

City of Worcester
Advisory Committee on the Status of Women

Meeting minutes – Tuesday, June 6, 2023
Levi Lincoln Chamber
City Hall, 455 Main Street, Worcester, MA 01608
Also

<https://cow.webex.com/cow/j.php?MTID=mec5f5ee5dbf88ebdea1960bf33c1f400>

Meeting number: 2311 267 6845 Password: G2TmSkhjA32
Call in: 415-655-0001 Access Code: 2311 267 6845
Spanish subtitles were made available over WebEx

Attendance

Members Present: Esther Boama-Nyarko, Heather Borelli, Amaris Gonzalez,
Jennifer Hernandez, Taylor Rich, Marcia Macri

Members absent: Samantha Sendrowski

Staff: Jayna Turchek

Guests: Captain Matthew D’Andrea, Lt. Donna Brisette and Sgt Justin Bennes

Call to order Committeewoman Borelli called the meeting to order at 5:50 pm. Quorum was established on a roll call (6/0/0).

Review and approval of April 4, 2023 meeting minutes

Committeewoman Boama-Nyarko made a motion to approve the April 4, 2023 meeting minutes. Committeewoman Macri seconded the motion. Unanimously approved on roll call (6/0/0).

Conversation with Worcester Police Department

(Follow up on recommendations in the May 2022 Committee report on Gender Based Violence)

www.worcesterma.gov/uploads/4f/da/4fda10ab443073d20636f37bc069e7fe/gender-based-violence.pdf

Complaints and Reporting

Question 1: We would like a report on the number and nature of calls received from the public over the last 5 years related to gender, including intimate partner violence, stalking, sexual assault, street harassment, and hate crimes?

Response: Sargent Justin Bennes (Special Crimes Unit in the Investigative Division of the City Police Department) informed the Committee they do not track everything requested. They do track domestic crimes, protection orders, sexual assault incidents, stocking incidents and stocking arrests.

Below is what we track for our ICJRP Grant reporting:

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023YTD*
Domestic Violence Cases	1675	1401	1377	1271	345
Enforcement of Warrants	146	81	115	129	34
Arrest for Violation of a Protection Order	79	62	34	41	10
Sexual Assault Incidents	276	244	317	327	86
Stalking Incidents	5	8	15	6	2
Stalking Arrests	0	0	1	0	0

Question 2. How many gender-based crimes do you estimate go unreported?

Response: The WPD does not have a method of tracking unreported crime. However, according to RAINN, (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network) the nation's largest anti-sexual violence organization, only 310 out of every 1,000 sexual assaults are reported to police. That means more than 2 out of 3 go unreported.

(Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey, 2015-2019 (2020))

Question 3. What steps are the Police Department taking to create safe spaces for survivors and provide easier pathways for reporting?

Response: All Officer are trained in “Officer’s response to interpersonal violence” during in-service, and all Special Crimes Detectives are certified Sexual Assault Investigators through the Massachusetts Police Training Council (MPTC) as well as extensive outside trainings that continue throughout their career within the unit.

The police department also has approximately 80 crime watch meetings where officers discuss crime statistics and listen to citizen complaints. Citizens are encouraged to voice any concerns they have. The officers give their personal numbers out so if someone is fearful to say something at the meeting, they can call them afterward and personally discuss anything they would like on or off the record.

The police also work with LYFT and YWCA to establish cooperation and collaboration as another avenue to hear about crimes and victimization which allows the PD to help those in need and also arrest and prosecute those who are victimizing women.

Diversity

Question 1. What percentage of officers in the WPD are female?

Response: Worcester police currently have 31 female officers. This is approximately 7% of department.

Question 2. What percentage of officers in the Special Crimes Division, Detective Bureau, and Vice & Gang Unit respectively are female?

Response: The Special Crimes Division has 33% female Detectives (2 of 6), Detective Bureau has 14% female detectives 2 out of 27, Vice squad has 12.5% women (2 out of 16) and the Gang Unit does not have any females assigned.

Question 3. What actions is the Police Department taking to increase the gender diversity of the WPD, across all levels of the organization?

Response: The Worcester Police Department has recently assigned two fulltime Diversity Officers. The Worcester Police Department Diversity Officers are prioritizing diversity, equity, and inclusion in recruitment, hiring, promotions, and/or opportunities for career advancement (i.e.) development, and training within the Department.

WPD Diversity Officers not only are networking with Community Leaders, but are also working together with WPD Department Heads, to ensure that those underrepresented communities are represented.

Training

Question 1. Does the Police Department require trauma-informed care training for officers? In the Human Rights Commission from May 10, 2021, Police Chief Steven Sargent said he would look into the Cambridge Police Department's policy on Trauma Informed Policing based on the Commission's request. Has there been any follow-up as a result?

Response: The simple answer is yes.

The Municipal Police Training Committee (MPTC), an agency of the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS), serves the Commonwealth by establishing training standards, oversight, and policy guidance for policing professionals, for both the Recruit Officer Course (basic academy) and in-service training. Both trainings cover trauma-informed policing.

In fact, the theme to this year's in-service training is "Policing Through the Trauma Informed Prism." The outline that forms this year's theme is the growing body of research that affirms the unequivocal truth that trauma informed policing leads to better outcomes: for the people and the

communities we serve, the departments in which officers work, for their families, co-workers, and, ultimately, themselves.

Question 2. Does the Police Department require gender-bias police training? If so, for what divisions? If not, would the department welcome recommendations?

Response: Yes, both the MPTC and the WPD requires gender-bias police training for the entire department., such as Implicit Bias, Fair and Impartial Policing and Racial Intelligence Training.

Implicit Bias - Implicit bias and stereotyping is discussed and how it effects law enforcement and their decision making. The physical connections that have been made in the unconscious structures of our brains over a lifetime to support implicit bias can be recognized and changed, and we will discuss long-term and ongoing efforts to change negative associations into positive ones.

Fair and Impartial policing -Policing in modern society was discussed and the role of police in providing public safety to all without exercising implicit or explicit biases

In 2021 RITE (Racial Intelligence Training and Education) was taught in person (4 hours) - “The practice of Emotional Intelligence, Social Intelligence and RITE tools to treat ourselves and others (the public) fairly”

Cultural Competency-Being aware of your own cultural beliefs and values and how these may be different from other cultures. This class discussed bridging gaps between ethnic and cultural backgrounds in the community and the role of the police as uniting forces.

Policies and Programs

Question 1. What programs/policies does the WPD have in place to collaborate with community partners with regard to: 1) the prevention, 2) the early intervention/ identification of risk factors/early indicators, and 3) helping trafficked women escape commercial sexual exploitation?

Response: The Special Crimes Division, through grants from the Office of Violence Against Women and the VAWA Act, partner with the YWCA for court based domestic violence advocates and advocates within the Police Department who work directly with our Detectives, as well as the PIRSEW program. PIRSEW is the Police Initiated Response to Sexually Exploited Women. It is a program designed to identify sexual exploitation and human trafficking operations and to investigate and prosecute the offenders while assisting the survivors to NGO’s that work directly with that population. Training for local hotels and establishments that would be involved in these crimes is also available.

Question 2. Is WPD committed to targeting demand for sexual exploitation, rather than arresting victims? Is WPD committed to not arresting victims of intimate partner violence?

Response: The Special Crimes Division takes a victim-centered approach to our investigations and investigate human trafficking related crimes. Our WIN Program and partnership with the YWCA addresses the need for the assistance of victims in intimate partner violence. The Special Crimes Division and the assigned Domestic Violence Detective deal with cases after the arrest has been made.

When engaging in law enforcement activities, the Worcester Police Department Vice Squad focuses the majority of its efforts on targeting demand. The results of this commitment are shown by the fact that the Worcester Police Vice Squad arrest male “Johns” at more than twice the rate that females are arrested during Vice Squad undercover enforcement operations. The decision to focus the majority of law enforcement efforts on demand must always be balanced with the fact that many citizens and business owners who reside and work in the city actively complain to the Vice Squad of open and blatant prostitution related offenses occurring in their neighborhoods, particularly around schools and school bus stops. These crimes have a negative impact on the quality of life in these neighborhoods, and as such the Worcester Police Department is tasked with addressing both the supply and demand when dealing with sex related offenses.

Question 3. How many prostitution stings have been conducted in the past two years, since the Police Department has been working to end them?

Response: There have been 11 stings over the last two years. These stings have resulted in the arrest of 43 male “johns” and 20 females. These prostitution stings are to target the “johns”. The WPD has forewarned LYFT in regard to when they will be doing a sting beforehand, and outreach efforts are made contact the females prior to the enforcement operation to give them an opportunity to get off of the streets in advance of enforcement activity. The officers will also go to the area beforehand to again warn females in the area who are out “working” to leave the area. It is only after the 2 previous warnings that females will be arrested if they interfere with the investigation such as harassing the female officer or flagging down cars to warn them of the police sting, or if they remain in the area of the undercover operations, placing the effectiveness of the operation in jeopardy. (The police department does not send out undercover officers to try and pick up females). Only after being given several opportunities to clear the area will females be targeted and arrested by undercover officers for enforcement.

Question 4. What policies are in place to ensure trafficking women are not further victimized during interactions with law enforcement?

Response: There are no policies enumerated by the Worcester Police for that specifically. However, Special Crimes Detectives who are trained in Human Trafficking investigations as well as the “Policing Through the Trauma Informed Prism” work with these victims directly. Victims are offered services through local NGO’s at the outset, and their safety is paramount, superseding even the criminal investigation if necessary.

It should be noted that the Worcester Police Department does abide by Policy 211- Bias Free Policing and Profiling. Bias Free Policing essentially states that the decisions and conduct of law enforcement officers shall not consider a person's race, ethnicity, sex, **gender** identity, sexual orientation, religion, mental or physical disability, immigration status or socioeconomic or professional level.

Question 5. Does the Police Department have a system that allows survivors to report and be listened to, without having to prosecute if they would prefer not to? Does the WPD provide survivors with resources to get the support they need?

Response: As stated prior, the Special Crimes Division takes a victim centered approach when it comes to the reporting and investigating of sexual assaults. Detectives explain to the victims that their case and the prosecution of it is up to them. If they only want to be heard and have the incident documented, it is explained that it can be done. If the victim would like charges brought forward, circumstances allowing, Detectives will do so. Resources are available and provided to victims through the process.

Additional questions:

What is being done to prevent domestic crimes?

Response: WPD work with prisoners to help them understand the issues related to their crimes. Working with LYFT and others on mutual cases as well as training staff.

Are there any prevention efforts focused on youth?

Response: The Safe Streets Program focuses on young men 18 to 24 years of age assisting with jobs and referrals to non-profits. Work with Dept. of Children and Family on missing children; Child Advocacy Office in the District Attorney's office.

Are there existing barriers to serving those WPD serve?

Response: The crime itself is a barrier. With juveniles plus internet and cell phones there is little understanding of what they are doing is a crime. There are a lot of resources available. However, things like television courtroom scenes have played a role in having victims come forward. Doing do can be trimitic and not always successful.

Debrief Arbor Day event Friday April 28, 2023

(University Park tree planting and plaque in memory of women victims of gender-based violence)

Committeewoman Hernandez reported that the event was successful and thanked the Patrick Sargeant and Unsolved Worcester for bringing the missing plaque to the attention of the Committee. The tree replacement was planted next to the pond which provides an opportunity for the public to visit and reflect. Some family members of the women who lost their lives were

present for the ceremony and they appreciated the opportunity to remember their loved ones and bring attention to ongoing violence against women.

Election of Officers

Nominations opened for Chairperson. Jenifer Hernandez self-nominated herself for Chairperson.

Committeewoman Heather Borelli seconded Ms. Hernandez as Chairperson. Ms. Hernandez is the new Chairperson by a roll call vote. (6/0/0)

Nominations opened for Vice Chairperson. Ms. Borelli self-nominated herself for Vice Chairperson.

Committeewoman Hernandez moved Ms. Borelli as Chairperson. Seconded by Ms. Marci. Ms. Borrelli is the new Vice Chairperson by a roll call vote. (6/0/0)

Future project:

Mentorship for Young Women of Consequence. Committeewoman Gonzalez is willing to take the lead.

Adjournment at 6:25pm

Next meeting Tuesday July 11, 2023, 5:45pm.

Lead topic: Annual conversation with City of Worcester Human Resources Director on the status of women in city employment and volunteer opportunities