



## City of New Haven Civilian Review Board

### Minutes for Special Meeting

Date: April 18, 2023, Time 7:00

Approved: April 24, 2023

Minutes prepared by: Alyson Heimer, CRB Administrator

1. Chair Rivera-Berrios called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.
2. **Attendance**
  - a. Present: Member Fawcett, Member Carter, Member Pescatore, Member Richardson, Member Jenkins, Member Johnson, Member Counsel
  - b. Absent: member Devin Avshalom Smith
  - c. Other attendees: Alyson Heimer (Administrator), Tasha Blanco, Mary O'Leary (press),
3. **Message from the Acting Chair** - There is a need to have a special meeting to address some important topics that have come up and allow members to reintroduce themselves to one another. This is going to start with a reintroduction of members to one another, and each person will have 2-3 minutes to explain their vision for the Board and talk about why they joined, why they are here.
4. **Discussion of Board Organization and Membership concerns**
  - a. Introduction of each board member and why they joined the Board (2-3 minutes each)
    - i. Member Pescatore: I initially thought it would be about building bridges between the community and police department, and reviewing complaints to make sure the police made necessary changes. The Board has grown into something bigger. Each case gives us an opportunity to make recommendations to the NHPD, and the Chief has been incredibly receptive to our advice. Still on the board because the capacity to make change is present.
    - ii. Member Richardson: Logged off at 7:07pm.
    - iii. Member Jenkins: Lives in the Dixwell neighborhood, has a degree in early childhood education, family of law enforcement both policing and FBI. As a mother of two black males who were constantly stopped by police when they were young. We are



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holding the police department accountable and ensuring transparency for the community. I joined as a concerned parent and mother and representative of a neighborhood that needed a better community relationship with the Police. They need to know the community they serve and representation from Dixwell is incredibly important in that. Also wanted to bring back anything that the community needed to know back to the people.

- iv. Member Johnson: Logged off at 7:09 pm.
- v. Member Counsel: Logged off at 7:11pm. He indicated this was due to an emergency.

At the request of the Acting Chair and other board members, Administrator Heimer called Members Johnson and Richardson and texted them with no response to please rejoin the call.

- vi. Member Fawcett: Asked by the management team to represent Newhallville, and for similar reasons to member Jenkins, I thought the Board would bring transparency to the department, and I could be an advocate for people from my community who needed it.
- vii. Member Carter: Joined for personal reasons related to treatment from an officer as a youth who mis-identified me as someone who had been involved in a shooting but the only similarity was that we were both African American. So I was held at gunpoint and people in the neighborhood kept saying it wasn't him, and the officer didn't like that he had made a mistake, so it was an embarrassing and terrifying moment. Another time, I had a used PT Cruiser and was stopped because the police wanted to verify the legitimacy of why I would have a car. So when I was called upon to be involved in this Board after being involved in community activism, I understood the importance of being on the board. The scope of the Board was important to me and could make a difference. There are some things that the public and the police could do better.
- viii. Member Rivera-Berrios: I thought the board would be a little different and we would have more direct and initial access to the



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complaints. I initially joined the board because I had an experience where I was held at gunpoint by the police who thought my husband and I were in a stolen vehicle, thrown onto the hood of the car, put at gunpoint, and we were held for hours. There was another time where there was gunfire as I was getting off the bus and my brother grabbed me and ran with me through the gunfire to safety, but the police came to question him later as if he was involved because he was there to get me from the bus. I had other experiences in New Haven and heard about experiences but I was really hoping the board would have more of an impact where the public could reach out to us and we could listen and help. In my experiences I had wished there was someone I could have reached out to. Moving forward as a team we should work together to improve this board and be there for the community.

Three members of the board were still logged off the call at this time.

b. Workshopping ideas for improvement of the Board's operations.

Member Jenkins: Before we continue, I want to know why Members Richardson and Johnson and Mother Jones held a press conference last week (this meeting was called as a response to that event to try to solidify requests and changes needed). We need to clear the air on that event and I want accountability from Member Johnson and Member Richardson, who aren't here. I thought there were rules about who can talk to the press from this board.

Member Jenkins further inquired as to what was going on with the members who called the press conference and what their concerns were, and found it illogical that they had left the meeting. Nothing else seems to matter now if we can't get answers from them first. Member Jenkin's replacement is waiting to be contacted by the city and has the CMT recommendation from Dixwell neighborhood. It was considered disrespectful that they came onto the call and then hung up.



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Chair Rivera-Berrios and Member Jenkins also mentioned that the hybrid nature of the meeting was done by request and the members who requested it didn't even show up in person. Multiple members of the board contacted the board members who logged off and asked them to come back on.

Member Jenkins recommended that the Chair go to the Mayor's office and discuss the board members who refuse to participate. We need to hold board members accountable before we hold the police accountable.

Member Fawcett pointed out that the members who aren't logged on also haven't been to IA to review cases so they are not doing the full job of the Board.

- c. Discussion on Bylaws and ideas to ensure functionality even without a fully seated board.

Member Jenkins would like clarification on the bylaws as to who was the designated person who was going to talk to the media because members signed legal documents that limited interactions with press to ensure the Board was represented by a singular voice.

Acting Chair Rivera-Berrios: I did not sign the legal document about the press because the Chair and I both were designated as able to speak to the press.

Member Carter went to the event on Tuesday, because it was in the district that he represents. There are arguments on both sides. This was supposed to be a meeting where we were supposed to work through some of these issues, but we can't do that without everyone's buy-in. We want the board to function, and there are folks with trauma and we need to address where they are coming from and make changes that help all members participate to the best of their ability. It started because there was no much communication between board members and this was supposed to be an evening to clear the air and while I feel we can work through this but if we continue on this path the board will suffer. We want to be an example of a board that functions well, that does things properly and this was the time to hash things out. There is trauma for members of the community,



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these issues are real, and we need to meet people where they are. We are trying to avoid politics while getting the work of the board done.

Acting Chair Rivera-Berrios: I showed up after the press event to make sure we could talk, and we set up this special meeting to move forward - I was happy to see everyone showed up tonight and I thought this was the way we were going.

Member Pescatore wants to make sure we can work through the difficulties at the regular meetings. And people can be upset, they can have opinions, but members can't stop doing the work because they are upset. Carve out sections on the regular agenda to discuss these things at the regular meetings. We need to be reviewing cases.

Member Pescatore logged off at 7:37pm.

Member Carter: We are a case study for the future and for other communities. We should engage in outreach through the press, because that's how we get the message out about what we do. What I've learned recently is that, if we didn't want red tape around contracts involved in our process, we shouldn't say contracts in the ordinance or bylaws.

Member Fawcett concurred. Subpoenas, for example, sound great, but you can't make people talk. We need to make the board a safe place for the public to come to and we can't do that if there is in-fighting. This is a volunteer board and anyone who is doing this work wants a safer community for the public and the police and that's the common goal we need to get back to, and work together to do it.

Acting Chair River-Berrios: This is a Board that is funded by the City and if the City says we have to do an RFP because the city says so, unfortunately we need to follow that procedure. No one should be pointing a finger for not allowing someone to apply or only allowing certain people to apply - you have to do what the City says.



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Member Fawcett: the system is set up to avoid favoritism. You have to go through the process. That's the point of an RFP.

Member Jenkins: while that's the system, the people who are questioning the procedure aren't here. They need to be here. We can have recordings, but we need to talk to them because some things need to be looked at in the bylaws because with them missing meetings, and when [Ross-Lee] was chair he said that missing meetings was not allowed. The members who aren't here are not trying to be on the team. They are making it so we don't have a quorum. They don't even want to have a conversation. Asked to add talking to Richardson and Johnson as an agenda item. If you miss a certain number of meetings you need to leave the board.

Administrator Heimer has recorded the times that members left the meeting.

Additional discussion was tabled to Monday's regular meeting.

- d. Discussion on Executive Board elections  
Tabled to Monday's regular meeting.

#### **5. Administrator's Report**

- a. Update on remote IA file review

Administrator Heimer: The Chief has agreed to create an off-site location at City Hall on the first floor for members to come, by appointment to review case files and media. A zoom conference will take place next week to work out details of the location and frequency of availability to members.

Member Fawcett: will we still be allowed to go to IA to review cases?

Administrator Heimer: yes. This is an interim measure until an online document storage system can be approved through the procurement process - like the Matrix Civil system that the office of Corp Counsel has already vetted - can be brought online to enable CRB access as well as internal NHPD access to files and data. The projected timeline is



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to have the off-site location available by May, and the online document service in place by next year. The Chief plans to onboard a system long term to allow for document storage and transfer within the department.

Attorney LaMarr also stated that the RFP for the legal counsel will go out by Friday. The RFP for the Consultant is with the purchasing department and expected to be live by the end of the month.

#### b. Member reappointments process

Administrator Heimer: Barbara Moltalvo from the Mayor's office has confirmed that applications were received for the following board members for reappointment: Pescatore, Counsel, Jenkins, Rivera-Berrios, Fawcett, Johnson, and Carter. Member Richardson submitted a paper form but needs to complete the online version, as the paper form is out of date. Members who did not submit supporting documents (resumes, letters of interest, etc.) need to do so. Reappointment is not just the form, it's also a resume and letter of interest explaining why someone wants to serve so the BoA can formulate questions.

Acting Chair Rivera-Berrios: I handled the attendance question despite there not being minutes for most of 2022, which was requested by the Board of Alders.

Members who wish to be reappointed also need letters/emails of support from the Chair of the CMTs from which they are assigned. This does not apply to at-large members. CMTs can recommend more than one person. If there are members of the public who have applications in the system, the Mayor's office cannot review applications without the CMTs also submitting their name as acceptable representation.

Member Jenkins has a replacement for her seat who submitted everything, has the CMT nomination, and needs to be reviewed by the Mayor's office. [Replacement Anthony Geritano, JR]

Nominations are planned to be submitted before the first Aldermanic meeting of the month. Legislative Affairs will meet first and two readings with the BoA, so hopefully by June they would be active members on this Board.



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- c. Backlog of minutes - Tabled to Monday's regular meeting
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- 6. Public Comment (speakers limited to 3 minutes each)**
    - a. None.
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- 7. Executive Session not needed.**
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- 8. Meeting ended at 8:03 pm** without quorum and all remaining topics tabled until the April regular meeting. Attendance at close of meeting: Acting Chair Rivera-Berrios, Member Fawcett, Member Jenkins, Member Carter. All others were absent.