

Police Community Relations  
**Blue Ribbon Panel**  
December 18, 2012  
Minutes

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The Blue Ribbon Panel on Police Community Relations met in the Community Meeting Room, at the Public Safety Complex, 815 Historic Goldsboro Blvd Sanford, Florida at 6:00P.M. on Tuesday, December 18, 2012.

**Present:**

City Manager - Norton Bonaparte  
Sr. Project Manager - Andrew Thomas  
Interim Chief of Police - Richard Myers  
City Attorney - Lonnie Groot  
UCF Center for Law & Policy Director - Cynthia Schmidt Esq.

**Panel Members Present:**

ANN PETERSON  
DAVID CHARLTON  
DAVID JOHNSON  
CHRIS RAY  
SYLVESTER CHANG  
WANDA CHANDLER  
ALLIE BRASWELL JR  
JOHN WRIGHT  
ROBERT GUY  
LINDA KUHN  
ADA RENEAU  
VALARIE J. HOUSTON

**Absent:**

CHRIS BUTLER  
OSCAR REDDEN  
KENNETH BENTLEY  
ALAN KRAFT  
NANCY PALMIERI  
CECI MCCLURE  
SILVIA MCLAIN  
CARSANDRA BUIE

**1.) Call to Order**

Senior Project Manager Andrew Thomas of the City of Sanford called the meeting to order at 6:06 p.m. Mr. Thomas opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and with a request for a brief moment of silence/ meditation.

**2.) Introductions of City Staff and Facilitator**

City Manager-Norton Bonaparte Jr., Sr. Project Manager-Andrew Thomas, Interim Chief of Police- Richard Myers, and City Attorney- Lonnie Groot introduced themselves to the panel. The Director of the University of Central Florida's Legal Studies Department Center for Law and Policy, Cynthia Schmidt Esq. spoke to the room giving a little background on her education, law and teaching career. As a facilitator she is going to assist by summarizing and clarifying the opinions and concerns of the panel in the coming months. Cynthia specified she does not live in the City of Sanford which will allow her to offer an unbiased, impartial position.

**3.) Panel Member Introductions**

Members of the panel introduced themselves one by one stating their name, occupation, how long they lived in the City of Sanford, what attracted them to the City, why have they stayed and if they left why they have returned to the City.

#### **4.) Greetings and Expectations of the Panel by- City Manager Norton Bonaparte Jr.**

Mr. Bonaparte thanked the Panel for being a part of the process, with an anticipation of 6 months, the task of this panel; find out what works. He specified that the feedback from this panel is necessary to find out what will be needed to have a positive relationship between the Sanford Community and the Sanford Police Department. Also he stated the panel represents various subgroups of the community, and each panelist brings a great deal of expertise. This panel has the ability to shape the City of Sanford moving forward. "A Police Department can only be as effective as its relationship with its community" he added.

Mr. Bonaparte explained that "Trust" is an important factor and that some segments of the city (residents) have a lack of trust in its Police Department and without that trust the Department cannot truly be effective. The task of this panel is to look at the department, examine its practices, and provide suggestions and strategies on how we can make the Sanford Police Department and the Sanford Community work together for the betterment of everyone.

#### **5.) Overview of Panel Goals and Objectives**

Mr. Thomas provided an overview of the Panel Goals and Objectives, going through the manual with the panel members. It was appropriately noted there was a request to the Department of Justice Special Litigation Division for an assessment of the department's (SPD) practices to determine whether it is engaged in patterns or practice of civil rights laws violation. Their response was, since there is an ongoing investigation at this time they will continue to consider whether a civil rights violation investigation is warranted. That being said the city is moving forward.

Mr. Thomas briefly gave a synopsis of the Nine Point Plan, highlighting the Police Community Relations Blue Ribbon Panel, the Establishment of an Inter-Racial Interfaith Alliance, Establishment of Anti Violence Campaign, the reactivation of the SNAP-Sanford Neighborhood Action Partnership, also request for continued support and assistance of the Department of Justice Community Relation Services as well as increasing youth training and employment opportunities. The Panel's (consisting of approx. 25 members from the community) goal is to produce a report that contains findings and recommended strategies to enhance police community relations stated Mr. Thomas.

#### **6.) Review of Open Meeting Law- Attorney Lonnie Groot**

Mr. Groot informed the panel of the Sunshine laws that apply to this panel. He stated the following:

- Every meeting needs to be noticed
- Committee members must NOT discuss with each other any items that have been or may be brought up at a panel meeting outside of the meeting
- Committee members may discuss and are encouraged to discuss items that have been or may be brought up at a panel meeting with Sanford citizens.
- Any notes, recordings or conversations partaken during these meetings are public record.
- Voting conflict laws apply to members of this panel
- Ethics laws apply to members of this panel.

The Brechner Report and supporting documents was issued to each member to refer to regarding the Sunshine State Laws.

Cynthia Schmidt added there should be adequate notice to the public, and minutes taken of the meetings. She informed the panel that the meeting will be recorded, the media and public are also welcomed to attend each meeting. Cynthia offered a suggestion if you (the panel) are speaking the truth and treating each other with respect it does not matter who may attend the meeting and no need for any conflicts if the media asks to see the panel records. Cynthia suggested panelists may take notes but that the notes will need to be maintained.

## **7.) Ground Rules for the Panel**

Mr. Thomas addressed the panel again regarding the ground rules of the panel with emphases on respect, having good dialogue to gain clarity and understanding without any assumptions. Mr. Thomas further elaborated on the following:

1. Test assumptions and inferences
2. Be specific and use examples when possible
3. Agree on what important words mean
4. Explain the reasons behind your statements, questions and actions
5. Disagree openly and discuss different points of view constructively
6. No side bars
7. Don't be afraid to discuss tough issues
8. Keep the discussion focused on the topic
9. Show respect for each other
10. No question is silly, dumb or stupid
11. No judging of others' commitment, dedication or sincerity
12. Not a gripe session but an opportunity for constructive discussion
13. No individual member speaks for the Panel without the Panel's permission/authority
14. Everyone participate in good faith
15. All members are expected to participate in all phase of the process
16. Do self-critiques

## **8.) Expectations for the Panel**

Mr. Thomas asked the panel what are their expectations. He suggested leaving panel expectations open to the panel because this is the panel's process. The panel needs to decide what works for them and if it is not working, analyze it, critique it, and fix it.

- Robert Guy stated, "Seeing each other as a part of the solution, valuing each other's opinion knowing that each member brings something that helps make the community and city a better place" there should be an expectation that we are all part of the solution working together collaboratively.
- David Charlton stated he expects open honest communication from the panel.
- Allie Braswell Jr. reiterated an excerpt taken from the Panel outcome "We strengthen the Sanford Community through strong relationships by building effective communications to understand and evaluate law enforcement engaging and supporting the community."
- Valerie Houston wanted the panel to have productive time. Having a certain amount of time allocated to one person, which ensures the panel stays on task without one individual dominating the process, yet having equal opportunity to address concerns.

- Wanda Chandler would like the panel to figure out how the police department can assist the community and how the city, the community assist the police department as well.
- Ada Reneau- expects the panel to value each other's time, starting and ending on time.
- David Johnson stated he expects a product that everyone has bought into including the police chief, a report with recommendations that the department will follow and not just sit on a shelf at the end of the panel tenure.
- Sylvester Chang- expects the panel to look at what is good in the police department and build on the good and assess the challenges and improvements.

Cynthia recommends that panel members limit their contact with the media allowing Chairperson and or Co-Chairperson(s) to speak on behalf of the panel.

## **9.) Discussion- Future meetings dates and times**

The panel members agreed that they would like to meet frequently, twice a month. 6 p.m. in the evenings would be feasible to everyone's schedule no more than 2 hours. Tuesdays and Thursday would be more compatible. Sheena Britton, administrative assistant, will review the schedule and notify the panel members of the upcoming meeting dates.

### **A word from the Chief**

Police Interim Chief Richard Myers addressed the panel indicating what an honor it is to serve as interim chief. Chief Myers gave a brief biography regarding his career as a police officer for 36 years, stating the one constant in this business is change. He added he was an early adopter of philosophy of community policing.

3 very important ingredients that drive community oriented policing:

- Community Partnership: the police dept. and community have a genuine, deliberate purposeful partnership.
- Problem Solving: The police and community together stating what are the priorities in this neighborhood and how do we together find sustainable solutions.
- Organizational Transformation- Police officers having the ability to engage with community partners to become mission driven and empowered to be problem solvers in the their communities.

January of 2013 there will be training – foundational trainings, every person sworn or unsworn will take ethics training. Chief Myers strongly suggested that the panel tap into Captain Darren Scott's perspective as he will be the panel's police staff representative and has a unique viewpoint on the department and the community.

## **10.) Other Business**

Sylvester Chang requests an electronic copy of the agenda and minutes prior to the next meeting and future meetings. Cynthia remarked that minutes should be readily available to the panel and the public, however an agenda in advance of the meeting may not always be possible.

## **11.) Meeting Adjourn**

Meeting adjourned at 8:22 p.m.