Public Safety Advisory Committee (PSAC) – Meeting Minutes  
December 21, 2020  
12:30-1:30pm  
Held via zoom

Attendees:

Members: Byrne (faculty), Chukuwukere (student), Haenlin-Mott (institutional), Mackowski, (faculty), Margulies (faculty), Rogers (student)

Chair: DeStefano  
Staff: Burgess, Honan, Matta, Radloff

START: 12:32pm

I. Introductions:

PSAC Chair, Joanne DeStefano, provided a brief introduction for today’s meeting. This meeting is the first of a series of meetings where guests will join the meeting to present topics valuable to this committee.

II. Approval of Minutes

Members of the committee unanimously voted to approve minutes from the November 6, 2020 and December 11, 2020 meetings.

III. History of Policing Discussion

Faculty appointed member, Joseph Margulies provided an overview of the history of policing. Mr. Margulies emphasized that the history itself is very broad and encompasses many things. Despite this range and diversity, the police have always dedicated and directed themselves against those identified as the “problem.” This raises several questions for the committee: who identifies “the problem”; what behavior constitutes a “problem”; and what does the CUPD do in response to that “problem”?

Mr. Margulies put into context the history of policing between the North and the South. The history starts in the South using slave patrols. Slave patrols were created by whites to enforce surveillance and curfew of the slaves. Tactics used by the slave patrol enforced a strict regime of social control. As cities grew and the concentration of people spread out, it became harder to perform the duties of the slave patrol which led to the creation of the police. In the post war period in the south, the slave patrol gave way to the earliest iteration of the Ku Klux Klan. Freedmen and women in the
South did not differentiate between the two – both groups terrorized them before and after the war. Historically, this was different in the North where police forces were established to control working-class immigrants and not specifically created to control black African Americans.

The history of policing has typically been divided into three eras: Political Era, Reform Era, and Community Era. During the political era, the police had a large neighborhood presence and had a great deal of discretion to deal with their principal focus which was order maintenance. Their primary job was to handle low level crimes. The police came under fire when corruption, scandals and brutality became too pervasive, which led to the Reform Era. This era turned policing into a profession. Police became more centralized, bureaucratic and quasi-military. Training academies were created to reign in police abuse. Technology removed police from neighborhoods and took away foot patrolling. It also caused a shift from order maintenance to crime control. A rapid response system (911) was created to minimize response times to crimes. Police started patrolling in cars and deprioritized low-level crimes.

Mr. Margulies pointed out that one of the problems that stemmed from this era was that it conditioned people to think that the police are not approachable and that they are only there to respond to crimes. This crime control model, however, was not only unsuccessful at solving crimes but it provided a catalyst in separating the community and police. Moreover, it became unsuccessful at ending racial injustice because crime control then focused on black African American communities after the Great Migration. In response to this, the community era was created. The idea of this era is to bring police back to neighborhoods and provide direct contact with the community to allow policing in a way that was more holistic and sensitive to neighborhood concerns. What we have learned from the past two eras was that we cannot ignore order maintenance and that the crime control model does not work. These eras not only created distrust in the community but also the idea of over-policing. The current issues we face today has stemmed from the failure of these eras.

Mr. Margulies discussed the broken windows theory and provided an audio example of a random stop of an individual during the Stop-and Frisk program in NYC. Laws such as this allowed police to concentrate on some neighborhoods over the others or communities where Blacks and Latinos resided in numbers. This type of behavior from the police has given rise to their comparison to the slave patrols.

Mr. Margulies rejects the idea that today's policing can be traced directly to the slave patrols. Instead, when Blacks migrated North, the systems of police control that were in place for immigrants became focused on the newly arriving Black populations. He stressed, however, that there has never been a time in U.S. history were Blacks were not identified as “the other.” Questions on what has been done to protect Black citizens were asked as the committee discussed the shift in police tactics. While there
has been progress made within police departments, there are still a lot of problems that exist.

In closing out the meeting, Ms. DeStefano suggested that the committee continue this conversation. She encouraged everyone to think about what the fourth era of policing should look like.

Meeting adjourned at 1:38 PM
Notes by: Samantha Radloff