

University of Rochester
Public Safety Review Board
Minutes of Meeting
May 15, 2018

Present: Francis Price
Rick Crummins
Holly Crawford
Tony Kinslow
Elizabeth Palermo
Kathy Parrinello
Eldred Chimowitz

Absent: Jordan Smith
Christopher Acquina

Guest: Mark Fischer
Richard Feldman

1. Administrative Items

The Board approved the minutes of the March 18, 2018 meeting.

2. DPS Update

- a. *NYS Dept of Health Rules*: Mr. Fischer reported that the NYS Department of Health recently cited Strong Memorial Hospital for use of batons, pepper spray and handcuffs to restrain highly agitated patients. This finding came as a surprise, since DPS and hospital staff believed they were in compliance with existing regulations. Going forward, DPS officers may not use these items on a patient anywhere in the hospital unless they are making an arrest of that patient. Policies and training have been updated and DOH has accepted the action plan.
- b. Mr. Fischer described a recent bias complaint against an officer. A student reported observing what she thought were white supremacist-related patches on the officer's "duty bag," a piece of official equipment, which was in the back seat of his DPS vehicle. Upon investigation it was determined that the patches were not associated with white supremacist organizations, although some of the patches depict older symbols that have been appropriated by certain "alt right" – type groups. The officer was cleared of wrongdoing; however, to avoid unintentionally offending members of the public with whom officers interact, DPS has adopted a new policy prohibiting all officers from displaying any personal items of expression on official equipment. Ms. Parrinello noted that a similar rule exists for nurses in Strong Memorial Hospital and that it helps to avoid offending members of the diverse community served there.

3. Evolution of Armed Officer Program

The Board had an extensive discussion of a proposal to expand the use of armed patrols by DPS.

a). *Armed Posts on River Campus and Eastman.* One element of the proposal was to add armed “posts” to River Campus and Eastman. Mr. Fischer explained that these would be mobile, not fixed posts, and would amount to two additional officers (ie., one each at Eastman and on campus) being armed per shift. Mr. Fischer cited various reasons in support, primarily including the anticipated improvement in response times in the event of an active shooter or other weapon-involved incident. He pointed out that virtually all other AAU campuses, except for Columbia and NYU (both covered by NYPD in New York City) have armed security staff. Currently, for an incident on the River Campus an armed response would have to come from a medical center post, an armed supervisor, or an armed member of senior staff. Eastman relies on RPD. These options are viewed by Mr. Fischer as not as effective as having a DPS officer always armed at Eastman and on River Campus, because there is a lack of familiarity with area geography, personnel and cultures.

The Board did not reach consensus on this proposal. Some supported it, while others sought more data, suggested additional training and campus input. It was pointed out that student representatives were not at the meeting and should be heard. Interim President Feldman, who was present for part of the discussion, asked that further debate of the proposal be had in the fall when a student representative would be present.

b). *Expansion of Supervisory Armed Response.* A second element of the proposal was to allow armed supervisors to be present anywhere outside the medical center. Currently, they are permitted to be armed on River Campus and other non-MC locations only if necessary to respond to an event involving life/health safety. Mr. Fischer explained that supervisors are some of the best officers at DPS and that their effectiveness depends highly on relationships they form with campus constituents – which are suffering now that they are unable to be present for events such as Commencement, Dandelion Day and others because they always have their firearms.

The Board also deferred this proposal to the next meeting where a student representative would be present.

c). *Adding Additional Armed Offices to Cover Existing Medical Center Posts.* Mr. Fischer reported that current staffing levels of armed officers are insufficient to cover posts in the hospital and medical center, resulting in officers assigned to those posts serving long hours in volatile, tense locations with a potential for violence by patients and visitors. This, in turn, threatens burnout and diminishes their effectiveness. Mr. Fischer proposed arming an additional nine officers (3 per shift) to provide more full and flexible coverage of these current posts. Ms. Parrinello, in particular supported this proposal, as did the full Board.