



City of Madison

Meeting Minutes - Approved

EOC AD HOC SUBCOMMITTEE ON TASERS

Thursday, July 30, 2009

12:00 p.m.

DCR Conference Room
Room 523, 210 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 12:10 p.m. by Bayrd

2. Roll Call

Present: Bayrd, Hurd, Benford

Excused: None

Absent: None

Staff: Melissa Gombar

Guest: MPD Captain Vic Wahl and Assistant Chief Randy Gaber

3. Public Comment

None

4. Approval of Minutes

The July 23, 2009 minutes were approved (Benford/Hurd).

5. Discussion

Subcommittee members will review available reports and policy from the Madison Police Department and discuss how it will gather information and determine whether to formulate a recommendation to present to the EOC Executive Committee on the use of tasers by the Madison Police Department.

Capitan Wahl and Assistant Chief Gaber were present to answer questions formulated in the Subcommittee's previous meeting. The Taser Reports that have been made since the beginning of the taser program in 2003 through June 2009 were reviewed.

About 350 officers are trained on tasers, and they check out tasers for their shifts, of which there are 190 devices. 153 officers have deployed a taser. There has been no

concern that certain officers are discharging their tasers at a higher rate than others, and there is no evidence that newer officers use tasers at a higher rate. Also, the ethnicity of the officers that have been using tasers is not available.

Drive stun is tasing a subject without the electronic wires or probes, it is holding the taser directly onto the subject, and it is rarely used. There are 5 subjects that have been repeat offenders, and have been tasered in more than one incident.

The full taser policy was handed out. A handout was also given to demonstrate some of the statistics of Taser Deployments by Year, Deployments – Total, and other Demographics. It was stressed that these figures are comparable to other agencies' around the country that Capitan Wahl has seen. The policy that the MPD has regarding when tasers can be deployed is more limiting than other agencies around the nation. Within the policy tasers can be used if the subject will harm another person or officer, compared to other policies where the subject only needs to be demonstrating "active resistance."

There have been no citizen complaints to the MPD regarding the use of tasers.

Racial disparity:

It was reported that the racial disparity within taser use has decreased through June 2009. Capitan Wahl and Assistant Chief Gaber maintain that the racial disparity within the taser data reflects the disparities of the criminal justice system as a whole, and is no different than other numbers reflecting the disparity in arrests and other areas.

There was a question if the Subcommittee could get national data to compare the racial disparity happening here with reports from other agencies. Capitan Wahl reported that he would be happy to point the Subcommittee in the right direction so they could see some other reports done by other agencies around the country.

Recommendations:

There was a debate as to whether taser use requires further attention, or if the Subcommittee should be dissolved. It was recognized that there are larger societal issues at play that are maintaining a racial disparity in the criminal justice system as a whole, which may be up to another Subcommittee to formulate.

There is also a Dane County Task Force that is looking at the racial disparity within the criminal justice system and they will be coming out with a report in November. It was suggested that perhaps the Subcommittee wait for that report before dissolving.

Another idea that was put out was that it would be useful for the EOC Executive Committee to get regular reports on taser use and the statistics regarding the deployments. The group decided to recommend that the statistics be gathered for review every quarter.

Benford feels comfortable that the police right now are using tasers appropriately and has no concern for the racial disparity as it is reflected in the larger arrest data, from what he has seen.

Bayrd would like to see the national data and the overall arrest record data before making a final decision, but is comfortable making the recommendation that the EOC Executive Committee review taser reports regularly.

Hurd feels as though this issue could be a symptom of a larger issue, and wants to keep it on the table.

The Subcommittee's final recommendation is that the EOC Executive Committee should be given quarterly reports regarding taser deployment data.

6. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 1:30 p.m.