
CAMBRIDGE ASSOCIATION OF NEIGHBORHOODS

* * * * *

BOARD & MEMBERSHIP MEETING**December 13 2023****MINUTES**

Board Members Present: Chuck McFadden (President), Tom Puglisi (Secretary), Dave Thatcher (Treasurer), Andre Duerinckx, Sharon Smith, Brad Rice, Judd Vickers, and Jane Weeks. Eight of 11 members being present, a quorum of the Board was achieved.

Board Members Absent: Roman Jesien (Vice President), Mary Ellen Jesien, and Rick Klepfer.

- 1. Opening Comments.** CAN President Chuck McFadden convened the meeting at 6:30 pm at the Dorchester County Public Library, 303 Gay Street in Cambridge. Chuck welcomed everyone in attendance and encouraged anyone who has not yet joined CAN to do so through the CAN website at <https://CambridgeCAN.org>. He noted that membership is free and that our email distribution list is up to 720 households. Of course, donations are always welcomed. Chuck reminded everyone about the election of CAN officers at CAN's Annual Business Meeting in January 2024.
- 2. Cambridge Police Department (CPD) – Chief Todd's Comments.** Chuck introduced Cambridge Police Chief Justin Todd who emphasized the importance of transparency to community-oriented policing, which he considers integral to effective policing in Cambridge. To support the community policing effort, and in addition to officer training in community policing techniques, CPD has hired two civilian liaisons (one funded by the State) to interact and build bridges with the community. CPD has also established a substation in the apartments on Greenwood Avenue to increase interactions with citizens and apartment management there. Chief Todd credited School Resource Officer Jones with having positive and constructive interactions with students at Maces Lane MS, and suggested that he would like to have resource officers in all City schools because building relationships with the community needs to start early. Chief Todd said that he encourages communities all across the City to come directly to him with their concerns so these concerns can be addressed effectively, and he believes that the community policing orientation is beginning to bear fruit.

Chief Todd reported that CPD currently has 37 sworn officers, two individuals about to graduate from the police academy, and two persons entering the academy in the near future. He indicated that roughly one gun has been confiscated every week over the past year. Homicides, violent crimes, and burglaries are down compared to last year. However, vehicle thefts are up dramatically all over the City, and are mostly being committed by juveniles. He clarified that the juvenile curfew was reinstated on October 1 with changes recommended by the Mayor, and that only five curfew violations have occurred since then. Chief Todd explained that CPD is taking a more data-driven approach to policing and that CPD has a division to identify times and locations where crime is occurring in order to target patrols in those areas more effectively. He indicated that crime maps will be included in the next CPD report, and that the report will be posted on the CPD website. He indicated that shot-spotter technology and surveillance cameras have been important additions to policing over the past year, and that the National ATF shell casing identification program has been able to identify guns related to crimes here

and elsewhere. He acknowledged that Maryland's Juvenile Reform Act has made it difficult to deal effectively with offences committed by juveniles under age 13. The Chief again stressed that transparency is important for policing in Cambridge and that the policy of transparency has helped inform the citizens of Cambridge.

Cambridge Police Department – Neighborhood Watch Program. CPD Captain Antoine Patton stressed that we have only 37 sworn officers to provide protection and services for about 13,000 people in Cambridge, so participation by the community is important for ensuring public safety. Captain Patton explained that the CPD Neighborhood Watch Program assigns a police officer and a civilian watch captain to each small neighborhood group. Each neighborhood group has a meeting with the officer every month, and can contact their assigned officer whenever a problem is identified. He noted that residents' door cameras have been a great help to CPD and have even helped to solve recent homicides. Call CPD at 410-228-3333 and ask for Captain Patton to establish a Neighborhood Watch group.

3. Juvenile Reform Act – Mayor Rideout. Mayor Steve Rideout explained that Maryland's recently implemented Juvenile Reform Act has resulted in changes such that juveniles under age 13 in most instances cannot be charged as delinquent youth. He suggested that the current blanket restriction on bringing children under 13 to court for nonviolent offenses does not work where the youth become repeat offenders. The Mayor indicated that he anticipates that legislation will be proposed in the upcoming session of the Maryland General Assembly to address some of the challenges that have been identified. Mayor Rideout said that he is currently working with legislators, other mayors, and the Governor's Office to identify what is not working and what kinds of changes would be helpful. He noted that getting effective services to children is critically important across the State and is especially problematic in rural areas like Dorchester County because the service providers are more likely to be located where there is a larger potential population. There is also the challenge of smaller jurisdictions competing and being awarded State grants for at-risk youth. The Mayor is advocating for dedicated funding streams that are based on data, demonstrated need, and the potential for engaging the community as a better way for the State to provide ongoing prevention and early intervention funding for programs and services.

4. Questions from Attendees. In response to questions from attendees:

- Chief Todd explained that a staffing study is currently underway (to be completed before the next budget period) to determine the number of officers that are actually needed in Cambridge.
- Chief Todd said that he met recently with the City Manager to discuss homelessness in the City. He suggested that certain agencies appear to be releasing individuals into Cambridge without providing transition support. He indicated that there are not enough day and night shelters and food programs in Cambridge to meet the need. He clarified that although most homeless individuals are not committing crimes, it is fine to call CPD if homeless individuals become problematic, and CPD will try to direct them to appropriate services.
- Mayor Rideout indicated that "One Mission Cambridge" and the "Overflow Café" are the facilities available for homeless people during the day. Delmarva Community Services also runs homeless shelters where the residents are able to stay in the property during the day. The Salvation Army also runs a homeless shelter here. He noted that mental health and substance abuse issues constitute major factors deterring some people from getting the help they need. Dudley Parr, the operator of

the “Overflow Café,” stressed that developing a relationship with people is important and that the café wants to help homeless people the community. He noted that determining the number of homeless persons in Cambridge is difficult because an individual has to be in a shelter to be counted as homeless by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

- Mayor Rideout stated that there are no data indicating that Cambridge has become a hub attracting people in need of services or support. The Mayor of Chestertown has pulled data together showing that the income levels in the City of Cambridge are below those of Dorchester County. See www.uwles.org. On the website are data referred to as A.L.I.C.E. which stands for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed, which is another definition of the “Working Poor.”
- Chief Todd acknowledge that Cambridge does have gangs, and all but two homicides over the past two years have been gang-related. Most of our violent crimes are concentrated in one area of the City and are committed by gang members. The Dorchester County Task Force (in which CPD participates) is focusing on this area and has help reduce the number of homicides and violent crimes there. He suggested that poverty and substance abuse issues often lead to crime. He noted that CPD police officers have been given training in policing gangs. Most of the gangs here are localized, the two most prominent being the “Greenwood Boys” and the “Pine Street Boys.”
- An attendee observed that we need to reach into other communities to foster understanding about what is going on in all our neighborhoods. Such understanding will take much time and effort.

5. Secretary’s Report. CAN Secretary Tom Puglisi reported that the CAN Board has proposed a revision of CAN’s Bylaws to describe three types of meetings: i.e., Membership Meetings (including the Annual Business Meeting), Board Meetings, and Executive Committee Meetings. Proposed revisions will be presented for consideration at the Annual Business Meeting in January and are available on the CAN website (<https://CambridgeCAN.org>).

Chuck thanked Chief Todd, Captain Patton, and Mayor Rideout for their presentations, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:50 pm.

CURRENT CAN BOARD MEMBERS

TERM ENDING JANUARY 2024

1. President: Chuck McFadden
2. Treasurer: Jane Weeks
3. Member at Large: Mary Ellen Jesien
4. Member at Large: Dave Thatcher
5. Member at Large: Judd Vickers
6. Member at Large: Brad Rice
7. Member at Large: Vacant

TERM ENDING JANUARY 2025*

8. Vice President: Roman Jesien
9. Secretary: Tom Puglisi
10. Member at Large: Sharon Smith
11. Member at Large: Andre Duerinckx
12. Member at Large: Rick Klepfer