

Sussex County Southeast Regional Accountability Committee

Quarterly Meeting February 13, 2025, 1 PM

402 Evergreen Rd, South Bethany, DE

Present: Chairperson Gayle Marie Brown Driver, Esq., Ms. Lauren Weaver, Ms. Claudia Rodgers, Esq., Mr. Ed Klima, Mr. Gregory Flynn, Mr. Ian McCauley, Esq., Mr. Denny Pridgeon, Mr. Scott Mumford, Ms. Holly Stiles, Chief Jason Lovins, Chief Michael Morrissey, Chief Ken McLaughlin, Chief Constance Speake, and Chief Nicholas Disciullo.

Absent: Pastor Ethan Magee and Mr. Tom Glenn

1. CALL TO ORDER/Pledge of Allegiance

2. ROLL CALL

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

4. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

Minutes from the November 14, 2024, meeting were approved unanimously.

5. OLD BUSINESS

Chairperson Driver mentioned that since the PAC mission is to work together with police officers, future meetings will integrate police chiefs with voting members rather than seating the Chiefs separately.

6. NEW BUSINESS

A. Vote on accepting the Selbyville Police Department's request to join the PAC

Chief Brian Wilson from Selbyville Police Department sent a letter dated December 23, 2024, to Chairperson Driver asking to join the PAC. Selbyville is within the geographic area of the PAC. According to PAC bylaws, the request must be approved by two-thirds majority vote of existing PAC members. Chairperson Driver asked for discussion on the request.

Concerns were raised about whether Selbyville fit in with the beach towns and about their town growing so rapidly. Chief Morrissey said towns like Selbyville and Millsboro are building up so much whereas the coastal towns are built out. Ms. Weaver said Selbyville is the gateway for evacuations, contains schools attended by children in the other towns in the PAC, and is the corridor to the beach towns. Mr. McCauley said different departments face different challenges and that is a good thing; diversity of viewpoint is good.

Discussion on amending PAC bylaws to establish criteria on how many departments should be allowed to join the PAC as well as when a department should leave the PAC and start their own PAC, and how such decisions will be made.

Chairperson Driver called for a vote. With nine of the eleven voting members present, the vote passed unanimously. Chief Wilson and his community representative in attendance, Ms. Diana Barrientos-Granados, were welcomed to the PAC and invited to join the other PAC members at the table.

B. Presentation by Sean Moriarty cancelled due to family emergency

C. Statewide Police Accountability Changes

Concerns were raised that if the state expanded PAC duties to be more like New Castle County, the PAC might have a hard time with so many departments.

Chairperson Driver said that before this PAC was started, she spoke with New Castle County. She said this PAC is not like New Castle County's. They are funded by the county; this PAC is not. New Castle County's Police Accountability Board's responsibilities are in their County Charter and mandated by County Council. Their duties are very different, including being involved in internal investigations of police officers.

7. REPORTS OF COMMITTEE

PAC currently doesn't have any committees but a training committee will be formed.

Ride-alongs with police departments are encouraged.

Upcoming training events include: CART training in Bethany Beach, Narcan Training in Ocean View, Seasonal Police Academy in Dewey Beach. Details are on the calendar on the PAC website <https://scsrpac.com/>.

8. REPORT OF STAFF

Ms. Hearn thanked Mr. Flynn for his help setting up the PAC website. She reminded PAC members that they are required to complete 20 hours of training within one year of appointment. Ms. Hearn asked members to log in their training and let her know if they have any problems. Policy manuals for Fenwick Island, Dagsboro, Ocean View, and South Bethany are posted on the PAC website. PAC members are welcome to look at the policies of all the departments.

9. DISCUSSION

A. Chairperson Driver asked the Chiefs for reports from their departments.

Dagsboro Police Department: Chief Disciullo said that as they were working on the accreditation process, questions arose about jurisdictional issues at Indian River High School and his officers are no longer able to do proactive patrols at the school. Chief McLaughlin had similar jurisdictional issues with Lord Baltimore Elementary in Ocean View and spoke about how they resolved the issue. He also mentioned potential statewide jurisdiction efforts.

Dewey Beach Police Department: Chief Speake gave hiring updates, accreditation progress, and preparation for their seasonal academy. Dewey Beach Police will be fully-staffed at 13 when their officer graduates from the academy and they will have 14 seasonal officers. They are working on plans for their new building.

South Bethany Police Department: Chief Lovins said SBPD is nearing accreditation completion and gave staffing updates. They are authorized seven full-time officers, they will have six when their officer graduates from the academy, and are in the process of hiring another.

Ocean View Police Department: Chief McLaughlin said OVPD will complete its 3-year reaccreditation March 25th. Ocean View is fully-staffed with 14 sworn officers which includes a school resource officer and two K9 officers.

Fenwick Island Police Department: Chief Morrissey said FIPD is 60% finished with accreditation. He mentioned they purchased new body cameras with auto-activation features.

Selbyville Police Department: Chief Wilson said Selbyville is also in the accreditation process. They are hoping to hire officers in the Fall and have purchased property for a new police building having outgrown the current building.

B. Recruitment and Retention Challenges

State police salary increases impact municipal police recruitment.

Discussion on funding challenges and the need for local governments to support police salaries.

10. PUBLIC COMMENTS

No Comments

11. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be Thursday, May 8th, 2025, at Fenwick Island Town Hall, 800 Coastal Hwy, Fenwick Island, Delaware.

12. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting, the motion was seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 2:30 PM. Chief Lovins invited everyone to tour the South Bethany Police Department.

Respectfully submitted, Kendahl Hearn, SCSRPAC Administrative Assistant