



TONAWANDA REFORM AND REINVENTION COLLABORATIVE



MAIN COMMITTEE MEETING

December 2nd, 2020

9:30 AM

Zoom meeting

MINUTES

PRESENT - Jill O'Malley -Facilitator, Shannon Patch, Joseph Emminger, James Stauffiger, Corey Flatau, William Krier, Tiffany Hamilton, James Chattam, Kenneth Martin, James Rozier, Danielle D'Abate, William Laugeman

ABSENT – Christine Milosich, Darren Hearitt, Kenny Walker

I. CURRENT WORK

- November meeting minutes uploaded to public folder – documents as well as minutes will be uploaded to public document folder
- Welcome PO William Laugeman from the Police Club to the meeting

II. PRESENTATION – “To Serve and Protect - A Historical Glance of Policing” by Tiffany Hamilton - Chief Diversity Officer at Daemen College

1. What is racism? - Broadly a marginalization and or oppression of black, indigenous and people of color based on a society constructed racial hierarchy that privileges white people
2. How do racism and policing intersect?
 - You are not a racist if you acknowledge that you have power, however, it is your responsibility to recognize it. Try to undo the harm done to those who do not have the privilege. Understanding white privilege will break down the system. Laws were created to separate and oppress. We need to examine the policies created to oppress that excludes others for being themselves. It also exists in personal behavior.
 - We must speak in socially accepted language. Speaking Spanish marginalizes and separates individuals.
 - What it means for policing? How it started – in the Northern US – the “watch” and “big stick” was informal policing. People would pay people to protect their properties. They would stay informed of protests, slave revolts. Slaves were not able to organize.
 - First Niagara Frontier police department created in 1866 – Poor whites with very similar living situations to slave life would align themselves with rich land owners as opposed to slaves. They had a loyalty to whiteness.

- Shannon Patch– Community Watch Groups often have racial undertones. How do we use people that want to be engaged to not have racial undertones. We need to understand that language does matter. “Watch Group” is trigger statement now. Be careful of language.
- Unexamined information to people that want a watch group must be trained? The Watchmen flyer distributed said to freed slaves that you weren’t safe around people called the watchmen. They are not there to help you but want to hurt you. In April 1851 people of color were warned against police – and now they are afraid of police in 2020. We need to figure out what happened in between then and now.
- After Civil War – volunteer policing groups (Watchmen) shifted to police departments. It evolved from catching slaves to holding them down. Enforced Jim Crow laws (state and local statutes that legalized racial segregation) said now that they are free let’s **control** them. Laws and departments issued through government kept law in place for example, charging police officers to enforce Jim Crow if they don’t comply. That is the frustration that people of color in America have. Laws and policies and procedures continue to marginalize to keep opportunity and access away. Keep superiority of whiteness alive.
- Jim Chatham – Modern policing is NOT Jim Crow in his dealings.

THEN VS NOW

Historical oppressions

- Splitting families through slave trade /mass incarceration
- Slave rebellions punishable by death/civil protests with police intimidation and violence indicting/not convicting Klan members
- Forced labor on plantations/unpaid prison labor

Question:

When will there be acknowledgement of the role of over how biased behavior have played in creating and upholding diverse policies including law enforcement – i.e. stop and frisk.

If we can identify these things, and what the outcomes were, we can determine what to do differently going forward. What is police training going to look like after we investigate the history of policing so we can understand why communities are generationally scared to build a relationship with police?

- Cory Flatau – one common theme on both sides, police side, people grow up and are targeted because of their skin color and grouped in. Police officers come on the scene and are viewed as racist even though they are not. That is a frustration for police officers. Other end feels frustration as well. There is bias against police.
- Tiffany Hamilton – It is challenging to change generational themes. Police needs more empathy. None of this is fair, and we should be past it now, but we’re not. How do we make communication better? Police are in a status that can change the interaction to diffuse; they have more responsibility.
- Jill O’Malley– Is the onus on Police Department for George Floyd? Should we say a loud that we do not condone?
- Shannon Patch – Slavery vs Incarceration – If the law is bad that is problematic policy makers need to change

- Cory Flatau - Police work on a Community Bank Account. Putting deposits into the community, good bank deposits are talking to kids, community involvement etc. When George Floyd comes along deposits are withdrawn.
- Tiffany Hamilton – Officers need to work hard to “make deposits” and let people see that officers stand with you
- Jill O’Malley– not only local disconnect, there’s disconnect between Albany and local, example: bail reform

Question:

What is responsibility of police department during protests? They are supposed to keep the peace, but it is not a dialogue.

- Tiffany – It is very complex, what are the protocols to lead to de-escalation? What we are currently doing, the policies are all over the place. Are there other ways to approach this; define what the Right to Assemble means? There are laws under this right. Look at successes and analyze outcomes that have currently happened.
- Shannon/Tiffany – Peacemakers are constituents that just come to events and hang out. They are valuable community members that can build a relationship with police. Are they useful? Community groups who are invested in the community exist, we should look to have them work with police.
- Jill – Lt Milosich and I spoke of a need for standardized training for Community Watch groups that will be helpful to them and not create more problems. One idea is to meet once a month to go over what groups are out there and bring them under one umbrella. There is a need for a buffer between groups and police.
- Jim Chatham – Is it beneficial if police intercede sooner? Police cannot comment if under investigation. Police Departments are not able to come out taking stances on national news. People want leaders to take stance, maybe the Town Board instead of police. Remember this is based on 465 responses in a Town with over 70,000 people.
- Jill -There was nothing surprising on survey. We are not writing plan based on concerns. Survey wants more policing which needs Town Board support. We need subcommittees to deal with constituent/police needs/wants
- Jim Chatham –Most attention was community groups, community policing and more policing

III. EQUITY AND DIVERSITY FORUM

- Equity and Diversity Forum is a National Federation for Just Communities. They have healing circles, but have they been cancelled due to Covid. They may not work virtually. Tiffany and Darren may possibly establish a once a month healing circle in the future.

IV. SUBCOMMITTEES –

1. Youth Engagement –

- Officers playing basketball with kids, engaging with them.
- Work with school district, participate in the classroom creating positive interactions with youth
- Recruitment of some kids to be interested in law enforcement
- YES program can reach out to school to get more kids involved

- Build relationships with youth so kids see police as public servant, not “watchmen”
- Jill O’ Malley – make sure right people are in place based on personality, not seniority. If they are officers that don’t like children, don’t place them there
- William Laugeman – School Liaison Officers are assigned to local schools, union would have to discuss compromise to make sure right officers and in the right place
- Juvenile detective bureau?
- Have officers at community events, engaging with people.
- Jim Chatham – Christine is where it will start. On the union side, officers that don’t want to do it, won’t. That shouldn’t be a problem.
- There is grant money and more involvement will be in place.

2. Community Outreach –

- Transcends generational lines, we need youth and elder getting involved in community
- Outreach – how do we open up to who would like to participate?
- Neighborhood watch is one big piece
- Subcommittee selection: identify key stakeholders, how will we advertise to public?
- How will we get feedback?
- Publish to see if anyone wants to participate

V. NEXT STEPS

- Mark Calendars for next meetings (all 9:30 AM Start)
 - 1.7
 - 1.21*
 - 2.11
 - 3.4
- Will begin sending portions of plan in December/January for input and review.

VI. FUTURE BUSINESS:

- Meeting scheduled 12.9 with Chief to outline written plan – call for subcommittee participants community members, students, SLO members
- Solicit and contact subcommittee reps

Meeting adjourned until 1/7/2021