

## **Procedural Justice Committee meeting: Jan. 6, 2021**

The Procedural Justice Committee held a virtual meeting on Jan. 6, 2021. Members discussed the committee's police-reform recommendations that were released to the public on Dec. 21, 2020.

The Committee's recommendations include creating a civilian oversight board, bolstering additional mental health partnerships, improving the police department's complaint form, creating more diversity in the ranks, increasing community policing and other matters.

The committee also discussed a draft report by the Police Department that incorporates some of the committee's recommendations and will eventually go to the administration, Common Council and public for further discussion and ultimately a vote by the Council.

Committee Co-Chair Yvonne Flowers said the Police Department's report was written to address a list of issues the governor's executive order had cited, but the department's report should be more comprehensive.

Committee member Carmen McGill suggested the report should include a community mission statement in addition to the department's mission statement. She said the department's draft report "reads like a police report," adding she wanted more definitive language in parts of it.

Flowers said parts of the report "seem pretty vague" and that the committee will address those concerns with the Police Department.

Committee members talked about the possibility of a civilian review board and noted the department was open to such an idea, depending on how it was configured. Committee members also said if the department improved its complaint form and process, this would go a long way toward addressing what the community has been seeking.

Committee members also noted the department's policy calls for a review board in cases of use of force and wanted more information about how exactly that is being utilized now.

Flowers pointed out that in addition to having the officers take training courses such as in procedural justice and implicit bias, the committee

recommends that refresher course/workshops be taken each year to reinforce the objective of this training. Committee members also wanted to know if there was any evidence or data to suggest the training is working.

The committee also discussed at length the county's decision to give new officers time to reach the 60 college-credit requirement, a change aimed at gaining more people of color in the ranks and also more bilingual officers. Committee members have not been in complete agreement whether delaying the educational requirements is in the best interest of the community, though the majority have stated that they understand new initiatives must be tried to increase diversity on the force.

In its report, the committee recommends that during recruitment efforts, the Police Department work closely with organizations that have a close connection to diverse populations. Also, as part of the career law enforcement course held for youths every year, a mentorship component should be considered to help encourage more local youths to consider becoming police officers in the city.

The committee is also recommending that police officers live in the City of Poughkeepsie or no further than 5-10 miles away. The committee advocates a "City Preferred List," under which officers who live in the city would be considered first to be hired off the Civil Service list. The committee also talked about offering financial incentives for officers to live in the city but agreed the implications on the city's budget and contract negotiations would have to be studied before such an initiative could be considered.

In mid-June, Governor Cuomo signed Executive Order No. 203 — the "New York State Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative" — requiring local police agencies to develop a plan and address policies, procedures, practices and deployment, including but not limited to the use of force. Governments with police agencies must adopt a plan by April 1, 2021, to be eligible for future state funding.