

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

May 20, 2021

The Public Safety Committee of the City of Mesa met in the lower-level meeting room of the Council Chambers, 57 East 1st Street, on May 20, 2021, at 9:32 a.m.

COMMITTEE PRESENT

David Luna, Chairman
Mark Freeman
Kevin Thompson

COMMITTEE ABSENT

None

STAFF PRESENT

Dee Ann Mickelsen
John Pombier
Alfred Smith

Chairman Luna conducted a roll call.

Chairman Luna excused Councilmember Freeman from the beginning of the meeting; he arrived at 9:53 a.m.

Items were discussed out of order but for purposes of clarity will remain as listed on the agenda.

1. Items from citizens present.

There were no items from citizens present.

2-a. Hear a presentation, discuss, and provide a recommendation on a new public safety response model for mental health 911 calls.

Office of Management and Budget Deputy Director Scott Butler introduced Performance Advisor II Amanda Freeman, Justin Chase and Matthew Moody from Solari Crisis and Human Services, and via Zoom, William Riley, Ph.D., ASU Professor, and displayed a PowerPoint presentation. **(See Attachment 1)**

Mr. Butler outlined the problem statement and explained that mental health is not a crime, but crime solvers are providing the primary response. He commented staff began to look at the issue to see if there were ways to address the response to mental health calls. He highlighted the three priorities that needed to be addressed (See Page 3 of Attachment 1):

- Ensure the City can provide services to the community and connect those who are dealing with mental or behavioral health crisis and provide the resources needed.
- Reduce the burden in jails, courts, and the law enforcement system.

- Reduce time demands placed on officers and get them back on the street to better utilize their training.

Professor Riley summarized the work at Solari and stated the agency has been working with community stakeholders and colleagues to approve approaches to deal with mental health care and interactions with public safety.

Professor Riley explained the U.S. invests the most money in health care yet has some of the worst health care of industrialized nations. He said if health care is going to improve, we need to reach outside the health care system, and address education, homelessness, and law enforcement. He remarked a theme that keeps coming up is behavioral health crises and how the involvement of Fire Departments (FD) and Police Departments (PD) do not serve patients well. He commented FD and PD agree they are not the best response for behavioral health crises.

Professor Riley stated the foundation for this approach is in the care fragmentation within the health care industry that is caused by conflicting financing mechanisms. He explained Medicare and Medicaid pay in different ways and there are a number of challenging policy conflicts between health plans, government payers, and healthcare organizations, as well as institutional bias in the health care system. He said reliance on law enforcement to respond to individuals in mental health crisis represents a fundamental misalignment in many communities. He indicated in studies with police officers the predominant theme is that this is not effective or efficient for PD or FD to be responding to these issues. (See Page 4 of Attachment 1)

Professor Riley provided an example of this system misalignment at the 911 dispatch center, which is the first point of contact for individuals experiencing behavioral crisis. He stated the challenge is that the preponderance of community calls to 911 related to behavioral health crises do not require law enforcement involvement, which is the only option open to 911 dispatchers. (See Page 5 of Attachment 1)

Professor Riley displayed a Sequential Intercept Model, which has six steps, starting with prevention and going through the criminal justice system. He reported a common element in all steps is how to divert individuals with behavioral health crises from law enforcement and into treatment. He added the paradox is that people with behavioral health disorders have an equal chance of being hospitalized or incarcerated. (See Page 6 of Attachment 1)

Ms. Freeman provided an overview of how a typical call is handled. She explained some calls end with community resources being provided; however, there may be circumstances, such as a waiting period or an individual declining services, where community services would not be provided. She reported Mesa PD and FD have policies in place to access community resources. (See Page 7 of Attachment 1)

Ms. Freeman explained another option is being added to the current crisis dispatch response, which will be to have call takers and dispatchers work with behavioral health professionals who identify the types of calls that could benefit as an alternative to a sworn officer responding. (See Page 8 of Attachment 1)

Mr. Chase described Solari as a non-profit agency based in the Valley since 2007 that provides crisis support, telephonic and team dispatching, and support to the community. He commented

their focus is providing resources to partners in law enforcement with crisis intervention team training.

Mr. Chase explained there are two schools of thought in areas where benefits can take place: a co-responder model where a joint approach is used to pair individuals and professionals with a first responder to go into the community and support an individual; and the second is diversion to avoid sending out a first responder. (See Pages 9 and 10 of Attachment 1)

Mr. Moody commented on the recommended approach to diverting calls from the Mesa 911 center to Solari. He outlined the first step, which is to co-locate a mental health professional that has worked in the field for several years and will provide coaching the moment the dispatcher calls. He added Solari will work with Mesa PD to expand their policy to reinforce and broaden the amount and types of calls that can be sent to Solari. (See Page 11 of Attachment 1)

Mr. Moody provided an overview of how mental health is structured in Arizona and the three main components of the crisis system: crisis line (Solari), crisis facilities like Community Bridges, and providers which includes crisis mobile teams.

Mr. Moody displayed a chart of current calls that are diverted to Solari. He stated Mesa PD approached Solari to change the policy, which was the first municipality in the country to do so. He explained an exchange program was implemented where the supervisors from 911 went to Solari to see how calls were processed and dispatched, and Solari supervisors visited the City of Mesa 911 center. (See Page 13 of Attachment 1)

Mr. Moody highlighted results comparisons over a one-year period and anticipates a 50% increase in the first six months and a 100% increase over a full year. (See Page 14 of Attachment 1)

Councilmember Thompson expressed his support for the program.

In response to a question from Boardmember Freeman related to how many mental health calls are received each year, Mr. Buter stated while there is not a code for a mental health calls, staff estimates approximately 20,000 calls annually.

Police Chief Ken Cost stated the department has a crisis response team which consists of eight officers and a sergeant that deal with mental health calls. He explained officers feel they are being called to be licensed psychologists or crisis counselors and at times they are tied up for three to four hours on mental health related calls. He commented the percentage of officers that are certified crisis intervention officers is well above average but the training they receive is a fraction of trained professionals.

Fire Chief Mary Cameli clarified that anything that can be done to mitigate mental health calls coming to the FD and PD would be helpful. She stated many of the calls are received because there is a medical component that must be ruled out.

In response to questions from Boardmember Freeman related to the expertise of behavioral specialists, Mr. Moody stated the average specialist has a bachelor's degree and a few years of field experience and at times a licensed professional will respond to a call. He continued by saying while some models in the country place a medical professional on a call, the focus at

Solari is to handle the behavioral health crisis and leave the medical or safety situations to the medical professionals.

In response to a question from Chairman Luna regarding the process, Chief Cost referred to Page 7 of the attachment and explained the behavioral treatment begins with the 911 call. He clarified if there are reported weapons or prior calls for service, PD will respond as those are safety issues.

In response to a question from Boardmember Freeman regarding the budget for the program, Mr. Butler commented the budget for the initial contract is \$75,000 and is set up in PD since that is where the contract will be managed.

Chairman Luna thanked staff for the presentation and expressed support for the program.

2-b. Hear a presentation and discuss an update on the Police Department's Critical Incident Review Board.

Police Commander Tim Walker introduced Genessee Montes, Principal of Jefferson Elementary School and Citizen Liaison on the Critical Incident Review Board and displayed a PowerPoint presentation. **(See Attachment 2)**

Commander Walker explained the Critical Incident Review Board (CIRB) was established in August 2020 and was created by the work of the Use of Force Review Board and Implementation Committee which met for over a year. He stated that Board was comprised of nine civilians, 15 sworn officers, and two professors from ASU who met every two weeks to come up with best practices for implementation.

Commander Walker indicated CIRB reviews Category 1 and 2 incidents, and said Category 1 are in-custody deaths, officer-involved shootings, and any other incident where someone is seriously injured; and Category 2 is canine bites and unintentional strikes to the head and/or less serious injuries. He clarified Category 1 are automatically reviewed by CIRB and Category 2 are at the discretion of the Board depending on the circumstances.

Commander Walker highlighted the purpose of the Board and said CIRB's efforts are to improve the agency and promote public trust. He added the Board also looks at supervision, training, response, how to improve communication and tactics, and how the department can improve training and policies from interaction with the community. He reported these non-binding decisions are provided to Chief Cost. (See Page 3 of Attachment 2)

Commander Walker explained the Board meets monthly and described the makeup of the Board. He stated in 2021 to date, 10 cases have been assigned to the Board with the goal of reviewing them in under 60 days. He reported the sooner a case can be reviewed the sooner issues can be identified and addressed. He indicated the Board looks at presentations from three different groups: criminal investigations unit, training unit, and professional standards groups. He added all three submit a report and make a presentation to the Board and a non-binding recommendation to the Chief. (See Page 4 of Attachment 2)

Ms. Montes commented that she has been serving on the board since last year and remarked on the process which is to receive all the information on a case, gain different perspectives, ask

questions, and receive a copy of the notes that are sent to the Chief to ensure all the relevant information is included. She explained the training unit is very open about how trainings are conducted, which the public is not always aware of, and CIRB members have been able to identify information they believe should be conveyed to the public.

In response to a question from Boardmember Thompson related to the training that citizen members complete, Commander Walker stated they are required to attend the citizens academy and the in-service training that officers attend. He stated the in-service training includes 10 hours on use of force tactics, tactical force, and how to de-escalate situations.

In response to additional questions from Boardmember Thompson, Assistant City Manager John Pombier stated for a holistic approach to work it is important to have untrained civilians that sit on the panel because they provide a perspective that officers cannot provide. He expressed the opinion that it is important that someone asks why officers react or do the things they do to gain various points of view and to ensure officers are properly trained.

Police Legal Advisor Geoffrey Balon explained state law now requires a certain amount of training for this type of board; however, that law is still under review and the policy will be clarified in the future as to the citizens role.

Chief Cost clarified that when recruiting citizens for CIRB it was important not to recruit individuals that agree with everything. He stated the report cannot be sent to the Chief without input from all CIRB members and then it goes to the executive level for review and possible action.

In response to a question from Boardmember Freeman, Commander Walker clarified that CIRB has an atmosphere of openness, honesty, and transparency which is created to get to the truth even when it means seeing things that are unpleasant. He added the only way to do that is a forum where everyone is comfortable to ask the necessary questions.

In response to a question from Chairman Luna related to the difference between an independent board and this structure, Mr. Pombier commented this structure reviews critical incidents to provide input to the Chief and is more of an advisory group than oversight. He emphasized this structure brings in community members to work on actual events and turn that into ways to improve the PD.

Chairman Luna requested a future report on incidents, the recommendations that CIRB provides, and the outcomes in terms of training or personnel.

Deputy City Attorney Alfred Smith cautioned that information is not provided that is the subject of pending incidents.

Mr. Pombier said they will return to the committee in September or October with a report.

Chairman Luna thanked staff for the presentation.

2-c. Hear a presentation and discuss an update on COVID-19 vaccinations, including the Mesa Fire and Medical vaccination POD, number of vaccinations administered, and public outreach methods.

Fire Chief Mary Cameli introduced Deputy Fire Chief Michelle Denton, who displayed a PowerPoint presentation. **(See Attachment 3)**

Chief Denton explained the COVID-19 vaccine POD began on January 13, 2021, will end on June 12, and has included walk-up and drive-through vaccinations.

Chief Denton commented the City of Mesa immunization program has been in place for over 20 years, has included partners such as Mesa Public Schools (MPS) and the Maricopa County Health Department. She stated to date, the City has provided 60,000 vaccinations. (See Pages 2 and 3 of Attachment 3)

Chief Denton remarked on the efforts by staff to expand the vaccinations which has included parking lots, gyms, construction sites, and car dealerships. She said male dominated worksites were targeted as part of the "Shoot 'n Scoot" program as that demographic was not being reached. (See Page 4 of Attachment 3)

Chief Denton highlighted the partnerships and community advocacy groups that provided staffing, facilities, food, volunteers, ideas, transportation, connection to the underserved, and much more. (See Page 5 of Attachment 3)

Chief Denton pointed out paramedics were being used to complete up to 24 hours of their clinical training time in the PODs. She added last week there were three medic students each day giving 200 shots per day which provided priceless experience.

Chairman Luna thanked staff for the presentation.

3. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Public Safety Committee meeting adjourned at 10:59 a.m.

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Public Safety Committee meeting of the City of Mesa, Arizona, held on the 20th day of May 2021. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

DEE ANN MICKELSEN, CITY CLERK

la/dm
(Attachments – 3)