

# Commission on Racial & Ethnic Disparity in the Criminal Justice System

Connecticut Judicial Branch

## Meeting Minutes

January 11, 2021

2:00 – 3:30

Virtual Meeting via WebEx

*Commission members in attendance: Justice Lubbie Harper, Jr. (Chair), Alex Tsarkov (Majority Leader of the House), Amonda Hannah (DOC), Avery Gaddis (Minority Leader of the Senate), Carleton Giles (BOPP), Claud Chong (COPD), Gail Hardy (DCJ), Hakima Bey-Coon (OVA), David McGuire (Majority Leader of Senate), Monica Rams (DCF), Chief Ridenhour (CT Police Chiefs Association), Preston Tisdale (Governor), Scott Jones (President Pro Temp of Senate), Sharon Cheeks (Governor), Cheryl Sharp (CEO).*

*Non-members present: Deb Fuller (Judicial-CSSD), Troy Brown (Judicial-CSSD), Chief Higgins (Yale University Chief of Police), Chief Roberts (former Hartford Chief of Police, current head of security with Hartford Public Schools), Chief Riddick (West Hartford Police Chief), Aileen Keays (Contractor – IMRP), Samantha Hawes (Graduate Intern – IMRP).*

### **I. Welcome**

- a. Meeting commenced at approximately 2:13pm

### **II. Review and approve minutes from Nov meeting**

- a. Commissioner Giles moved to approve, Commissioner Tisdale et al seconded, approved unanimously via voice vote.

### **III. Review and approve 2019-2020 biennial report**

- a. Commissioner Giles moved to approve, Commissioner Cheeks et al seconded, approved unanimously via voice vote.

### **IV. Panel Discussion Regarding Police Accountability & Leadership**

- a. What challenges do you face as Chief and how might community and CT General Assembly be helpful? Also, what issues do you believe black officers face, specifically?
  - i. Need to gain public trust, and we need to build trust for them. One way LE can do that is by showing up when something has happened in the community. Also, respond to phone calls/e-mails from the community. If you know their name, use their name. Every lady is a lady and every gentleman is a gentleman, until they're not. If you're invited to a BBQ, go. Be there in good and bad.
  - ii. Sometimes, black officers feel they are not black enough for their community and not blue enough for their brothers and sisters in law enforcement.

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- iii. Only 3% of budget is for unrestricted/discretionary purposes. The rest is for personnel and contracts. This limits a chief's ability. Hesitant to accept private funding because of a potential appearance of impropriety/ 'buying influence'.
  - iv. An additional barrier is history – true v. false histories. A lot of officers aren't aware of the historical relationship between police and the black community; why members of the black community might fear police.
  - v. Many departments don't have decent diversity, particularly with regard to race. This can make it difficult to implement change, as well.
  - vi. Unions can make real change a challenge, as well.
  - vii. When seek to meet with the community to broker improved relationships, sometimes it's hard to know who in the community truly represents those in the community whom you are trying to reach the most.
  - viii. A benefit of being a black chief - we know how to meet people in the community where they are.
- b. What can we do in recruitment?
- i. The polygraph attempts to get at some racist-type characteristics. Looking into incorporating an integrity component. Fire department includes an assessment of integrity in its assessments and if applicants don't pass the integrity test, then they don't pass the overall test.
  - ii. Officers assigned to perform backgrounds for potential new-hires need to be the right officers, too. At-times, officers are placed in backgrounds unit because someone in the department wants certain people in to recruit who they want to maintain the status quo. Need the people with a service-oriented mind and values in the role of performing background checks.
  - iii. Potential solutions?
    - 1. Reporting the demographics of people who were weeded out during the recruiting process and why. Potentially performing an audit.
  - iv. Low number of racial minority applicants for officer positions. Would love to encourage women and persons of color to enter law enforcement.
- c. Disparity between how communities handle juveniles who commit relatively minor violations. Racial/ethnic minority students/youth growing up in urban areas, tend to end up in the JJ system whereas youth in suburban areas who are more likely racial/ethnic majority are brought home for their parents to address their poor behavior and they are kept out of the JJ system. Justice Harper asked if officers are informed of their options to divert youth from formal systems when discretionary decisions might be appropriate.

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### V. Updates on other commissions, committees and task forces

- a. *Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee* (JJPOC) – Judicial/CSSD
  - a. JJPOC RED Workgroup Update – Judicial/CSSD
    - i. Has one proposal it is advancing this year to require pedestrian stops with police to be recorded in the same way as traffic stops.
- b. *Racial Profiling Prohibition Project* (CTRP3) – IMRP
  - a. Due to snow, there was no December meeting. The next meeting will be Thursday, January 14, 2021 at 10:00 a.m. CTRP3 Policy Work Group is developing recommendations on a 2-tier traffic enforcement system (primary vs secondary stop violations), for the Police Transparency and Accountability Task Force (PTATF).
- c. *CT Sentencing Commission* (CSC) – IMRP
  - a. Proposed several bills to the legislature.
    - i. Sentence modification statutes – extension of eligibility. Under current law, in order to modify sentences of over 3 yrs, need permission of State’s Attorney. Proposal would increase that to 7 yrs for cases that did not go to trial. For cases that went to trial, would no longer require States Attorney approval.
    - ii. Drug-free zones – resurrecting proposal from 2012 which would reduce zones from 1500 ft to 200 ft.
    - iii. Voting – would restore voting rights to everyone incarcerated except for those sentenced to life.
- a. *Police Transparency and Accountability Task Force* (PTATF) – IMRP
  - i. Next meeting is tomorrow, Tuesday, January 12<sup>th</sup>, at 1pm. Preliminary report will most likely be approved at February meeting. Still some issues to work out on mandated recommendations. Youth (under 18) listening sessions are planned for Tuesdays from 4-6pm on: February, 2, 9, and 16. For more info and to register, go to [www.ctpolicetransparency.com](http://www.ctpolicetransparency.com).

### VI. Distribution of Commission statement in response to George Floyd homicide

- a. Statement was shared with media, Judicial Branch, and all State’s Attorneys (thanks to Gail Hardy).

### VII. Other business

- a. Preston Tisdale just became the first black partner at Koskoff, Koskoff & Beider. Amazing accomplishment that the Commission wants to recognize.

### VIII. Meeting adjournment

- a. Motion to adjourn made by Commissioner Cheeks, seconded by Commissioner Ridenhour. Meeting concluded at 3:52pm