

City of Alexandria, Virginia

# Civilian Oversight of Policing in Alexandria

Community Engagement Meetings  
February 27 and March 3, 2021



# Council Direction in June 9, 2020 Resolution 2950



- Established a Community Police Review Board in Alexandria
- Directed the City Manager and City Attorney to return to Council at the first Legislative Meeting of September with a proposed ordinance to establish a community police review board in Alexandria

# Legislative Authority from the General Assembly



- Senate Bill 5035 (Hashmi), House Bill 5055 (Herring) authorized localities to establish civilian oversight bodies
- Authority for these bodies to receive, investigate and issue findings regarding law enforcement in their community
- Investigate policies, practices, and procedures of law enforcement and make recommendations
- Goes into effect July 1, 2021

# What is Civilian Oversight of Policing?



- Establishment of a body of civilians in a community that is tasked with reviewing, monitoring and/or investigating policing in that community
- Oversight
- Accountability
- Transparency

# Why Civilian Oversight of Policing?



- Promote public trust in police services
- Ensure integrity and transparency during police investigations
- Ascertain whether there are systemic issues that need to be addressed
- Create and support a system that delivers the most professional, appropriate and effective police services possible to our community

# Models of Civilian Oversight of Policing



- Investigative
- Review
- Auditing
- Hybrid

# Review-Focused Oversight of Policing



- Most basic model of civilian oversight of policing
- Reviews completed investigations, offering recommendations regarding findings
- Civilian board, composed of citizen volunteers, reviews completed police internal affairs investigations of complaints
- Board generally offers non-binding recommendations regarding the accuracy, completeness, impartiality of investigations
- Issues recommendations regarding sufficiency of discipline resulting from investigations

# Investigation-Focused Oversight of Policing



- Takes a complaint, conducts an investigation, and renders a conclusion
- Operates separately from law enforcement agency
- Often a separate city agency
- Conducts independent investigations of complaints against law enforcement officers, civilian employees
- May completely replace police internal affairs for all investigations of law enforcement conduct



# Auditing-Focused Oversight of Policing



- Tend to focus on systemic reform of policing
- Focused on patterns and practices of policing rather than individual incidents
- Examines patterns in complaint investigations
- Looks for relevant patterns in quality of investigations, findings, and discipline
- Makes recommendations
- Monitors or reviews individual critical incident or complaint investigations

# Hybrid Oversight of Policing



- Parts of the investigative, review and auditing models are brought together
- The combination may be unique to the community in order to achieve the balance of oversight necessary in and demanded by the community
- Some researchers call a hybrid model the “Ideal Police Review System”

# Key Features of Effective Oversight of Policing



- Independence
- Adequate funding
- Access to critical information
- Rapport with key officials
- Ample authority
- Transparency
- Community/stakeholder support and outreach
- Ability to review policies, training and other systemic issues

# Key Takeaways



- “If you’ve seen one Community Police Review Board you’ve seen one Community Police Review Board”
- Needs to be unique to the community it intends to serve
  - must have the scope and authority necessary to be responsive to the needs, concerns, perceptions and problems in that community
  - must be built on the engagement of local stakeholders and robust community input

# Alexandria Community Policing Review Board: Purpose



- Enhance legitimacy of policing in Alexandria
- Increase and maintain trust between and among the Police Department, City Council, City Manager and the community

# Alexandria Community Policing Review Board: Objectives



- Provide timely, fair and objective review and evaluation of policing policies, practices, procedures, and outcomes in Alexandria
- Provide meaningful assessments and corrective recommendations intended to remedy discriminatory practices, including racial and social inequities, that it may find
- Ensure the protection of all communities through recommended actions and reform, including in the criminal justice system
- Recommend strategies for effectively implementing these reforms

# Alexandria Community Policing Review Board: Scope & Duties



- Authority to conduct administrative investigations of matters involving use of force, incidents resulting in death, and incidents of severe misconduct
  - Investigative authority includes subpoena power
  - Board may recommend discipline
- Authority to review all administrative investigations completed by the Alexandria Police Department (APD) for completeness
- Authority to evaluate policing practices, policies, procedures, and outcomes in Alexandria; issue findings; and provide actionable, advisory recommendations regarding policing practices, policies and procedures in Alexandria

# Alexandria Community Policing Review Board: MOU



- Board shall enter into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Alexandria Police Department
- Define the terms of the relationships and mutual obligations between the Board and APD
- Ensures the Board is able to do its independent work but still be integrated into the City's other necessary procedures –helps us all work together



# Alexandria Community Policing Review Board: Membership



- Seven member Board appointed by City Council
- Residents of the City
- Fairness, objectivity, integrity
- Experience relevant to the Board's duties
- Create a fair, objective, independent, diverse and representative body

# Alexandria Community Policing Review Board: Membership



- At least three members who come from historically racially or socially marginalized communities that have commonly experienced disparate policing in Alexandria
- At least one member who represents an organization, office, or agency that seeks racial or social justice or that otherwise advocates on behalf of historically, racially or socially marginalized communities, particularly communities that may have experienced disparate policing; and
- At least one member with past experience in law enforcement, criminal justice or policing who, by law, may not be a voting member of the Board

# Alexandria Community Policing Review Board: Staffing



- Policing Auditor
- Investigators
- Legal services from the City Attorney's office
- Support of outside legal counsel

# Alexandria Community Policing Review Board: Ongoing Discussion



- Entire draft ordinance is under ongoing consideration
  - Board membership and procedures
  - Timing of administrative investigations when there is a criminal investigation
  - Confidentiality of investigative materials
- Councilman Seifeldein has submitted specific suggestions, changes that will be posted to the webpage

# Community Input



- “If you’ve seen one Community Police Review Board you’ve seen one Community Police Review Board”
- Needs to be unique to the community
  - must have the scope and authority necessary to be responsive to the needs, concerns, perceptions and problems in that community
  - must be built on the engagement of local stakeholders and robust community input
- Opportunity to tailor our Community Policing Review Board to the particular needs, concerns, perceptions, problems and characteristics of Alexandria

# Next Steps



- Use collected community input to advise Council and influence draft ordinance under Council consideration
- Community input gathered and submitted will be posted to the Webpage
- Bring community input forward for Council consideration, along with the proposed ordinance, for first reading at the March 9 City Council legislative meeting
- Schedule public hearing and adoption of the ordinance at the March 13 Council Public Hearing