

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT PLAN

GOAL 1.3 LISTENING SESSIONS



Summary: July 17, 2020 100 Black Men of Sonoma County Listening Session

Background

On July 17, 2020, Mayor Tom Schwedhelm, Santa Rosa Police Chief Rainer Navarro, Economic Development Division Director Raissa de la Rosa, and Community Engagement Coordinator Danielle Garduño, met with four members from 100 Black Men of Sonoma County. This included 100 Black Men President, Arthur B. Chaney, Vice President Dr. Jim Gray, Treasurer Gerarde (Gerry) Moret, and Member Dr. Greg Granderson.

The mission of 100 Black Men of Sonoma County is to provide services to the local African American community and community at-large. For over 30 years, the Sonoma County Chapter has been committed to the intellectual development of African American youth, by providing and supporting the foundations that include: emphasize academic achievement; positive self-identity; life skills; social and emotional wellness; moral character development; high degree of work ethic; and lifelong learning.

Discussion Points and Themes

The discussion centered around three areas:

- training of law enforcement officers,
- officer accountability, and
- policy change at various levels of government that influence or impact local law enforcement agencies

Discussion Point 1: Training for Law Enforcement Officers

The group began the listening session stating their agreement in support of the efforts the SRPD is making to mend bridges with and to improve relations with the community. 100 Black Men of Sonoma County would like to help in this effort in any way, stating, "I hope we go down this road together." One member noted, however, that while he currently supports these efforts, one minor set-back could remove his support and possible support from the entire group.

From there, the discussion turned to the topic of training, in particular voluntary and incentive-based training provided through the California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST). POST was established by the California State Legislature in 1959 to set minimum selection and training standards for California law enforcement. More than 600 agencies participate in POST, including the SRPD. Santa Rosa Police Officers receive training through POST in the Police Academy. [VIEW COURSE OUTLINES](#)

Two participants spoke about their experiences as POST trainers prior to POST deciding to hire only former law enforcement officers or officials as POST trainers. This move is viewed as hugely problematic in that it eliminated non-law enforcement perspectives from officer training.

Concern continued to post academy practices in that rookie officers are placed with veteran officers for additional trainings. The issue here, per the group, is that a shift in culture will not occur or becomes difficult when a rookie, perhaps with new ideas or fresh intent on how to “do good by” the community, is then overseen and influenced by their veteran partner/mentor. “Rookies are learning different behaviors in the street; it’s not the same as what they learned in the academy.” The participants said they see bigotry as more problematic than racism within the law enforcement mentality and treatment of community members, particularly in communities of color. “You can’t teach bigotry out of these officers.”

The Chief of Police was provided an opportunity to talk about Santa Rosa Police Officers’ training. SRPD follows the minimum standards for trainings, and the Chief feels they go above and beyond that required training, including annual refresher trainings, which can be found on the Department’s website.

Discussion Point 2: Officer Accountability and Public Perceptions

One participant opened this discussion point asking, “Has this current Chief of Police, when he was an officer, ever written-up or filed a complaint against a fellow officer for excessive force?” The intent of the question is to assess strength of character in the willingness and ability to recognize and call out wrongs. It was requested this question be asked by the community during interviews for future police chiefs. (Chief Navarro’s answer was no, he had not.)

The participants raised the issue of public perceptions in cases of officer involved offenses and officer accountability, stating the perception is that officers are not held accountable when investigated. In addition, when an outside agency conducts an investigation of a Santa Rosa Officer, the public thinks there is a relationship between the officer and the investigating agency as all agencies are within the County.

Additionally, follow-up with the public was a stated concern. If a member of the public makes a complaint against an officer, they want transparent follow-up on that complaint – this would go a long way with the community.

Evaluation and measures of success were also discussed by the participants. Several questions were asked in regard to this topic:

- How do you (Chief of Police) measure the success of an officer?
- Is there a way to evaluate an officer’s aptitude for allyship with the community? That is, can we seek a way to assess if an officer is an ally vs. a foe when working with the community?
- Can the SRPD publicize how officers are evaluated?
- Does the SRPD use upstream evaluations?
 - These evaluations are similar to 360-Evaluations where staff are evaluated by peers, reportees, supervisors and community members. Upstream evaluations are geared more toward management where officers and/or staff reporting to that manager give feedback on their supervisor’s performance.

- Chief Navarro mentioned that the SRPD uses 360-Evaluations for all managers in the department and with any officer who wants to promote within the organization.

Discussion Point 3: Policy Change

Several topics came up briefly under the theme of policy change, starting with any action at the State level to affect change at the local level. The Chief stated that the California Chiefs' Association is working on a variety of policies and goals related to police reform, including: de-certification of officers under specified conditions; tracking information related to officers who resign prior to disciplinary action or termination, as well as those with multiple sustained complaints/violations whose personnel records are closed/unavailable; and upon request of a local agency, mandating the Attorney General investigate deadly use of force incidents. [READ FULL STATEMENT](#). The participants requested that the City share this information with the public so they can see that change is taking place at all levels of government.

In addition, the participants noted several communities are revising contracts with police unions. They recommended that the City of Santa Rosa look at their current police union contract and revise where needed to allow for more officer accountability and flexibility related to disciplinary actions.

Other Points of Discussion

- **Engaging the community** – the SRPD and City need to involve people of color in this process and do better involving people of color on an ongoing basis.
- **After Action Report** – all participants agreed that they would not read the After Action Report in its entirety. They request the City create a summary sheet with simple points that breakdown the outcomes of the report. Also, if there are certain pieces of information that cannot be released to the public, state why the information cannot be released.
- **Defunding the police** – all participants agreed that defunding the police is not the answer. Their concern is that the SRPD will get less funding but still be expected to do the same amount of work.