

Police Budget Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

March 17, 2022, 6pm, City Hall

Present: Evelyn Buisch (EB), Amara Dunn (AD, chair), Rob Maclean (RM, sec), James McCorkle (JM), Andrew Spink (AS)

Note: Due to computer crash, minutes were taken longhand and typed out later.

Agenda:

- 1) February meeting minutes approved without objection
- 2) Brief discussion of slides from Adam's previous budget academy: generally helpful, will need to revisit as the budget process continues and when a new Comptroller comes on board.
- 3) Discussion of 2021 GPD expenditures:

EB: There are a number of irregularities, in terms of accounting, things that are organized in a really weird way. Usually, there needs to be more detail in accounting expenses. In my work I'm very much against "general" descriptions, e.g. "Wal-Mart": there needs to be a sub-description identifying what was purchased, etc. Other examples include: LNB statements, polygraph tests, "brushes" for vehicles, which were all categorized in strange or inconsistent ways.

JM: It raises questions about what oversight was done before the existence of this Board.

RM: Do we have an understanding of why Equipment purchases ended up being over twice the budgeted amount?

EB: There was something weird having to do with the "uplifting" of the vehicles [installing equipment].

AD: Some things were apparently listed twice.

EB: It'd be good to have all together. For example, if the total cost of a vehicle plus outfitting is say, \$50,000, let's see that.

AD: If it's a case of "robbing Peter to pay Paul," switching which category to draw funds from, that needs to be made clear.

---General agreement that additional transparency and detailed listing of expenses would be beneficial.

RM: I looked at the budget from the pov of what values or priorities are projected by the data. My conclusions are that the priorities are 1) Aggressive or saturation level road patrol (requiring high levels of staffing and equipment and involving long-term relationships with regional

vendors who do profitable business with the department). Typically, vehicle, traffic, or other infractions are dealt with by a large (2-3 car) armed response, often leading to charges of, e.g. AUO (“suspended license”), a function of which is to funnel poor people into the system. 2) Second priority is aggressive enforcement of drug prohibition, including a focus on low-level busts and developing criminal informants. 3) A distant third priority is professional development, mostly focused on enhancing goals 1 & 2.

EB: It would be good to know what are the GPD’s goals? What is their plan over 3-5 years? The standard question: where would you like to be in 3-5 years? It’d be nice to hear their answer. Then we can ask, e.g.: Why this equipment? How do certain expenses help them achieve their goals?

AD: In many institutions, the assumption is that every agency or department will be automatically trying to increase its number of employees, increase its budget. It’d be good to hear from GPD about their goals instead of projecting onto them.

EB: Looking at gas prices and inflation now.... If you’re going to grow, it’s good to be looking ahead

AD: Cars are a separate expense. Having a large fleet may create an incentive to over rely on vehicles. Is that the best thing for the community? Maybe, maybe not. How do answer this question, removing the incentive to keep it the same.

EB: We need a better understanding of why they need new vehicles. I’m curious what happens, if you retire a vehicle, does it go to auction, and is the money returned to the general fund.

Transition to discussion of the data necessary to analyze efficiency of public safety spending.

---General agreement that the Board **needs data that breaks down a) calls for service, b) what the police response was, c) what the outcomes of the encounter were [detainments, arrests, charges, convictions, etc.].**

AS: Are certain parts of the city overpoliced based on calls for service? I think we’d like to know if there’s a disconnect there.

AD: That was on our original list of information requests, especially the comparison of calls and responses.

EB: Similarly, it’d be good to know, how many calls to HWS? To Downtown? East side, West side? What’s effective? Is there a certain location, say a housing complex, that’s prone to this? Does it need oversight?

AS: That’s why I’m curious—is there a police presence because an area gets a lot of calls? What are the rates of response compared to number of calls for a given area?

---The Board **decides** unanimously to **create a Google document that will contain a running**

list of budgetary line items it has questions about. Rather than taking up meeting time listing them, we can add our questions to the document directly. We can compile these to forward on to Erica Collins and the Chief.

AD: Fundamentally, there needs to be a way to document what was actually spent rather than accounting that brings the balances down to zero. No matter what, choices will have to be made given the overall financial picture: “the status quo is not an option,” and not just for this department but across the city. (This is a paraphrase from the slides Adam shared with us.)

Several initial suggestions for revising the structure of expenses:

--The category “Physical Exams” should become “Exams & Evaluations” so that things like fingerprints, polygraphs, etc., are not misleadingly listed under “Supplies.”

--Regularize the Chief’s membership in IACP: last year it was in “Training”; this year, “Supplies”

--Consider changing “Publications and Advertising” to “Communication” (primarily as a way to find a better spot to put the charge for an interpreter; but there may be better options)

Costs for an interpreter, as well as lunch for County Court, were also listed under “Supplies.” Also there are several categories that seem to overlap, i.e. “Materials & Supplies” and “Office Supplies.” In Jan-Feb under “Materials & Supplies” there was a \$650 charge at Staples, and the description is “Office Supplies,” but it wasn’t listed in that category. We need more precise descriptions.

--Board discusses how the accounting structures might be revised to become more transparent. In short, **we need to know how much it costs to run this organization.**

AS: I’m interested in having a conversation about FOIL procedures, especially regarding settlement numbers.

AD: What are our next steps, and how can we make sure they lead to action? We have a council liaison, and we need City Council to be aware of our work.

EB: ---Volunteers to reach out to councilor Gaglianese to discuss the Board’s needs)

Adjourned.