



Summary of the Police Chief Listening Sessions as conducted by the City Manager

Winter 2017

The City conducted five listening sessions and an internal session with the Police Department from February 16th – March 28th. As a result we gathered and listened to input from approximately 180 people. The five listening sessions primarily involved answering four questions:

1. What characteristics do you prefer in a police department?
2. What characteristics do you prefer in a Police Chief?
3. What is community policing?
4. What is the best way to give information from this session back to you?

A structure was developed and adapted to each session. Further, individual meetings with a variety of citizens also took place with the City Manager during the Winter of 2017, in order to invite further ideas and suggestions. In compiling these notes we looked for common categories or themes across the groups for characteristics related to the future Police Chief and Police Department.

The listening sessions produced a number of common themes related to the participants' desired characteristics of the next Police Chief as well as the Police Department. While there was a lot of information gathered, this is just a summary and doesn't include all comments submitted.

Common themes included:

1. Seek diversity in the Police Department
2. Understand and provide regular and relevant training for the Police Department
3. Promote residency for both the Police Chief and Police Department
4. Focus on building relationships as a key component of community policing
5. Emphasize an understanding of the unique nature and culture of Oberlin and the College
6. Incorporate visibility and accessibility as a key strategy in the neighborhoods and business sectors of Oberlin
7. Promote and enhance positive connections with the youth of Oberlin

The next step in the search will include publishing this document. The document will be listed on the "Community Voices" section of the City of Oberlin website, and distributed to organizations as requested. Future steps in the Police Chief selection process include developing a technical panel, in order to assure the next Police Chief is qualified in law enforcement management, trained in community policing and able to build relationships. The panel will consist of individuals with law enforcement background, to assure the next Police Chief is qualified in managing the multitude of responsibilities, and demonstrating the

experience needed. This panel will be responsible for the first round of interviews. They will give 3-5 names of applicants interviewed to the City Manager for consideration. The City Manager will conduct the balance of the interviews, utilizing any resources needed to assure the best candidate is evaluated. The City Manager will make the decision in selecting the next Chief.

The following is a more detailed summary of the individual listening sessions. Many notes were taken, and this document is only an effort to reflect the general themes of the discussion, and not intended to provide individual comments.

Focus Group #1

Location: Kendall

Date: 2/16/17

Number of attendants: 80

Brief summary/key points expressed by attendees:

Some of the characteristics preferred in the police department is to emphasize the value of diversity and that effort be made to be further involved in the community. Living in the City was stated as a desirable trait for the Chief of Police by the group. The group also believed education in the field of police management was an important trait to continue. The Police Department should continue to understand Oberlin College and the community. An internal candidate with this knowledge is a plus and shows experience in Oberlin. The group indicated that community policing is providing relationships and visibility with individuals in the community. The group emphasized that they appreciated friendliness. The group discussed the concept of restorative justice, as a continuum in approaching issues in the community.

Focus Group #2

Location: Wilder Hall, Oberlin College

Date: 2/27/17

Number of attendants: 15

Brief summary/key points by attendees:

The characteristics preferred for the police department were accessibility, accountability, understanding, and sensitivity to the different cultures in the community. The value of diversity was discussed. The group believed a better understanding of the training that is provided to the police is needed, including the efforts of understanding implicit bias. The group indicated that the Police Department should have a role in youth development. They prefer officers reside and participate in Oberlin, to better connect to the community. The preferred characteristics of the Police Chief is to utilize problem solving techniques to get to the issue of the problem. They expressed a need of the Police Chief to champion change, be flexible and listen to feelings. Additionally, the Police Chief should encourage a culture of trust. Connections with the youth, a commitment to communication, accountability, and strong town-gown relationship experience was discussed.

Focus Group #3

Location: Oberlin Public Library/Oberlin Business Partnership

Date: 3/7/17

Number of attendants: 35

Brief summary/key points by attendees:

The group expressed that the Police Department should emphasize relationships and outreach with the youth of the community. The Chief of Police should be professional, responsive and engaged, and be experienced in all aspects of police management. The Police Chief should embrace being a change agent when it is warranted and be a leader with an enthusiastic sense of the future. The group identified the need to understand departmental training, addressing social and other factors effecting law enforcement on a national and local level. The new Police Chief should relate to the community on a personal level and demonstrate respect and clarity. The Police Chief should empower a diverse team that outreaches to the community. The group preferred the Police Chief live in the City. The Police Chief should understand the unique challenges of Federal Immigration Issues. The Police Chief should seek ways to emphasize peace keeping. The Chief should emphasize relationship building with the variety of diverse cultures, youth, and Oberlin College.

Focus Group #4

Location: Mt Zion Church

Date: 3/14/17

Number of attendants: 35

Brief summary/key points by attendees:

The group desired a Police Department that is visible to the community. There is a desire that the Police Chief values regular training in diversity and understanding in handling issues related to the mentally ill. The Police Chief should value investing in relationships in the community. Additionally, the Police Chief should be open and empathetic to citizens, committed to protecting the most vulnerable among us, and demonstrate intercultural competence. They should actively participate in meetings and be a solid communicator. The group preferred the Police Chief live in the community. The group desired the Police Chief to inspire cultural competency and motivate others to achieve this. The Police Chief should be a good collaborator with Oberlin College and the community. The Police Chief should be objective, trusting, and show competency in investigating issues from an internal and external perspective. The Police Chief should be caring, honest, and a great listener. The Police Chief should understand the problems of the community and be respected by the Police Department. They will have the personality to change the culture and stay for this change. Community policing should include regular meetings with the public. The group discussed community policing as integrating people and building networks, all with the intention to continue to build trusting relationships. The Police Chief should explore alternative, modern approaches in law enforcement. A physical change to the structure of the department facility is requested so that when you walk in you feel more welcomed.

Focus group #5

Location: Oberlin Public Library

Date: 3/21/17

Number of attendants: 15

Brief summary/key points by attendees:

The group expressed the desire of the Police Chief to be visible and to know people in the community. This includes the Police Chief having a high level of listening skills, and being committed to bringing people together. The Department should continue with training and be able to communicate with the College. The group desired the Police Chief live in the City. The Police Chief should have creative alternatives to enforcement and be quick to listen. The Police Chief should seek to be a mentor and be able to relate to diverse populations. The Police Chief should also be active and visible in the community. They should know the environment of Oberlin, and be willing to make productive changes on behalf of the City when necessary. The Police Chief should live in the City. The group desired a Police Chief who is visible, friendly, and interacts in the community.

Police Department Sessions

On March 28th two focus group sessions were held with the Police Department.

The Police Department believed that they excelled at response time, professionalism and integrity. They assist the community in many ways that are not fully understood. Auxiliary officers are an attribute that not only helps the community but assists patrol officers. Teamwork is very strong in the department.

The Police Department indicated they can improve on communication internally and with the community. The facility and technology can be improved to help with communication as well as other issues. The training budget can be worked on to address the needs of the department.

The Police Department desired to provide more education on what the Police Department does, in order to improve community understanding, including the work they do related to emergency services. This is presently done through a variety of communication techniques and events.

The Police Chief needs to be clear on what is expected and take responsibility for that direction. The Police Chief needs to formalize communication and training. There is a need to have stability in this role, so a commitment to longevity is preferred. The Police Department indicated that there are internal candidates that should be considered for the position. The Police Chief should understand the community and the Police Department. The Police Chief should lead by example, particularly by demonstrating support, honesty, and integrity. The Police Chief should evaluate the Police Department organizational structure. The Police Chief should be someone who is experienced, an Ohio Police Officer, someone with police management experience and someone who will be visible and accessible.