in the essence of time the Public Safety Commission could submit a recommendation in their March 2021 should they wish to do so; because the report would not be presented to council until the end of March 2021. Commissioner Gonzales motioned for a recommendation in support of the Mental Health report for 1<sup>st</sup> Responders and Commissioner Lane seconded.

**b. Discuss and provide input on resolution supporting City of Austin's Agenda for 87<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session (sponsors: Commissioner Webber and Gonzales)**

**Speaker:**

**Brie Franco, Intergovernmental Relations Office, City of Austin**

Commissioner Gonzales presented the resolution from Brie Franco with Intergovernmental Relations Office and asked for a vote. Ms. Franco had presented on the resolution at the Public Safety Commission in January 2021 meeting. The vote was called; see the details in resolution below.



## PUBLIC SAFETY COMMISSION

**Date:** February 1, 2021

Recommendation Number 20210201-003b - Endorsement of the City of Austin's 2020 Legislative Agenda and support for the City's right to advocate for Austin's vision and position at the Texas Legislature.

WHEREAS, the City of Austin's greatest asset is its people who are passionate about their city, committed to its improvement, and determined to see its vision become a reality; and

WHEREAS, the percent of registered voters who voted in the past 4 years of city elections exceeded 60 percent; and

WHEREAS, an overwhelming majority of registered voters who live in Austin voted for the current Austin City Council representation; and

WHEREAS, over 700 Austinites participate and serve on over 60 Boards and Commissions to help shape, and continually improve upon the policies of the City and the lives of its Residents; and  
WHEREAS, the input provided to the Austin City Council through the City's Boards and Commissions reflects the will of the community; and

WHEREAS, it is the intent of the City of Austin that the legislative agenda guide City staff, in coordination with the City's strategic partners, in their efforts to advocate on behalf of the City of Austin and its residents; and

WHEREAS, each year, the Texas Legislature increasingly attempts to pass legislation that negatively impacts the City through preemption or limiting the ability to advocate; and

WHEREAS, the 2019 Legislature strongly considered and almost passed S.B. 29 which would have limited the ability of the City to utilize community advocates to effectively advocate on behalf of the policies created and supported by its residents; and

WHEREAS, taxpayers and City residents benefit from and need community advocates as a tool that amplifies their voices before the Legislature, Congress, and regulatory bodies; and

WHEREAS, a prohibition on community advocacy equates to censorship of Residents' voices and is detrimental to a representative democracy where all Austinites and Texans have equal opportunities to voice their opinions.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE PUBLIC SAFETY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN HEREBY ADOPTS THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION THAT:

- The Public Safety Commission endorses the City of Austin's 2020 Legislative Agenda adopted by the Austin City Council on **September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020**.
- The Public Safety Commission believes the general principals of the policy and position statements contained in the City of Austin's state legislative agenda capture the positions of its membership and the community it represents.
- The Public Safety Commission urges all Austin of the Texas Legislature to protect the City's right to effectively represent the taxpayers and continue to amplify their collective voices through advocacy at the Texas Legislature.
- The Public Safety Commission strongly supports the City of Austin's engagement of and funding for a community advocacy team to assist the City in advocating for and protecting Austin's vision and position at the Texas Legislature.

**Public Safety Commission Vote:**

**For:** 7 (Commissioners Rocky Lane, Daniela Nunez, Nelly Paulina Ramirez, Kathleen Hausenfluck, Rebecca Bernhardt, Rebecca Webber, and Rebecca Gonzales)

**Against:** 0

**Abstain:** Commissioner Michael Sierra-Arevalo

**Absent:** William Kelly **Attest:** 0

  
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(Staff or board member can sign)

**a. Public Safety Organizations Quarterly Report – Austin Fire Department (sponsors:**

**Commissioner Hausenfluck and Gonzales)**

**Speaker:**

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

**Chief Vires began his presentation with the overall data trends in the quarterly stats for AFD due to COVID-19.**

Call Volume – decreased from last quarter

District 9 had the largest decrease in call volume and this could be attributed to

Cancellation of large scale events

Teleworking/reduced traffic

Limited capacity for shopping and dining

Chief Vires continued to present on FY2020 and FY2021 Q1 comparisons for Emergency Incidents and Response Time/data trends and reviewed the AFD and COVID-19 status. The Cadet Hiring Process was mentioned and that there is Class #131 that will begin March 29, 2021 with 37 cadets.

Future Agenda Items:

- 8 Can't Wait Report from OPO ( R. Webber requested)
- Review status of adding people from the trans community to the boards ( R. Lane requested)
- Update on the Austin Police Department Training Academy (R. Bernhardt requested)
- Revisiting/update on City of Austin Homeless Strategies since COVID -19 (K. Hausenfluck requested)

Motion to adjourn the meeting by Commissioner Webber and seconded by Commissioner Lane

Vote: unanimous

Adjourn at 5:00pm