Date: March 19, 2021
Time: 3:00pm
Location: Classroom A; Law Enforcement Center 320 S. Kansas Ave (virtual attendance was available as well)

Committee members present: Councilmembers Karen Hiller, Sylvia Ortiz (Chair), Michael Padilla

City staff present: City Manager Brent Trout, CPT Jamey Haltom (TPD), Interim Chief Bryan Wheeles (TPD), Ed Collazo (Independent Police Auditor), Bill Cochran (Chief of Staff)

1) Call to Order
Chairwoman Ortiz called the meeting to order at 3:05pm. Committee members introduced themselves.

2) Approve minutes from February 19, 2021 meeting
Committee member Hiller made a motion to approve the minutes. Committee member Padilla seconded the motion. Motion approved 3:0.

3) Presentation: Stay Calm
Craig Johnson, innovator of the Stay Calm program and lifelong Topekan, discussed the history behind the Stay Calm program, and the idea behind what the program is wanting to achieve in Topeka.

It is important for citizens to remember to stay calm, stop, and listen when interacting with law enforcement. It is also something that can be used by citizens to help identify important documents should EMS (emergency medical services) be called to the home during a medical emergency, or during the event of a car accident. The bright orange, plastic envelope is easily visible for first responders and law enforcement, and is an ideal place to keep important information that would be necessary to provide during a car stop, or in the event of an emergency.

Mr. Johnson’s hope is to open the dialog between citizens and law enforcement, and begin to repair some of the feelings of mistrust between members of the community and law enforcement.
Chairwoman Ortiz inquired about what items are found in the Stay Calm folder. Mr. Johnson stated the program began in 2018. He read the information found on the back of the folder “Be Calm. Do not panic. Do not run. Do not argue. No sudden movements. Roll down the windows, if windows are tinted. Turn on interior light. Do not offer information. Document contact. Get names and addresses of witnesses. Keep hands visible. Only the driver talks. Only speak when addressed.” Mr. Johnson concluded by stating he felt those items would help with keeping people safe. He advised individuals to go home and request family to speak on the behalf of individual if there had been an issue with an officer. He stated it was more likely to have a favorable outcome for everyone if a situation was addressed properly rather than on the street in the heat of the moment when too much is occurring. Mr. Johnson also felt this program would be beneficial for individuals with behavioral or mental health issues.

Chairwoman Ortiz inquired about Mr. Johnson’s time with the Topeka Police Department. Mr. Johnson worked with the TPD for 30 years.

Committee member Hiller voiced appreciation for the various uses of the Stay Calm folder that Mr. Johnson discussed. She felt the most important reason for the folder, to contain information during a traffic stop, would be especially helpful as people often feel nervous and stressed. A situation can escalate when someone is fumbling around and trying to search for requested information. The folder allows for all of that to be in one easy-to-see place.

Committee member Padilla complimented Mr. Johnson for taking an approach based on his familiarity with the TPD, and allowing for effective communication to take place even if it was through a non-verbal means. When a law enforcement officer sees that the individual has the folder and is ready to provide them with the information that will be needed to help in the situation, it can help to deescalate a situation for both parties. Committee member Padilla stated this was a prime example of a private citizen going the extra mile to find out the facts, and was able to come up with something to help an agency and other citizens come together in a meaningful way, while also having direct impact. He encouraged other citizens to look to Mr. Johnson as a role model to continue to find solutions.

Chief Wheeles agreed with comments made by Committee member Padilla. He added that he appreciates that after all of the years, Mr. Johnson is still teaching TPD lessons. Mr. Johnson voiced his appreciation for the openness of the TPD to
continue making efforts to better the community and relationship between law enforcement and citizens. Chief Wheeles stated the Stay Calm folders are free, and anyone who would like to have one can get them at the Topeka Police Department. Mr. Johnson noted the local schools also have them, and folks can get them from the program website [https://www.ustaycalm.com].

CPT Haltom expressed appreciation for the program, and added that there is no such thing as a “routine car stop”. Each time an officer performs a car stop, the interaction and outcome are unknown. However, for an officer to be able to see the bright orange folder, even in the dark, it will be able to provide assurance to the officer that there may be more cooperation from the citizen. It is a useful tool to both the citizens and to law enforcement.

Chairwoman Ortiz confirmed that there was no age limit, race, gender, or other qualifying factors associated with the program. It truly is for all citizens.

4) Presentation – Recommendations from Governor’s Commission on Racial Equity & Justice [Video 19:20 minute mark]
[This presentation can be found on the committee’s webpage]
Topeka Public School’s Superintendent, and Commission Co-Chair, Dr. Tiffany Anderson, and Commissioner John Nave presented the recommendations from the Governor’s Commission on Racial Equity & Justice. [To view the Commission’s full report and recommendations, please visit: https://governor.kansas.gov/governors-commission-on-racial-equity-and-justice].

Presentation Highlights:
• Governor signed Executive Order 20-48, on June 24, 2020 to form the Commission.
• Commission asked to study issues of racial equity and justice across systems in Kansas, focusing first on policing and law enforcement.
• The Commission is not one based on criminal justice reform, rather focused on broad issues of racial equity in Kansas, which includes some elements of the criminal justice system, but is not tasked with the comprehensive study of that system.
• In 2021, the Commission will be focusing on studying racial equity within economic systems, education, and healthcare.
• The Commission meets every-other week. There have been eleven meetings of the full Commission. With an additional 26 learning sessions being held in
numerous different locations and offered to people outside of the Commission to include community members, and stakeholders from law enforcement, healthcare, education, municipal government, and academic experts.

- Contact information for the Governor’s Commission on Racial Equity and Justice:
  - Phone 785-296-0530
  - Email: KansasCREJ@ks.gov
  - Mailing address: Capitol, 300 SW 10th Ave., Ste. 264W Topeka, KS 66612
  - Twitter Hashtag #KansasCREJ

- Process and timeline were reviewed. The Commission presented the final report to the Governor on December 1, 2020.

- Recommendations - 60 were made for state agencies, legislature, state and local governments. Focus, being highlighted in this presentation, included:
  - Law enforcement training
  - Officer certification and standards
  - Recruitment, retention, promotion
  - Accountability
  - Data collections
  - Public defense
  - Justice system
  - School resource officers
  - Tribal jurisdiction
  - Immigration and law enforcement
  - Behavioral health
  - Law enforcement funding

- The Commission will continue meeting every other week, and focus will begin on areas of education, health/health care, and economics.

Questions/Comments:
- What was intent of slide section that quoted about working with ICE in schools? The immigration community expressed a lot of fear in a wide range of areas including unmarked vehicles to a perception about issues that may come about that would impact undocumented individuals. There was a desire to have a clear statement about where boundaries lie, in relation to that. In hearing from the community, the Commission felt it was their responsibility to be a part of that voice, and to make that statement clear.

- Unsure of the policy regarding ICE in schools. Were schools safe-havens? The idea was to adopt a clear policy on immigration enforcement efforts. Policy
made to guide local law enforcement agencies on how to treat immigration enforcement efforts, to include resources and assistances that are available. There were two pieces, one to create clear policy so there is no confusion about ICE and to define clarity of safe havens in schools, but was meant more in terms of law enforcement when undocumented individuals are addressed there is a clear policy for what that looks like. And that immigrant communities are no longer left out of those conversations. The second piece about investing in education, there is a feeling that education and schools are not included in the policies that are being made. Local recommendations that local communities should adopt are greater transparency, and clarity in language and reduction in exclusion from some of our immigration communities.

- Could you please explain current recommendations as they apply for the juvenile justice system, interaction with law enforcement, and resources? Collaboration and partnership between schools and policing to increase mentorship and partnership worked well, and were included in the report. The position of having School Resource Offices in schools was also heavily reviewed with recommendations as to how they should be used and what to avoid. It was also noted in the report that making efforts for diversity and recruitment for diverse individuals that reflect the student environment. Providing opportunities to build greater relationships, and provide more training with how to engage with young people while ensuring the way to engage with the younger community was trained on. Court service officers and school officers were able to share their experiences noting it was helpful with building communications and relationships with youth who looked like them. The inclusion and diversity training helped to further build the relationship and trust within their law enforcement community by those students.

- Do the officers who teach at T-CALC have additional training in the Education field? Dr. Anderson replied that the officers who are at T-CALC, and the School Resource Officers are included as a staff member in all training and are receiving special training on the various subjects. Specifically at T-CALC, the officers are involved in staff meetings, and are observed just as any other teacher is observed. The relationships have been very positive.

- What about additional training for officers who are not teaching at T-CALC? There are certifications for SRO training. Some of the SRO’s who have been through that certification program have said they would like to see that training become a comprehensive program across the board.

- On the SRO’s, you do support having them in the Topeka Public Schools, correct? Dr. Anderson confirmed. They have her full support in being in the schools, and being a partner in education. The district’s Equity Council held a
student session, in which many in attendance were students of color. All of the students shared positive experiences such as athletic and summer camps, some shared their officer was their go-to, etc. Some feedback received regarding that based on where they lived, the perception of law enforcement varied. The goal of USD 501 is to have SRO’s be interactive, not viewed as the disciplinarian. Across the school, teachers and principals who perform home visits rely greatly on the SRO’s for support.

- Have you heard from students about their perception of officers in uniform? National data shows high incarceration rates occur when there are not SRO’s. The students, staff and families have not expressed a concern regarding the officers’ attire. Mr. Nave stated that in some of the data gathered noted that the attire can lower or heighten a perception in some communities, however it has not been something that has been recommended in Topeka.

- Are there any items from the State report and recommendations that you would want to bring to Topeka, specifically to review with TPD? With the report being a framework for the entire state, it really has not been reviewed to compare to our city. There are some items in the mental health field that Dr. Anderson would be interested in bringing forward. The last item was data. The amount as it relates to demographic would help to bring transparency, and trust as it relates to that with demographic breakdown. Would encourage a continued collaboration and perhaps regular opportunities to meet with the school system in a more systematic way to open ongoing dialogue.

- Were there any of the recommendations that you (Dr. Anderson) feel would be important to bring to Topeka? Now that the report is published, Dr. Anderson would like to review the report to navigate what practices are currently in place, and what could be expanded on to enhance transparency. On the heels of the social unrest, another avenue Dr. Anderson would be interested in assessing are the opportunity gaps, and ways to narrow or close those gaps. She would like to have a conversation perhaps within the next 30 days before the school year ends. Committee member Hiller stated she would be interested to expand that conversation to include broadening topics such as crime prevention for youth overall, expanding outside of the schools. Dr. Anderson also recommended inviting a couple of student groups to attend youth-centered conversations.

- Will there be another report, or will there be amendments added? There will be additional reports. Mental health issues that police departments across the state was another area that came up. The Governor was clear in saying the commission would be ongoing and that (economics, education, healthcare) are systemic things across Kansas are important to be addressed to proactively
support and grow our communities. Chairwoman Ortiz stated she appreciated receiving invitations to attend the meetings. The sub-committees (economics, education, health care) are meeting every-other week. The full Commission meets about every six weeks.

- Chairwoman Ortiz voiced appreciation for all of the work done by Dr. Anderson for all that she does for Topeka.

5) Discussion: Customer Service Protocols [Video 1:29:05 minute mark] [This presentation can be found on the committee's webpage]

CPT Haltom noted that some of the questions that had come in from the committee included topics about front desk procedures and reporting that occurs there, the online reporting program, and some general customer service questions.

Highlights:

- Front Desk Procedures 6.19.1 & 6.19.3 were read. The Front Desk lobby area is open 24/7/365. Officers there offer resources, complete reports that come in. Reports taken by the front desk officer is performed in same manner as if patrol officer would arrive at “on-scene” location. In instances where reporting parties do not want to stand in the front lobby to make report, it would be better to call and have a patrol officer respond on scene.

- With the online non-emergency report (www.topeka.org/tpd/reporting) was reviewed, along with the types of reports that can be submitted via that method. The Criminal Investigative Sergeant reviews all of the reports, and transfers the report to the proper bureau Sergeants who perform a more in-depth review to ensure it is a reportable offence and there is something criminal in nature. Those Sergeants then assign to officers.

- Solvability Factors, 6.30.3, was defined and reviewed. This is an industry standard, not unique to TPD. These are a standard for filtering cases.

- Case Volume for 2020: Calls for service was 90,115. Kansas Standard Offense Reports taken 17,911. Arrests 4,423. Online Reports received 1,111.

Questions:

- What would the department about utilizing the VIPS (Volunteers In Police Service) to help with some of the office assistance and other things that do not
require immediate officer attention, perhaps help with report writing but obviously would require office to make final approval on the report? VIPS are used in some of those positions, and are an invaluable resource that the department utilizes to help alleviate the need for sworn officers.

- Are there always two officers at the front desk? CPT Haltom stated there were not always two officers. Chief Wheeles stated the COVID-19 pandemic also created a challenge because VIPS were only recently allowed to begin coming back again to help serve.

- If people feel uncomfortable giving a report in the lobby, can they go to an interview room? Yes, and in some cases, the report is something that a detective would conduct anyway, and having those cubicles and interview rooms nearby is helpful.

- What kind of training do the front desk officers receive with regard to customer service and multiple line phones? It is the same training that all of the officers receive. The officer at the front desk will provide the same standard of response. Chief Wheeles stated there was no specific training for the multi-line phones, front window, and lobby because for a lot of those officers, that is one of many areas that officers work.

Committee member Hiller suggested simple training in customer service for those officers who are typically assigned to the front desk. Things such as making eye contact while maintaining a phone call, learning how to handle and prioritize multiple lines, and other fairly standard and simple training. Chief Wheeles appreciated the comments. He stated some of the officers who are assigned to the front desk often, are better at handling those types of concerns through experience.

Committee member Padilla suggested placing a cheat sheet with some tips for those officers. He noted from experience that the front desk officer is often looking down intently while on a call and without making the eye contact, that basic police practice of being vigilant is lost.

- With regard to the Online Reporting, how well is that seeming to be working? In 2020, over one thousand reports were received. Chief Wheeles noted the online tool was an additional way for citizens to contact the department, it was not a
replacement and people still had the option to call for service. He noted it was also a great way to avoid lines for non-emergency situations.

- With regard to online, will the reporting party receive some type of confirmation response? Yes. The form will provide a generated number. An important distinction to understand is that this form is not generating a case number. It is simply providing the basic information to the department for the officer to then follow-up and complete the report.

- If a report comes through, but does not meet the requirements in the Solvability Factors, what happens to it? It can be converted into an incident report, an offense report, and may get some follow-up but perhaps not much follow-up. Those reports that are not criminal in nature do not move past the second sergeant. Many are converted into a department report or a Kansas Standard Offense report.

- If, for example, my neighbor was on the front porch waiving a gun in the air, would that be something to report? Yes. That is part of the investigation and review process. If additional information is known, such as the neighbor’s name, if you are aware that they have a felony, etc is helpful. Chief Wheeles stated that often times, good intelligence has come from those online reports regardless of the final outcome.

6) Other Items
Continued conversation of customer service at next meeting.

7) Set next meeting agenda and date
Chairwoman Ortiz will be coordinating the agenda and next meeting date with the City Council Assistant. To receive notice of future meetings when they are posted to the City of Topeka’s Public Calendar, please complete the information found on the E-Notify program at: https://www.topeka.org/e-notify/

Citizens wanting to speak on the items may contact the committee. Questions or comments should be sent to the Liz Toyne, City Council Assistant, at etoyne@topeka.org.

8) Adjourn
Chairwoman Ortiz adjourned the meeting at 5:06pm.
Meeting video can be viewed at: https://youtu.be/YFmg1tDBn1Q