

Working Group for Police & Community - Group Memory
Meeting July 22, 2021

Meeting Goal: The primary purpose of this meeting was to conduct introductions, discuss process expectations, as well as group expectations and guidelines. These notes provide a general overview of the key topics of discussion.

Election of Chair and Vice Chair: The resolution establishing the Working Group calls for the election of a Chair and Vice Chair. The group discussed that toward the end of the process, the Working Group will put forward recommendations to the City Council, and the Chair and Vice Chair will be instrumental in this process, as a more traditional committee format might be used to vote on those recommendations. Further, the Chair and Vice Chair roles would include representing the group as needed, such as during the public forums that are required components of this process.

Ultimately, the Working Group decided via a unanimous poll to table the election for a later date (as these positions become more relevant).

Expectations of Confidentiality: The Working Group discussed the level of confidentiality most appropriate for these meetings. The resolution forming this committee anticipates some level of transparency to update City Council and conduct public forums.

Some committee members expressed an interest in transparency to increase public trust and ensure accountability for the Working Group. Others expressed an interest in full and frank discussion that may be best preserved with some measure of confidentiality. Confidentiality may be particularly important in a community the size of Laramie.

The Working Group took a poll and decided to release public notes that convey general information (summaries & themes) without attributing statements to individuals.

Committee Limitations: Remarks were made on the legal limitations in Laramie, WY of civilian oversight of law enforcement, particularly relating to personnel decision-making (hiring, firing, promoting, disciplining, release of personnel files, etc.). In Laramie, these are the responsibilities of the Civil Service Commission. This committee works against a backdrop of strong statewide policies protecting the privacy of police personnel records. The Working Group will need to consider this context as it determines its recommendations and the ability to implement those recommendations. There was also a question regarding whether there were any specific court decisions that could influence the Working Group's recommendations (e.g., rulings on police safety issues).

Some members noted that Cheyenne, WY has some level of civilian oversight of their police force (<https://www.wyomingnewsnow.tv/2020/11/13/cheyenne-pd-becomes-first-in-state-to-have-civilians-on-force-review-board/>). The conversation indicated that more information was needed about this topic and this should be considered in future meetings.

Committee members also noted that many states are developing citizen review boards and there is a great deal of variability in these models. Members of the Working Group indicated an interest in gathering and sharing information about these models.

Next Working Group Meeting: August 19, 2021 from 5:15pm – 7:00pm.