

Working Group for Police & Community – Public Comment Summaries

Public Forum Dates: November 29th, December 2nd, December 4th

November 29th Comments:

- Debra Hinkel– Recommended exploration of a co-responder model, where the police officer is not in uniform. Expressed that this model reduced the potential for intimidating someone in crisis. Also recommended seeing additional officers receive CIT training.
- Taylor Norton– Noted that in many situations there is no need for police officers to be present when someone is experiencing a mental health crisis and that this is a burden on police officers who are already asked to do so much. Other professions (such as mental health professionals) could handle this responsibility.
- Marlis – Noted that she has personally had multiple experiences with police officers while experiencing a mental health crisis. Noted that many of these experiences have been positive and that she has a generally positive view of the police and finds there have been many beneficial changes. However, there have been situations when the police officer interactions have not been helpful (the officers were snarky, triggering, and unkind). Noted that the mental health training officers can receive makes a dramatic difference in how they handle the situation.
- Sean Moran – Would like to see an oversight board review the manual Laramie Police Department uses and make recommendations for changes. Suggested that the City explore a mental health response model in which only mental health professionals respond to mental health calls, such as welfare checks.
- Sam N.– Recommended the implementation of a complaint system that is outside of the police department to make it easier for people to report complaints anonymously. Also recommends the demilitarization of the police.
- Linda Devine – Remarkd on client’s experiences with excessive force and noted the need for a better complaint system when people fear retaliation. Also noted that intoxication cases can get out of hand and recommended that the group explore solutions for this such as additional deescalation training.
- Marlis – Noted the need for training on addiction issues and alcohol issues. Also noted the important role of dispatchers and the possibility of dispatchers having a notation system were citizens could note their mental health issues.
- Debra Hinkel – Noted that there is an option for notation in the dispatchers’ system. Also noted that CIT training is important because officers never know when they will have to engage with someone experiencing a mental health crisis.
- Karlee Provenza– Noted that individuals with mental health issues are more likely to be killed by police and there is a perception that those with mental health issues are violent and this impacts how they are treated. Expressed the need for a complaint system that does not go through the City or police department.
- Taylor Norton – Noted that the mental health training offered to police officers is either too much or too little. Noted that LPD makes a large number of welfare checks, which could be done by other professionals with training more tailored to the task. Also noted that it is important for LPD to be held accountable to the community it represents and that the community should feel safe.

- Marlis – Noted that the focus has been on LPD, but it is important to keep in mind the interactions with other agencies.
- Linda Devine – Stated that it important to consider that Laramie is a transient community and many of the folks have had interactions with law enforcement in other communities that might influence their interactions with and perceptions of police.

December 2nd Comments:

- Erin O’Doherty – Expressed concern about policies related to tickets and warnings for minor traffic violations including equipment violations (e.g., taillight is out).
- Isabella Pope – Would like to ensure the working group is considering the process of welfare checks. Noted stories from individuals in crisis who interacted with police officers who used excessive force (e.g., too many police officers show up).
- Rep Provenza – Noted the state is working to implement a statewide suicide number (988). Noted that a citizen oversight board could be beneficial, in part because citizens would have additional “out of the box” ideas and it would be important that this type of board having the ability to conduct audits. Noted that the Cheyenne law enforcement has had a positive experience with their review board.
- Erin O’Doherty – Asked whether there was a way for citizens to make an anonymous complaint. Chief Stalder noted that there is a link on the police website that is completely anonymous.
- Isabella Pope – detailed an incident in which officers were negligent when an individual was experiencing a mental health crisis and was held at the hospital. Urged the working group to look closely at these policies.

December 4th Comments:

- Jason Clark – Noted that he has been in mental health crisis and has personally had a number of interactions with law enforcement that have varied in experience (some positive, some negative). The negative experiences included being restrained and humiliated. Acknowledged that there needs to be a community response to these situations, and this response should be a medical response, not a police response. Also stated that a citizen review board should exist and that board should include a member who experiences mental health issues. Noted that the power to take someone’s life requires accountability.
- Taylor Norton – Noted that police (who have the power to take lives) should be held to a high standard by the community. Because of this, community oversight is important and also supports a citizen oversight board with a member who experiences mental health issues.
- Jason Clark – Noted that citizen oversight boards have been implemented across the U.S and expressed an appreciation for models like those in Denver and New York that focus on mental health responses instead of police responses. Also noted there are individuals who are unable to attend these forums to express their thoughts and concerns, some of which cannot attend because of symptoms from mental health issues. Advocated for a compassionate response instead of a punitive response or incarceration for mental health crises.
- Taylor Norton – Noted that individuals with mental health issues are not inherently dangerous, however that perceptions can cause people to treat them as a threat and that can elicit defensive behaviors.

- Sara Bursac – Noted that she coordinates local services for acupuncture treatment that reduces stress and symptoms of withdrawal, including services offered to those in detention. Noted that there are community partners that are willing to come together and generate creative solutions.
- Billy Harris – Asked a question about the role of LPD members in the working group and the potential for biased perspectives on the working group. Recommended the implementation of a citizen oversight board that has separation between police and the civilian board.
- Timberly Vogel – Asked a question about how the working group has considered public comments made to City Council prior to the formation of the working group. Recommended adopting a complaint system that is administered by civilian community members (rather than the city manager).
- Taylor Norton – Expressed support for separating a civilian oversight board from LPD.

Comments Received through Email:

- Jeremy Dalton – Recommends that all emergency services in Laramie have a meet and greet event where people can give input and ideas.
- Becky Wills – Recommends the implementation of an oversight board and states that this transparency and increased communication will benefit the community and law enforcement. Notes the need for more information about the training police officers receive for mental health responses, and the resources available to officers for their mental health, as well as bias training. Notes that police officers have a difficult job, but it is a position of power and responsibility. Notes that officers need a better way to respond to individuals with mental health issues. Relayed information about an incident in which officers were on the scene of a suicide, joking and discussing weekend plans within earshot of grieving family (she & the victims father).