

**TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND
POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY BOARD**

Minutes of Public Meeting
March 11, 2025

The meeting of the Talbot County Police Accountability Board ("PAB") was called to order at 8:30 a.m. on Tuesday, March 11, 2025. Present were Chairman Mitchell Ettinger, Members William Belding, John Gilbert, Jo Ann Murray, Chris Rice, Connie Webster, and Board Secretary Victoria Bradley.

- I. **Call to Order** – Chairman Ettinger called the meeting to order and made welcoming remarks.
- II. **Minutes** – Upon motion made by Ms. Murray, seconded by Ms. Webster, the minutes of the Tuesday, December 17, 2024, PAB meeting were approved unanimously without modification.

III. **Discussion with Law Enforcement Agencies ("LEA")**

- a. *2024 PAB Annual Report Feedback* – The Chairman noted that the correction requested by the Talbot County Sheriff's Office ("TCSO") to the summary of an Administrative Charging Committee ("ACC") action was made and that the corrected copy was distributed to the County Council.
- b. *Submission of Quarterly Use of Force Reports* – The discussion centered on the apparent trend that use of force was becoming more commonly associated with persons who are intoxicated or suffering from a mental health disorder. It was noted that none of the incidents reported by the LEAs resulted in serious injury. Oxford Police Department ("OPD") stated that LEAs across the country are experiencing the same trend.
- c. *Criminal Activity Trends or Upticks* – The TCSO reported no uptick or trend in criminal activity. Easton Police Department ("EPD") reported a continuing uptick in retail theft. St. Michaels Police Department ("SMPD") has seen an uptick in thefts from automobiles as owners are failing to lock their cars.
- d. *Report on High-Speed Chase* – The TCSO reported on a high-speed chase that occurred last year and resulted in a fatality. The Attorney General recently cleared the deputy involved in the incident. The TCSO have adopted new policies surrounding high speed pursuits, especially in light of the fact that Maryland State

Police do not assist with such pursuits when they cross county lines. There was only one such fatality in the county last year.

- e. ICE Actions in Talbot County – The PAB asked the LEAs to explain how, if at all, they cooperate with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (“ICE”) agents. The LEAs described a memo from the Maryland State Attorney General’s Office (the “AG”) that requires ICE agents to have a warrant to obtain LEA assistance. The TSCO emphasized that the AG generally recommends adopting a hands-off approach, leaving the ICE agents to act on their own. The TSCO observed that there have been no material changes to their procedures since the new administration began more aggressive immigration enforcement. EPD noted that ICE does not report their actions after the fact, notwithstanding that that is the expected standard procedure. The LEAs will hold an individual who has been incarcerated if there is a federal detainer for his arrest.

The LEAs have engaged with the community regarding rumors circulating regarding ICE actions. EPD recently sponsored “coffee with a cop” event with the Hispanic community to dispel such rumors and inform the community that they are available to help. The LEAs share the view that ICE actions can chill victims from reporting crimes to local authorities for fear of being arrested. The LEAs do not inquire into customs status in response to such calls and are endeavoring to ensure that the community understands this fact.

- f. Community Relations Activities (Q1 and Q2 2025) – The Chairman praised the LEAs on their Q1 community relations events. With respect to Q2, the TSCO will sponsor a citizen’s police academy. The academy requires attendance one day per week for ten weeks.

EPD too is hosting a citizen’s police academy, which closely tracks the curriculum offered by the TSCO.

The OPD continues to host coffee with a cop and have enjoyed a good turnout. OPD also has started to host events on Facebook Live on a variety of topics. Oxford Day is in April this year and it provides yet another opportunity for the OPD to interact with the community in a positive manner.

- g. Complaint Mediation – The Chairman inquired whether the LEAs have attempted to pursue mediation as a means to resolve a citizen’s complaint, noting that a recent complaint submitted to the ACC was well suited for mediation. The TSCO explained that it has offered mediation to complainants but there has been little or

no interest by the complainant in agreeing to attend mediation. The TSCO also noted the challenges associated with contacting complainants and their general lack of responsiveness. The TSCO said a further impediment to mediation is the mediator's requirement that all "willingly" participate in the process and any reluctance expressed by the complainant results in termination of the mediation. Ms. Murray asked if the LEAs have tried talking with the mediation team regarding their process to help avoid that issue. The Chairman suggested that working with the mediation staff to rephrase their in-take questions could prove fruitful. For example, instead of asking "are you here voluntarily," they could ask "are you here in an effort to resolve your complaint against the police officer?" The LEAs agreed that re-phrasing of the in-take questions could overcome this hurdle.

- h. Easton Police Department Participation in Teen Court – EPD reported that it is working with the TCSO and utilizing Teen Court. The Chairman discussed the recent article in the Star Democrat about Teen Court, which presented the program in a very positive light.
- i. Disclosure of Pending Investigations within ACC Purview – The Chairman emphasized the need for the LEAs to report newly filed complaints to Secretary Bradley, noting that this was the agreed upon process to assist the PAB in tracking the number of complaints in the investigative pipeline.
- j. Recommendations for PAB 2025 Focus – No suggestions were offered.
- k. PAB/ACC Attendance at Select LEA Training – The Chairman inquired whether there was any training that the PAB/ACC members would be permitted to attend. EPD have reached out to the police academy and were told, due to class space, they would not be able to allow citizens to attend. The TSCO stated much of its training is not done in house, and what they in-house typically is not suited for PAB/ACC participation.

The Chairman stated the PAB/ACC would be interested in any training done in-house that focused on things such as traffic stops or mental health situations. Attending such training sessions would enable the members to better understand the police officers' perspectives.

- l. LEA Topics of Interest/Concern – The TSCO requested that when the ACC imposes administrative charges against a deputy that it delineate by charge the discipline, if any, imposed. The Chairman agreed to raise this request with the ACC at its next meeting.

- m. PAB Appearance Before the County Council (April 2025)* – The Chairman noted that he will make a brief presentation to the County Council on April 8th and requested that other members attend the session. The purpose of the presentation is to obtain feedback from the Council regarding its expectations of both the PAB and ACC. The Chairman committed to circulating any presentation materials he intends to use in advance of the meeting for PAB comment.

IV. Next PAB Meeting – The Board set a date for the next PAB meeting with the Local Law Enforcement Agencies for May 13, 2025, at 8:30 am.

- V. Adjournment** – There being no further business, a motion was made by Mr. Gilbert and seconded by Ms. Webster to adjourn the meeting. The motion was passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 9:31 am.