



CECIL COUNTY POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY BOARD (PAB)

Cecil County Administration Building
200 Chesapeake Boulevard, Suite 2100
Elkton, Maryland 21921

Open Meeting Minutes

October 22, 2024

Attendance:

Present:

PAB Members: John Gainey (Chair), Robert McKnight,
John Thompson and Jamila Mettee

Office of Law: Kevin Jensen (Assistant County Attorney),
Kayla Maldeis (Legal Administrator),
and Rita Buckland (Paralegal)

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order at 10:01 AM.

Roll call - 4 members present, representing a quorum.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by John Gainey.

Agenda Approval:

Jamila Mettee motioned to approve the agenda, seconded by Robert McKnight.

The motion was approved unanimously.

Old Business:

Approval of Minutes:

Robert McKnight motioned to approve the minutes of the September 17, 2024, meeting, seconded by Jamila Mettee. The motion was approved unanimously.

New Business:

Presentation by Chief Deputy Gerald Widdoes of the Cecil County Sheriff's Office:

Chief Deputy Widdoes provided members of the PAB with copies of the Cecil County Sheriff's Office (the "CCSO") annual report. He also mentioned the report is posted on their website. Chief Deputy Widdoes also provided members with a brochure for CCSO 350th

anniversary.

Chief Deputy Widdoes spoke on a few highlights from the annual report. The CCSO handled 521 vehicle collisions on Cecil County roads with 3 fatalities in CY2023. The CCSO conducted 5,384 traffic stops and wrote 2,535 citations in CY2023.

The CCSO had 251 referrals from the Cecil County Department of Social Services. Chief Deputy Widdoes stated that these referrals often include child neglect and child abuse, which are very stressful and taxing investigations on CCSO personnel. The stress and emotional involvement inherent in these types of investigations causes substantial turnover in the positions responsible for their investigation.

The CCSO Criminal Investigation Division executed 106 search warrants in CY2023. The CCSO Child Sexual Offender Unit was responsible for monitoring 172 registered sex offenders in CY2023. The CCSO Child Sexual Offender Unit made 25 arrests in CY2023 for various violations of laws pertaining to registered sex offenders. There is currently one Deputy assigned to the CCSO Child Sexual Offender Unit.

Chief Deputy Widdoes said the CCSO Special Response Team had 7 call outs in CY2023. The CCSO has also utilized the Harford County Sheriff's Office and Maryland State Police to assist the CCSO Special Response Team for more serious incidents.

The CCSO is responsible for service of all notifications for the Cecil County Circuit Court and the Cecil County District Court. The CCSO served 1,649 arrest warrants in CY2023.

Chief Deputy Widdoes mentioned the CCSO also has a Drone Unit with 5 drones and 5 pilots. The CCSO is one of the first offices in the state to have a drone unit. Chief Deputy Widdoes stated that the drone unit has been used for criminal investigations, tracking missing children, and missing elderly and has been very successful. Other allied agencies request assistance from the CCSO drone unit on a regular basis.

The CCSO currently has 12 vacancies. The CCSO is finding it very difficult to attract new hires, even with a signing bonus. CCSO has lost good employees to positions offering higher pay and better benefits.

Chief Deputy Widdoes informed the PAB the CCSO holds weekly intelligence meetings every Thursday at the CCSO building. Chief Deputy Widdoes provided the PAB with data from a recent intelligence meeting, which included 763 total calls for service in the County, with 235 calls for service for CCSO. 34 of these calls were "Part One" crimes, which are the most serious crimes.

Chief Deputy Widdoes stated that juvenile crime is an evolving legislative topic, with many changes in the last 2 sessions. Chief Deputy Widdoes stated that recent legislative efforts have advocated for the termination of the Director of the Department of Juvenile Services.

Chief Deputy Widdoes shared data with the PAB indicating that calls for mental health crises are trending down. The CCSO averages 13-14 mental health calls a week. Chief Deputy Widdoes shared data with the PAB indicating that calls for domestic violence are trending up. Domestic violence calls average about 30 a week.

Chief Deputy Widdoes spoke on the overdoses in the county. CCSO has had 3 of the total 18 fatal overdoses in CY2023. There were 195 reported overdoses in the County in CY2023.

Chief Deputy Widdoes stated that the prevalence of opioid overdose-reversal drug “Narcan” has saved many lives, but speculates that it may also result in an under-reporting of actual overdoses, as there were 32 fatal overdoses and 209 non-fatal overdoses in the County at this time last year. Cecil County has more overdoses this year than any other eastern shore county. Chief Deputy Widdoes stated that CCSO confirm that the vast majority of “heroin” is actually fentanyl, a synthetic opioid drug smuggled into the USA largely from China.

Review of Complaint summary:

The Office of Law provided the PAB with a summary of all PAB complaints submitted since the last PAB meeting.

Next meeting:

The next PAB meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 26, 2024, at 10:00 AM in the Elk Room of the Cecil County Administration Building located at 200 Chesapeake Boulevard, Elkton, MD.

Adjourn:

On motion made by John Thompson, seconded by Jamila Mettee, and approved by all, the meeting was adjourned at 10:27 AM.