

## **PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE**

April 11, 2022

A meeting of the Public Safety Committee was held this date beginning at 3:00 p.m., by video conference.

Notice of this meeting was sent to all local news media.

### **PRESENT**

**Committee Members:** Councilmember Shahid (Chairman), Councilmember Seekings (Vice-Chairman), Councilmember Mitchell, Mayor Tecklenburg (Councilmember Shealy not present)

**Also Present:** Andrea Derungs, Shylah Murray, Shannon Scaff, Heather Mulloy, Rick Jerue, Chief Curia, Cpt. Bruder, Melissa Cruthirds, Julia Copeland, Mallary Scheer, Velvett Simmons, Deputy Chief Walker, Cassandra Payton, Steve Ruemelin, Lt. King, Chief Reynolds, Jeremy Collins

#### **1. Invocation**

The meeting was opened with an invocation led by Mayor Tecklenburg.

#### **2. Approval of Minutes**

On a motion of Councilmember Mitchell, seconded by Councilmember Seekings, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes from the February 7, 2022 meeting.

#### **3. Presentation from Amy Barch, Executive Director of Turn90**

Ms. Barch said that last year they opened a second location in Columbia and also changed their name from Turning Leaf, which was done in an effort to become a nationally recognized organization. Turn90 worked with men coming out of prison who were at the highest risk of recidivism. Most of the men had never worked, had low levels of education, didn't have a good social support system, didn't have stable housing, and faced many barriers to reaching their life goals. They provided transitional work through their on-site screen printing business, and while working there, men also received case management support from a social worker and participated in cognitive behavioral therapy classes. After 4-6 months, the men were placed in jobs outside Turn90. Ninety-eight percent of the men stayed at that job for 30 days or more after graduation, 94% stayed for 90 days or more, and 89% stayed for 180 days or more. She said they tracked recidivism and incarceration closely, which included rearrests for any reasons. In 2021, none of their men were rearrested. Cumulatively, they had a 22% rearrest rate, which was 40% lower than the national average. Last year, they worked with a total of 53 men in the Charleston area. She reported they were planning to open a third location in 2023. In 2021, they had 6 employees; after the expansion to Columbia, they had 12; and when the third location opened, they would have between 18-20. She also noted that six of the current staff members were graduates of the program. She concluded by inviting everyone to come for a tour.

Councilmember Mitchell asked if the Alston Wilkes Society was still in business. Ms. Barch said they ran the Federal halfway houses in both Charleston and Columbia. Turn90 partnered with the Society by hiring men who stayed at their houses. Councilmember Mitchell said, at one time, they were assisting

ex-offenders to find jobs and that they used to have two halfway houses in Charleston, but they had to close one because they didn't have enough people coming from the Charleston area. He said they would only take men who had six months left on their sentence and would try to help them find jobs. The men would receive a percentage of the paycheck they earned, and the rest would be given to them at the end of the six months. Ms. Barch the halfway house in Charleston was still operating and was one of their biggest referring partners. Councilmember Mitchell said they must have closed the one in Greenville since they used to have three. Ms. Barch said the Society used to do more with re-entry, such as resume writing and job-prep services, but they didn't do it anymore.

Mayor Tecklenburg said the City loved Turn90 and all the work they were doing to help offenders. He mentioned that the City was looking for workers and encouraged Ms. Barch to send men their way. Councilmember Shahid asked how many graduates worked for the City. Ms. Barch said she thought there were 8 currently working for the City. She said one problem they had with getting men to work for the City was that the private market was also looking for employees and could pay more. She said sometimes they could convince men of the benefits and stability the City offered, but it was a competitive market. She said they appreciated the opportunity to send men to the City. Chief Reynolds thanked Amy for her leadership, her accomplishments, and the team she had developed. He said she was a pioneer and Turn90 was developing impressive leaders. He noted that part of Amy's approach was reaching back and having men who had been successful in the program mentor others. He said she was defying the odds and creating a path for men to succeed. She was helping the community, saving dollars, and saving lives. Ms. Barch thanked the Chief for his words and invited him to tour the Columbia campus if he was ever in the area. He said he would and that she had a lot of good collaborators up there. Ms. Barch said they did and that the expansion had really come at the request of the City, the Mayor, and the Police Department. She said it was fun to see it flourish and she appreciated the City's support. Councilmember Shahid said the City had been with her since the beginning and it was important work because they were saving lives. He noted that the City loved her men because they were hard workers, so he echoed the Mayor and asked her to continue sending more men their way.

#### **4. Police Department Update**

Chief Reynolds reported that the number of field contacts had gone up significantly in 2022, which had been one of the recommendations from the audit. Crime statistics, including violent crime and property crime, had gone up in the past few years, but in 2022, it was trending down. Year-to-date, there were 0 homicides. He noted that they usually didn't get as many early in the year, so that number was, unfortunately, likely to increase. He said they continued to focus on education, enforcement, and engineering when it came to traffic issues, which had allowed them to become more efficient and effective. He said CPD had a significant focus on working with the community, building trust, and collaborating, which had led to partnerships with many organizations. He said staffing continued to be a challenge, specifically attrition, but they were doing a great job with hiring and training. He noted that their hiring process had actually received national attention, and a lot of people were coming to Charleston to talk about recruiting, hiring, and training. He reported that they were working with Clemson and other colleges to come up with creative ways to recruit folks, including using evidence based policing practices. He added that the amount of training they were doing was astronomical, but they needed to continue to invest in their new and veteran officers. He noted they had been awarded

the National Public Safety Partnership, which was a three year award, to work closely with the North Charleston Police Department to focus on violent crime.

Chief Reynolds said a new initiative they were starting was electronic monitoring. Lt. King said he had been working on the initiative since July. It was focused on repeat violent offenders, who would be selected at bond hearing, and it was at no cost to the offender. They were using CJCC's pre-trial risk assessment instrument to select the offenders. The offenders would have nighttime curfew hours, likely 7 p.m. – 7 a.m., which would minimize their ability to offend but still allow them to work during the day. He said CPD wouldn't arrest people for not being home on time, they would simply report all the offender's activity back to the court. After 120 days, each case would be reviewed. If the offender had been compliant, they would ask the court to remove the monitor. He said the program would start with 2 designated CPD officers and would utilize 4 or 5 monitors for the first month. The goal was to move up to 20 monitors. Lt. King said the restrictions would be based on the offender, but the main focus would be having them home at night for 12 hours. Depending on their compliance, the restrictions could be loosened by a judge or CPD. He said they wanted these men to be successful. Councilmember Shahid said he applauded Lt. King for taking the initiative on it and said it kind of went hand in hand with Turn90's work. He said this would give the community a sense of security while also allowing the offenders to work.

Chief Reynolds said some other initiatives they were taking part in were the Leadership Development Institute, reinstating the mounted patrol unit, and having a sworn Public Information Officer. In respect to the Racial Bias Audit, there were 8 recommendations "in progress" and 63 in either "full compliance" or "full compliance annual review." He noted that the dashboard was live and continually being updated. He said they recently held an awards banquet, which was the first time they had done a formal banquet. It had been very well received and they were already planning another one for next year. Some of their emergent priorities and needs were capital projects and facility planning, salaries, retention and attrition, a staffing study, violent crime, population growth, and safety and security camera funding.

Councilmember Shahid thanked Chief Reynolds and his team for the comprehensive report and thanked Lt. King for providing an update, even though he was on vacation. He asked what the next step with the racial bias audit was and if there would be another update. Chief Reynolds said Cpt. Cretella had been working diligently to get a report produced. Deputy Chief Walker said they could do a more comprehensive presentation at the Committee's convenience. He noted that some of the outstanding items centered around traffic and the third party assessment, which would hopefully be addressed by the end of the second quarter. He said that part of the audit update would be included in CPD's annual report, which should be finished by the end of April. He also mentioned that they were moving into phase two for filling the procedural justice position. The interview panel for that would include individuals from CPD, CPAC, and the community. Councilmember Seekings asked if there would be a financial obligation for the electronic monitoring. Chief Reynolds said there was, and that they planned to use \$16,000 from the drug forfeiture fund, which would cover them from May to the end of the year. In the fall, they would address the effectiveness of the program and whether further funding was needed. However, he thought they would be able to get funding from the other partners involved, as well as some grant money. Councilmember Shahid said he thought some of the issues they were having

with people who were out on bond being rearrested was aggravated by the Covid restrictions placed on court times and jury trials. Chief Reynolds noted there had been 7 trials in Charleston County in 2021 during what was the highest rise of violent crime in the State. Councilmember Shahid said they didn't control the Circuit or Federal Court, so they were at the mercy of the courts when it came to trying violent offenders. He said the County's Sheriff Department had tried the electronic monitoring program many years ago and it had not worked, but he thought that was because they bit off more than they could chew. Mayor Tecklenburg said that CPD was juggling a lot of balls now that Charleston was back to hosting big events. He asked Chief Reynolds to provide an update on the forensics lab and how it was being helpful in solving crimes. Chief Reynolds said he couldn't be prouder of the team at the forensics facility. NIBIN and their ability to analyze shell casings in real time was a game changer, and the DNA lab would also be a game changer. He said that every time there was a crime of significance, someone from the lab was out there helping detectives and investigators. Councilmember Mitchell asked how they came up with the 7 p.m. – 7 a.m. curfew for the electronic monitoring and if they had ensured that it would not be infringing upon any individual liberties. Chief Reynolds said they didn't have the authority to do this independently, everything was based upon the law and the courts.

**5. Fire Department Update**

**6. Emergency Management Update**

Councilmember Shahid asked Chief Curia and Mr. Scaff if they would be okay with presenting their updates at the next Public Safety meeting. Both Chief Curia and Mr. Scaff agreed that would be best.

Having no further business, the Committee adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

Andrea Derungs  
Clerk of Council's Office