Penn Knox Neighborhood Association Meeting Minutes

October 5, 2021

**Attendees**

**Philadelphia Police Department:** Commissioner Danielle Outlaw, Chief Inspector Michael McCarrick, Inspector Jarreau Thomas, Captain Anthony Ginaldi, Captain Nicholas Smith

**Community:** Angela Steele, Irving Vaughn, Adam Kaufman, Maggie Manzer, Terese Vekteris, Sue Patterson, Allison Weiss, Rep. Darisha Parker, Zarah Adams, Deneene Brockington, Kevin Zuber, Elizabeth Green, Birdie Busch, Don Jones, Cheryl Smith, Andrea Providence, Alvena Melton, Tom Kang, Marjorie Thomas, Kevin Zuber, Elijah Vasilets, Phileasa Patrick, Andy Lemons, Robinna Wilson, Diane Tull (and several others who did not leave their names in the comments)

Co-vice chair Angela Steele opened the meeting, reviewed the agenda, and welcomed special guest Philadelphia Police Commissioner Danielle Outlaw.

Commissioner Outlaw stated she was pleased to join the meeting, and had invited a number of other PPD personnel along to help speak specifically to issues in Penn Knox, Germantown, and NW Philadelphia.

Angela stated that we had gathered questions in advance from PKNA residents and supplied them to Commissioner Outlaw’s office. She read the first question:

Angela Steele: Multiple businesses on Maplewood Mall have been robbed after hours. Can PPD put more patrols on cars and bicycles on the mall?

Angela then announced that the rest of the meeting would be recorded.

**Transcript of recorded portion of meeting:**

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| Captain Nicholas Smith: | Yes, I got it. All right. Hello, everybody. For those who don't know me, my name is Captain Nicholas Smith. I'm the commanding officer of the 14th District, right there at Germantown and Haines. I've been there for about three years now. So Maplewood Mall? It's a great location there, it's historic, we know the history of it. Not much crime there. However, we do get property crime from time to time with regards to theft from autos and burglaries. No pattern seems to be around there, they seem to be isolated incidents. They do happen in the middle of the night, after midnight. I'm in constant communication with my last-hour supervisors, which is the supervisors who work in the middle of the night. So to answer that question can we increase patrol in that area? Absolutely. It'd be a little bit challenging putting bikes out there but increasing patrols where officers around that area, 100% we could do that. They could actually drive to Maplewood Mall there, that's not a problem. It's you're right there on the border of myself and a 39th Police District, Captain Ginaldi, I know he's on. |
|  | But again, with regards to the area there, they seem to be isolated incidents. We get a little... Some of that flow from Germantown to Chelten, which we know is a busy commercial corridor. So it could be individuals who are hanging around there that kind of make their way over to Greene Street and further down the Schoolhouse Lane. But to answer your question, we will increase patrol around there. |
| Angela Steele: | Thank you and I have just one follow-up. When would we see those increased patrols starting? |
| Captain Smith: | You'll see that right away. You should see patrols out there tonight. |
| Angela Steele: | Okay, great. All right, our next category of pre-submitted questions is about drug trafficking. There's two questions, I'll read them both. The first is what is your narcotics enforcement team doing to address the drug market at Hansberry and Marion? Have you requested assistance from the DEA? The second question is at the last neighborhood meeting the officers said they need more evidence to bring narcotics and drug trafficking cases to the district attorney. When there is open drug dealing, why is that evidence difficult to get? |
| Chief Inspector Michael McCarrick: | Okay, so once again, its Chief Inspector McCarrick. So I do have Captain Ginaldi on the phone and he oversees operations in that immediate area, Knox and Hansberry, Knox and Marion. We do collaborate with our state and federal partners. However, there are certain criteria that must be met in order for our federal partners to really partake in the investigation and or the prosecution end of it. So when we're talking about street-level dealing, that predominantly is handled by our city resources and the partnership with us in the district attorney's office. The investigations into that area would fall both with the district personnel and Captain Ginaldi can discuss that, as along with our internal personnel from our Narcotics Bureau. So that collaboration is ongoing, it's regular. Part of the challenge is policing way for the city's Narcotic Bureau is the entire city. The focus, unfortunately, the opioid epidemic has really impacted the city, particularly in our East Division, which I oversee. That can take up a lot of resources. So a lot of times the inspector, Inspector Thomas, and the captain will formulate a strategy among our divisional personnel to target narcotics. I know this is one area, in particular. |
|  | So before I go to Captain Ginaldi, I would ask Inspector Thomas that if he could comment. I know he himself was out recently and actually, recovered the drug stash from that exact location. The cameras are... Once again, just to reinforce the cameras are up and functioning and it is a high-quality camera at Knox and Hansberry. That captures a pretty good view of that immediate area. So, Jarreau if you can comment as to what you do from a divisional and then we'll go to Tony. |
| Inspector Jarreau Thomas: | Sure, no problem. So for those of you who aren't aware of who I am, I am Inspector Jarreau Thomas, commanding officer of Northwest Police Division. Just taking a look at this area, one of the things that we did was we took a look back to about 2018. Just to give you a snapshot of exactly what we're dealing with in this area. Now, what we found is that we have about 28 arrests in the area for narcotics. That's for narcotic sales and narcotic possession. These arrests specifically occur around the area, 5100 Marion. Hansberry and Marion, Mannheim and Greene, Knox and Marion. We also have about eight gun arrests over the last few years. Three of this are actually for this year 2021. As the chief alluded to, we do share all of our information with our federal partners, in addition to our internal partners. Regarding our narcotics enforcement teams, they are aware that the activities are occurring. |
|  | As a matter of fact, I used to be a narcotics enforcement officer here in the 39th District. I started my career here in this district in about 2004. The individuals who are now running Hansberry-Knox were the individuals who were the street runners when I was on patrol in this particular patrol district. Nonetheless, over the years, these individuals they've kind of perfected ways to evade detection by the police and apprehension, which makes open-air drugs apprehension kind of difficult for us. But nonetheless, we do from a divisional perspective, specifically the 39th, we deploy your VCR team as we call them. To this area to continue our enforcement areas. |
|  | In addition to that, I personally patrol this area, I have a lot of family in the division. I happen to know a few of the dealers from Hansberry-Knox because of just spending my time as a police officer here in the 39th. They know that we know what's going on. I don't want you to think for one minute that because they're selling drugs, these are stupid individuals. These individuals are very intelligent, they know when we set up, they know where we set up. They know the location that we've used to arrest them in the past. These are some of the challenges that we find ourselves dealing with currently, as we set up. |
|  | Nonetheless, my last time in the area, speaking of the 5100 block of Marion, I believe that there was about seven to 11 abandoned vehicles on that block. We went out there and we cleared those abandoned vehicles. As you know abandoned vehicles are utilized for storing narcotics, in addition to firearms. While I was out there, had a couple of the dealers that I don't know kind of run from the area. We wound up recovering a good amount of crack cocaine, my aide and I. From actually the corner of Hansberry and Marion. So we are aware that the open-air sales are occurring, our VCR team and the 39th will be back up and running. We had a number of injured officers but we've since made some shifts, they're going to be hitting that area. Just keep us posted on anything that you see, any information is critical in order for us to be able to effectively do our jobs. |
| Angela Steele: | Can you clarify what is the VCR team for the notes, is that correct? |
| Inspector Thomas: | Absolutely, I'm sorry about that. So when I refer to the VCR team, that's Violent Crime Response teams. These are teams that are established in these patrol district. The intent and the mission of these teams is to go into our pinpoint areas and target the individuals in these areas that are causing problems, wherever that problem may be. The unique characteristic about our VCR teams are that they work not only in a plainclothes capacity but they also work in uniform. So they're very flexible component of our deployment plans, which we use in order to reduce crime. |
| Chief Inspector McCarrick: | Jarreau, are you done, Jarreau? |
| Inspector Thomas: | Yes, I am done. |
| Chief Inspector McCarrick: | All right. I just wasn't sure if you cut out. Before we go to the Captain Ginaldi, as the inspector alluded, these officers are pulled to the numerous locations that we deploy throughout the 39th District. So Captain Ginaldi has to balance the gun violence as well as the narcotics. But one of the points that we always ask and the partnership through your meetings and the communication is to streamline the sharing. Never assume that because clearly the individuals are out there engaged in activity, the officers are always there, and always see it. So understanding when something changes and communicating that. Whether it be through our tip hotline or directly with the Community Relations Officer and or the Captain's Office is vital to our deployment strategy. So with that, I know we constantly ask for information from the community. That's the partnership that we must have if we're going to truly be successful in the area. But I'll turn it over to Captain Ginaldi and he can discuss a little more in-depth about what he's doing in the immediate area. |
| Captain Anthony Ginaldi: | Thank you, sir. Can you guys all hear me? |
| Angela Steele: | Yes, we can. |
| Captain Ginaldi: | Hello. We're good. I tried to dial in on the camera side, that didn't work. Good evening, for everybody who has not had the opportunity meet me, I am Anthony Ginaldi, commanding officer of the 39th District. The inspector and chief stole a lot of my thunder. You're welcome for having all the answers, guys. But to address some of the issues, I know that the inspector talked about the VCR teams, that's the formerly our NET officers, our narcotics enforcement teams. I've lost five officers to injuries in two years in the efforts that we put forward out there to stem off the problems that we know are happening in the community. Like it was alluded to earlier, regarding the evidentiary-based product that we have to put forward at the judicial level. What we know or what the community knows what's going on in the street is completely different than what we can take to court. There's a huge, huge, huge gap there. The district attorney's office has had a complete and total transformation that we have to adapt to and work with. |
|  | The NETs officers or the VCR officers that we have out there, I want to say they're just not standard patrol officers that you'll see wandering around out there. They have to go through specialized training to be narcotics officers, there's policy and protocol that goes along with that. It takes time, they have to be vetted through our internal processes. Then there's also the plainclothes training, that is also time-consuming, in as much as getting them all trained up. You have to have both of those training backgrounds to be deployed in those capacities. The chief was kind enough to basically put it out there that I do have to balance. There's so many different things that we're dealing with. If you live in the community, you know what's going on in Germantown Avenue. We have issues up there that I share with Captain Smith. If you check the community flyer and the bulletin that we have that we put out weekly, it talks about some of the more challenging situations that I have to deal within the borders of the 39th District. |
|  | A lot of times, you won't see what goes on behind the scenes, what we're doing, what we're monitoring, how we're affecting the arrests that we put up. The chief also noted that we have multiple, multiple requests into our partners out there. Trust me when I say that they're working as diligently as we are. We all want to make sure that when we go to court that it's a solid case and there's no wiggle room in there. We know that we're going to take a potential problem out of the scenario for a considerable period of time. So these investigations aren't quick, they're not a quick hit. If you recall, some of the lesser narcotics crimes don't even see the inside of the police station. It's like a ticket, you get a ticket, you'd be on your way. Many people balk at that and laugh at that. They're not going to pay the ticket, they're not going to give you their real name, et cetera, et cetera. |
|  | I have meetings once a month, I have command meetings. There's the community, Captain's Roundtable, please come. I know the chief alluded to this. The sharing of information is absolutely essential for me. If I don't get that information from you, the community, I'm almost handicapped in a way. The community is the eyes and ears of the police department and the community truly does police itself. We're here to do basically support what you guys are doing out there. Give me what I need and I've always said this between the PSA meetings and the captain's meetings I have. All I want is for you to give me the information and point me in the right direction, I'll take care of everything else. I love to sit here and tell you that it will be an overnight success but it's not. It's going to be a lifelong challenge for us until we can get the judicial system back on track. Make the people who are going to commit these crimes realize that it's a bad idea. That there's going to be consequences to it. I don't think then they fear... I don't want them to fear the police per se, I want them to fear the consequences that they're going to face. Both from our side and from the judicial side as well. No one fears these consequences anymore. |
|  | So that's what I really need from the community. Come to the meetings, share with me, share what you have. You guys see what's going on, please tell me. I don't need your name, I don't need your phone number, I don't need your address, I just need to know who's doing it because they're not going to sit there and do it in front of us. That's another aspect. I know you talk about the evidentiary-based product and what we're going to put together. Give me what I need, let me know who it is. Take pictures if you can, share the pictures. We have technology that will help us identify these people and we could proceed forward with that. |
| Angela Steele: | Thank you. I'm going to move to our next questions, so I see hands coming up and questions coming into the chat. Let me go to this question for Commissioner Outlaw. When can you come visit our community and see some of the areas of concern? |
| Commissioner Outlaw: | It's all a matter of scheduling, I do that all throughout the city. Sometimes I pop up on the captains. In this case, we have Captain Smith and Captain Ginaldi. I've been out and about a few times, actually, with Captain Smith. Thus far, we have to schedule something with Captain Ginaldi for the 39th. But with that said, again, it's a matter of scheduling. I enjoy getting out of here and getting boots on ground to really have an ability to connect with folks. Quite frankly, I'm going to tell you this. I like to do it without cameras following, meaning media. I believe wholeheartedly that we get more authentic responses from people that encounter me without the fear of being recorded or so on and so forth. So again, it's just a matter of scheduling for me. I wish I can tell you that I have a lot of open chunks of time in my schedule, I don't. But I like to prioritize walking tour as best as I can. So it's just a matter of working that out logistically behind the curtain with my [inaudible] assistant. |
| Angela Steele: | All right. Two questions about PPD culture, maybe two sides of the same question. What's the characteristic of PPD that you are working to change? What's the characteristic that you didn't want to change? |
| Commissioner Outlaw: | I think that's a good question. Over time, it has evolved. Obviously, this is an institution, it's in a culture. Organization has been in existence for quite some time, we do a lot of things really, really well. It's just due to where we're situated in the country, it's due to the fact that there's a lot of institutional knowledge here. People stay on for decades as opposed to three to five years and move on to other places. Given that we are a major city and I happen to know my predecessors. Typically, major city police departments tend to stay ahead of the curve with best practices and what's going on in policing. Then do what we can to try to either keep up and or exceed. With that said, I know I was hired to make tweaks in a lot of areas. It formulated around culture, it formulated around internal issues, around accountability, and gender discrimination, harassment. Really just making sure, in addition to violent crime and homicides, non-fatal shootings. That's a completely different topic but it, obviously, is something that falls under my realm of responsibility. But all of us, all over the country have to deal with that. |
|  | So when you talk about specifically culturally, we have to work harder to diversify our department throughout the ranks, sworn and non-sworn. Obviously, recruiting and retention is an issue. But then again, the culture and making sure that when we recruit this diversity that we can retain as well. Meaning that we have a supportive culture here within the police department to ensure that people feel supported, that they're celebrated. They're empowered and that they stay forever and ever and ever. |
|  | So a lot of things that we're working on, there is a plan you can check it out on our website that was released in June of 2020. It's not just an action plan to address violent crime, that's about one part of it. But it's a strategic plan to address everything in the department comprehensively. When I first came here, even before I rolled out the plan, I immediately implemented. Made very clear that we have three guiding pillars that are all interconnected. One isn't more important than the other. One is organizational excellence, is all things internal. What are we doing or what do we need to ensure that we're performing at our best? So God forbid if I ever have to call 911 or if any of you have to call 911, what was that experience like for you? For some people, you've only had to call one time and that experience was terrible. That is your impression of your police. We want to make sure that God forbid, if you ever have to call that one time, that it was the best interaction that you ever had. Whether it was for something good or whether it was for something bad. |
|  | So how are we focusing on our training? Do we have systems of accountability in place? Who are we hiring? How are we marketing? Who are we promoting? What are our processes? Again, all things internal. Then there's crime prevention and reduction as another pillar that's interrelated as well. I think that one is self-explanatory. But laid out in that plan made very clear that there's an operating model here. There's a lot of information when I got here. Again, there's a lot of things that we do really well. A lot of information, we have to DVIC, the Delaware Valley Information Center. But it was just kind of all out there and no one really knew or had clear instruction on what to do with that information. What were roles and responsibilities? Who was responsible for what? Then what are the feedback loops? How are we reporting that stuff back out? What are our goals? What are we trying to accomplish over the next three years, let alone year to year? So that was laid out. |
|  | Then the third pillar is community engagement and inclusion. Traditionally, you would hear a lot of police leadership say we have to engage, we have to engage, we have to engage. That's but one part of it. Me engaging is me being here and speaking at you like I am now. But what are we doing to include you in our business processes? Are you sitting on our selection panels? Do you have any say in our policies as they are amended or if they're new? What are we doing to actually include? So we know that if we don't engage and include community, our numbers, our violent crime, our crime period. Our numbers aren't going to go down because witnesses aren't going to come forward. There isn't a relationship of trust. |
|  | Then if we don't invest in ourselves, not divest, not defund. If we don't invest in ourselves, how do we expect to stay on top of cutting-edge policing, through training and technology and equipment, and vehicles, and whatever that is? So hopefully, you can see how all three of those things are interconnected. That's what's laid out in that plan. Within each of those, there's a very key strategic objective of all the things that I'm trying to change and then the things that I'm trying to improve that were already in place. |
| Angela Steele: | Thank you. |
| Commissioner Outlaw: | You're welcome. |
| Angela Steele: | So our last pre-submitted question and then we're going to get to our attendees questions. Is can you work with Councilwoman Bass to provide home security cameras to community members in areas with high rates of violence, gun violence, and drug trafficking? |
| Commissioner Outlaw: | Before I turn that over to the chief, we're happy to work with anyone. Whether they're an elected official or a group that's engaged. Obviously, you all are a very engaged group. You're vocal, you're organized, and this is what it takes to help partner, in order to get things done. We work with our council members all the time on whatever their specific projects are or if they are initiatives for the larger neighborhoods. In order to get something done together, as opposed to being able to do it on our own. So the answer is yes, we work with our council people regularly, we work with Councilmember Bass regularly. I know we can drill down, the chief will drill down on just how the cameras work, typically, what our camera program is like. I also know that there are some cameras already placed in certain neighborhoods and I'll let them expand on that as well. Chief, you want to talk about that a little bit? |
| Chief Inspector McCarrick: | Absolutely, thank you. So we had a discussion last time and I want to clarify. I believe the councilwoman is looking to expand some cameras and most of our council members are looking to expand the camera footprint throughout the city. The difference is they're doing it in multiple phases. So you had the police department cameras, which are the cameras that you'll see like Knox and Hansberry along Germantown Avenue. Those are purchased through the city's budget. They are the ones that I specified earlier. We're limited in the number that were budgeted each year, that budget goes between the police department and the office of innovation and technology. They cost approximately about $10,000 per camera and that's if it's just one that is not equipped with acoustic gunshot detection software. So those cameras are integrated into our system and there's a specific criteria that has to be placed on its compatibility with our system. |
|  | I know the councilwoman was looking at other areas like commercial corridor cameras and that would come from a separate funding source. Those are cameras that could be built out one our requirement, our network. We've, over the last few years as we developed our Intelligence Bureau and working with our partners, strategic initiative partners. We got Office of Innovation Technology to communicate with the Councilmatic members to say that this is the requirement. So that's additional external funding that would come in, that would purchase cameras. That has been supported both by Council President Clark, particularly in around schools, department or rec centers, as well as the commercial corridors. A lot of that goes through commerce as well. |
|  | But council members lately have also been exploring the use of private-owned systems, such as Ring. I use that as just an example, there's multiple, various cameras that can be put on doorbell cameras. They can be placed strategically through a neighborhood and then video from those cameras when they capture crime could be uploaded to a source that would be made available for investigations. That was another source they were looking at, it was a lower cost realized from that. I think mass purchase gathered those cameras for approximately $200 apiece. That they would be utilized throughout their Councilmatic districts. |
|  | Then finally, are the safe-cam cameras. What that is there's an incentive from businesses. They're for businesses as well as owners to register private-owned cameras. Businesses will receive a stipend back to reimburse them for some of the expense in equipping their buildings externally. What it is, is an agreement to say that the video from their cameras, they notify police that the presence of the cameras there, who to contact for purposes of gathering the information. But it's a partnership saying that they will share the video for those purposes. So for purposes of investigation moving forward. What it does is it also helps remove the stigma or the threat of the owner of the camera having to go to court to testify with the potential backlash from those that are engaged in nefarious activities. Looking to come back and intimidate a witness. |
|  | We do partner, like I said, with all of our Councilmatic representatives. We do have a healthy partnership with Councilwoman Bass and she communicates directly with our captains, myself, and the inspector. We've partaken in numerous community calls that she's done. So any project that they have, we openly welcome it. Anything that expands our capabilities to do our job better and to support the end goal, we welcome. So it's all a matter of which initiative we're focused on because I know that she's faced a couple initiatives. It's just a matter of how we integrate them with our systems. |
| Angela Steele: | Thank you. |
| Commissioner Outlaw: | If I could just piggyback on that, too. Chief Inspector McCarrick did a very thorough job I think of explaining not only the process but the value. But there's a huge value add, whether it's a camera that's monitored in the real-time crime scene or not. There's a lot of evidentiary value in this video, oftentimes what we're seeing. In addition to a witness not necessarily having to go into court and testify, it really helps us for after the fact. I don't know if some of you have been watching the press conferences or the press briefings that we do every two weeks. Giving an update on just where we are in the city with violent crime statistics, guns recovered, so on, and so forth. But Deputy Commissioner Nash who's over investigation spends a lot of the time showing not only still photos but video footage of unsolved cases. We've gotten a lot of feedback from that, meaning that we've been able to close or clear a lot of cases because what people have seen that we've put out there. But again, that video footage is coming from you all. It's coming from community, is coming from business owners, it's extremely helpful in helping us solve cases. |
|  | So I think there's a huge value add and benefit to having a strong camera program and registering your camera, so we know that it exists. |
| Angela Steele: | Thank you. |
| Captain Smith: | Commissioner, Captain Smith again. If I could just add in on that. With regards to the cameras, I can tell you right now, I can't push the cameras enough. Every meeting I go to it's huge, it's big for the police department, for the community. I encourage them, I encourage the cameras, I encourage every house, every block. This is where the community and police can actually work together. The homeowners, the residents if you get the cameras, notify your police district. Whether it'd be the 14th, 39th, whatever district, every district has a crime prevention officer. Contact us, we can have our crime prevention officer come out. We can kind of help you strategically place the cameras. When you get the whole block to get cameras, we can get it where anything that happens on that block is going to be captured. Definitely register with our Safe-Cam Program. You can go on phillypolice.com, navigate through the system. It'll show you exactly how to register it. But it's helpful to everybody involved, it speeds up the process. If a crime does happen, say a robbery. We can make one phone call to our real-time crime center. We know at real-time where the cameras are located at that can help capture the individual who did the crime. Our number one goal was to prevent crime, we don't always get that right. But we have to investigate the crime. |
| Chief Inspector McCarrick: | Then if I can just add one thing and just because I saw something pop up in the chat. We had discussed this last month, pertaining to the monitoring of cameras. So it was never the intention of the police department to sit and monitor or present that police state in a community. By sitting and staring at a camera at a particular location. People have the right to walk down the street without having officers infringe on their privacy. What the cameras are there for, we pick specific locations based upon high crime areas or high traffic areas. There's a value, a scale that's put in place to determine where we best put these cameras. They're used as an investigative tool. So if a crime is committed and we are alerted to that crime, we can immediately go in, look at the camera, and then utilize it as a tool. But as I indicated before, we're approaching in around the area of approximately just Police Department cameras of approximately 1000. If I were to give that with that caseload of three to four cameras per officer, I would need approximately 300 per shift just to sit and do nothing but monitor cameras. When we're looking at a time where personnel are becoming our resources, our finite. |
|  | So it's dedicating somebody to monitor camera on the off chance something might happen. We're using it as that unbiased view in the sky, objective view of a community or a neighborhood and wait. When a crime occurs, then leveraging it as an investigative tool is greater benefit for us than having an officer sit there. We would rather have officers out as we've discussed here, out on community patrols, out on bicycles out in interdictions, responding to 911. Doing active investigations. |
|  | Then this is a supplement to what we're doing with our resources on the street. So hopefully, that answers the question. It's counterproductive to have that number of officers on each shift sitting and just staring at a camera. In hope of because we're only picking like I said, approximately 1000 locations. If you look at this across the city, that's a drop in the bucket for us. So hopefully, that answers the question that was in the chat. |
| Angela Steele: | Thank you. So we're going to turn it over to additional questions now. I saw some hands go up, some hands went down. Maybe your questions were addressed from additional comments. I'll just give people a second. Okay, Deneene has a hand, go ahead. I'll serve yours first and then we'll go to Robinna. |
| Deneene Brockington: | Hey, good evening, everyone. Angela, I'm not sure if this is really a question. I've just been listening to questions, questions that we've asked previously on similar conversations, and listening to responses. Honestly, I don't feel like I've heard anything new. I feel like our situations continue to be the same. I live on the 5200 block on Knox Street. I'm right at the center of a lot of this activity, gun shooting, murders on my block in the middle of the afternoon. Man dead five doors down from my house when I'm working from home in the middle of the day. Neighbor's son shot, killed in the middle of the night. So every time, very frequently, we're hearing about these young men on the corners dying, they're gunshots. Our community is actively working with our elected officials. The Penn-Knox Community Quality of Life, we're actively working to improve. I just feel even after all this, nothing is going to change. I'm like what can we be doing different? We're hearing about the camera programs, we hear about yes, we've got to call the tip lines. |
|  | But there seems to be something missing and I don't know what it is. But I am challenging Commissioner Outlaw, you and your team, the District Attorney's Office, elected officials, and community members. Maybe we need to have another working session, where we're brainstorming. We try to innovate to do something because what is happening now is not working. It's not working and we really need to do something different. I'm willing to work to do that but come... I appreciate you making the time, I appreciate everyone making the time to come. But I'm not hearing anything different, it's the same old, same old. I'm not seeing anything different and I've lived in this community, I've raised my son in this community. There are other people who have been here forever, who probably feel trapped in this community, and in these environments, and don't know what to do. We have to do something different. |
| Commissioner Outlaw: | Thank you for that, thank you for sharing that. That's very real and because of your testimony because of your comments is why I'm very reticent. Even though people ask is reticent, I'm reticent to throw out stats. We've seen some decreases over the past week or whatever it is because people are still feeling the way that you feel. The question that I have is aside from meeting with us, has this group worked with or met with other stakeholders, I would say? Whether it's in the city but also in the criminal justice system, to find out how or... How do I say this? To find out if your priorities are their priorities as well. I'm not just talking about the DA's office, I'm not just talking about the judiciary, I'm talking about LNI or other facets of the city. To make sure that when we do clean up a corner, for example, we do make arrests. For example that there's a mechanism in place to sustain all the efforts because we the police can't be there all the time. But have there been other conversations to ensure that the streets remain clean? Just whatever it is, lighting, anything. Through environmental design to keep your areas harden and once we do find some form of success. I'm just curious to know who you all have met with? |
| Deneene: | So yes, we are actively engaging with the councilwoman's office. We have been meeting with her monthly since April and working through her office to get things cleaned up, trees trimmed, speeding signs on the street. Lighting, alleyways cleaned, abandoned cars removed. So we work, the Penn-Knox Quality of Life we have targeted blocks in our district, in our community, where we are cleaning monthly. We've been cleaning monthly since the beginning of January. We're out once a month, we have a cleanup coming up this Saturday. So we are actively engaging in some of these tools. We would like to know more of what we could do when we talk about design. Community and design with police and district attorney, the system of what kind of design? That we can come up with something different piloted. Something different to see we can get some different outcomes and some improved quality of life and safety. |
| Commissioner Outlaw: | That's more than fair. I defer to your areas as leadership on this. Please know that we're always going to be at the table and I hear you. Sometimes I feel like I'm saying the same thing over and over again but I can't stress enough, there's has to be alignment across the board. I reference a plan that was released back in June. One of the challenges that I identified very early on is that what we laid out is our vision, how we prioritize. If that vision and our priorities aren't shared by others, it's not going to work because we rely heavily it was mentioned, we talked about the DEA. We work with the DEA, we work with the ATF, we work with the US Attorney's Office for federal prosecution, we work with everybody. If there's no alignment across the board with what's going to happen when we get these guns off the street, we're going to continue to see the same thing over and over again. We are on pace to get a record number of illegal crime guns off the street this year, over 6000. That's absolutely ridiculous. Captain Ginaldi mentioned it, I don't want to sound like a parrot. But if there aren't serious consequences for these serious offenses that we see, there's nothing that's going to deter folks from saying you know what? I probably shouldn't be out here because it's not stinging enough. |
|  | So we're doing what we can to continue to advocate on your behalf to ensure that there are consequences. But I think it would be helpful again, to have all of the stakeholders in the room that represent each facet of the criminal justice system. Once we make an arrest and if charges are brought forth, there's prosecution. We have no idea what happens as it matriculates to the criminal justice system. If charges are downgraded or if they're thrown out altogether or if they're laid out on an unsecured bill. We just don't have access to that information. So again, we understand and we're here to do everything that we can to make sure that what we're doing sticks and that we're doing the right thing. Is it time to switch gears and find a completely different method? We don't know but I'm with you on that and that's why we're sharing our time this evening. |
| Chief Inspector McCarrick: | If I can, commissioner, just to build on that. As the commissioner pointed, it is incumbent on us from the localized leadership in law enforcement, we got to constantly review what we're doing. I always challenge my commanders with doing the same thing. We have to look at what we've done traditionally, as the commissioner had discussed earlier about our culture. I myself have been with the department for 33 years. So the methods that we employed back when I first started are not the methods that we can employ now. The inspector has already told you that the individuals who are out there are very intelligent and they modify their behaviors based upon what we do. It's incumbent on us to constantly shift gears and adjust. That means learning that new behavior or model that we're using to address what they're doing. You only learn by making mistakes and, unfortunately, the process is not always an expedient one. |
|  | But what I will say to you is your group, Captain Ginaldi has placed his information in the chat. A representative from the 39th District will always be available for your meetings. That partnership that you engage with the councilwoman, we need that partnership as well from our perspective as well. As the inspector said cleaning up abandoned cars, addressing any homes, the abandoned homes that were there. The conditions that are conducive to crime, whether it's the lighting, the Councilmatic people, and councilwoman is an excellent resource to correct that. But there's areas that the police absolutely want to be part of and need to be part of to fix it. So it's not just going to be a police solving a problem, it has to be that collaboration. We are a key part to it but we're just one part to it. Thank you. |
| Angela Steele: | Thank you. I'd like to take the two other hands, Robinna, and then someone who's just listed here as Zoom user. You did have a hand up if you want to ask your question. I want to clarify though I know we have five minutes to 8:00. Commissioner Outlaw, do you have a hard stop at 8:00 PM? |
| Commissioner Outlaw: | Yes. |
| Angela Steele: | Okay. Can I send you or can we send you any questions we can't get to that have been in the chat via email for our follow-up? |
| Commissioner Outlaw: | Absolutely. |
| Angela Steele: | Okay, great. Robinna, do you want to go ahead? |
| Robinna Wilson: | I guess I'll apologize in advance. I want to circle back to and I'm sure maybe he's gone now but the Inspector Jarreau Thomas, who indicated he's been around, he has longevity in the 39th District. I don't want to be remiss that the parameter I live on Kaiser Street, the 5100 block of Kaiser. The black backstreet is Henley Street. Henley Street has been a problem long time ago. So that was my cue when he said he's been around, that this parameter still does exist with heavy drug use, prostitution, dumping of trash. Here again, I believe in the broken window theory. When something happens, let's take care of it right away. But I do understand Philadelphia, the resources are slow to none. Then it will take forever to get things done. But I do just want to stretch it out since this is the Penn-Knox and we're talking primarily about Knox Street, Hansberry. I do want to open that framework up a little bit and extend it all the way over to Wayne Avenue, from Hansberry down to Henley, down to Mannheim, right before you get to Wayne. |
| Inspector Thomas: | Hey, how you doing? I'm sorry. This is Inspector Thomas again. Just want to first and foremost say no, I appreciate you coming on tonight. Just we are aware of the issues that are in the surrounding areas. Just because you weren't mentioned, it doesn't mean that your area is not on our radar. We've had some issues along Wayne Avenue for quite some years, we have some gang activity in that area. Thankfully, a number of years ago, the public housing at 301 Queen Lane was taken down and eliminated a lot of crime in the area. But it also displaced from crime. |
|  | So we are aware of the issues and I just want to reassure you that we are actively working. Not only around Hansberry-Knox but the whole corridor and the whole police service area. I just wanted to put that out there for you. |
| Robinna: | Okay, I do appreciate you, your comment. But I want to be more specific because Queen Lane is a little bit up from where I'm talking about specifically. I'm talking about the 5100 block of Henley Street, in between Hansberry and Mannheim. We had a murder last year, we had a murder the year before that, and it continues to have heavy drug and prostitution use. |
| Inspector Thomas: | Absolutely, thank you for just refreshing us on that. We'll definitely be taking a look at that. |
| Robinna: | Thank you very much. |
| Inspector Thomas: | You're welcome. |
| Angela Steele: | Thank you. So Rep. Parker we'll give you the last question or comment. In case any of our attendees from PPD have to sign off, we want to thank you for your time and for attending today. We will send any questions additional, questions we get via email for written responses. Rep. Parker. |
| Rep. Darisha Parker: | I was trying to go to a place that's quiet. Thank you, Commissioner Outlaw and your team for coming on to addressing issues. We know there's a lot that we still have to do collectively as a group. I'm looking forward to having a walking tour with the commissioner, so she can see some of the things that were addressed tonight. One of the things that we are doing is cleaning up Pulaski Town. My office has partnered with [Enon] on October the 16th and I'll make sure that everybody is a part of it. But one of the things that we always need to stress and address in order for our neighborhoods to be better and in order for them to be safer. That's individuals on this line and beyond to make sure that they're aware of all of the free tip lines. The police officer has a tip line, the town watch office has a tip line, and the DA's office has a tip line. That anybody at any given time can use. We just need to make sure that we're letting individuals know that there are safety parameters that when they give up the information. There's a lot of things that happen that individuals are fearful of their lives if they want to come forward with some of this gun violence. |
|  | So I'm using this organization as a model so that we can make sure that we keep everything clean and get rid of all of the other dirt and debris of some of the drug dealers. So that was just my two cents and I'm looking forward to seeing everybody again soon, thank you so much. |
| Angela Steele: | Thank you, Rep. Parker. Perfect timing, we are at eight o'clock so I know we didn't get to a lot of the questions in the chat but we will send them to the commissioner via email for written follow-up and put them on the notes on the website. Definitely want to thank everyone for attending from PPD, we have some additional PKNA business if folks want to stay on for that. But I guess, Commissioner Outlaw any final comments? |
| Commissioner Outlaw: | I appreciate everyone's dedication, this is what we need. These aren't always easy conversations to have but we need to hear from you. We need to know what we don't know. I think it's a reminder, honestly, all of us on this call receive constant reminders. But these aren't just numbers, it's people behind what we're talking about here. So hearing the emotion and the passion behind not only your commitment to your community but what you experience every day keeps us motivated. To try to keep going until we get it right and there's some things that we do get right. We're just going to have to put more resources into it and make it scalable. But again, I just appreciate everyone's dedication and commitment to your neighborhood. This is on your own time, I get it. So please know that nothing that you said this evening is falling on deaf ears. I know you meet regularly and I know it sounds like we may be sounding like broken records from time to time. We do hear you and we're trying and we're working very hard to put a dent in this and we're not going to stop. So again, I can't express enough my heartfelt appreciation for everything that you all are doing. |
| Angela Steele: | Thank you. If you guys want to come to our cleanup, we'll be out this coming Saturday picking up trash, Hansberry and Knox and also on Maplewood. So please come join us. |
| Chief Inspector McCarrick: | This is Chief McCarrick. Just real quick in closing, I just wanted to reiterate what the commissioner said. Additionally, when we were looking at some of the partners that we can get in touch with, that Don Jones from the DA was on the call. An outstanding resource for the community. I saw some chatter about operation town watch, we can invite Anthony Murphy, who oversees. I don't know if you've worked with him yet but they are an outstanding resource. One in establishing town watch groups but also working safe corridors, things of that nature. I did see some indication about 311, they do work in partnership. A lot of the city agencies who are responsive to 311 do work with the police to address community concerns. So these are all outstanding resources and as always, the 39th District, the 14th District. So look forward to further communication and appreciate your time. |
| Angela Steele: | Thank you. Okay with that, let's transition to the next part of our agenda. If there are any other questions still feel free to add them to the chat and we will send them via email to the commissioner for response. All right, so next we have our Quality of Life committee. So we are continuing on with the Penn Knox litter-free blocks initiative. Continuing our monthly cleanups on the 100 block of Maplewood, 5200 block of Knox and 100 block of Hansberry. Our next cleanup will be this Saturday, starting at 9:00 AM. We're working in two teams, meeting either at the corner of Hansberry and Knox or the corner of Maplewood and Greene. We have gloves, masks, trash-bags, brooms, shovels for everyone. So you can just come on out, we usually clean for about two hours. It's great, a chance to get to know other people in the community, and really just work on a good initiative. We're seeing more and more people come out each week, so that... Each month I should say, so that has been encouraging. We're grateful to everyone who has been coming out for the entire initiative. |
|  | Quality of Life Committee. Our other second initiative is our streets improvements campaign. So we've been collecting streets improvements requests at different meetings from different neighbors. We have put them together into a letter that we're going to send to the chief traffic engineer, asking for the following improvements that are listed there. I won't read them all but the reasons for all these improvements are detailed in the letter. Effectively, they're for public safety, for traffic calming, and just updates to things that have gotten kind of neglected. So you can download a copy of this letter on our website @knox.com. There's a space for you to just sign your name, put your address, put in an envelope with a stamp, and send it off to Chief Traffic Engineer Rossi. We're hoping to get enough momentum and people to send letters that we start getting, taking off some of these streets improvements. We'll keep tracking them every meeting and see what we're making progress on. If you have any other streets improvements you want to add, we can kind of add them on our next outreach to the streets department. |
| Terese Vekteris: | So I think that Maggie Manzer, who is the Neighborhood Development and Conservation Committee chairperson, is out of town. But we just wanted to bring to your attention, a virtual community meeting that will take place around the new zoning map recommendations for North Germantown. This was a meeting that was supposed to have been held in March 2020 but got canceled because of COVID and is now just getting rescheduled. But on Thursday, October 7th, at 6:00 PM at a Zoom meeting, there is a shortened link, a bit.ly link down at the bottom. If you want to take note of that because you have to pre-register to attend this event. But we will also post that link on our website at pennknox.com. |
|  | So during the meeting, Ian Hegarty, who is the city planner for Northwest Philadelphia will present the recommendations for Germantown North. Which does not encompass Penn-Knox but abuts it. So it's Germantown between Rittenhouse and Johnson streets. So anybody who can attend that is welcome to do so. |
|  | Then also, I am giving the treasurer's report for Maggie. As of today, our bank balance was $1738.92. In September, we took $0 in but we did have to pay $161.89 for our Zoom subscription. So we just wanted to just send out a reminder that we always appreciate people paying dues. It's a donation, it's a freewill donation, you don't have to pay dues to be a member of Penn-Knox. If you've lived within our borders, you're automatically a member. But it always helps us because when we want to plan activities or if we have legal expenses, we're challenging a zoning issue or something like that. That's why we need money in the treasury, also to keep up our website, and things like that. Then what we recommend is $10 per person or $25 per household. You can go to our website pennknox.com and make a donation there. |
| Angela Steele: | So now we're on to open mic, new business section of the agenda. This is really for anyone who's in attendance. If you have any announcements, news information, comments, questions, feedback. Now's the time to kind of share anything that's on your mind. We're also very interested in feedback on these meetings. If there's anything else you would like to see, information you think would be helpful, that's good information for the PKNA board as we're kind of creating agendas for this meeting. |
| Sue Patterson: | Angela, I just had one comment, your cleanups. I would love to come to a cleanup but Saturday's the day I go bike-riding. Is there any way we can have these on a different day, like a Sunday afternoon or something like that? |
| Angela Steele: | Yeah, it's something we've talked about in committee. So if we're going to extend to another year on our same sites, just because it seems like we're finally starting to build a momentum. The question that people didn't hear was if we could move the cleanups from the second Saturday to another date. We have to talk about it again in committee and see if we want to pull folks or see if there's another date or time that works. But we will be continuing on with the same sites on the weekends for another year. So we'll get back to on that. |
| Sue Patterson: | Okay, thank you. |
| Birdie: | Hi, this is Birdie. Hello. |
| Angela Steele: | Yeah, we can hear you. |
| Birdie Busch: | Okay, I have a question. Apologies if it sounds like an awkward question. But I have been regularly coming to the once-a-month cleanups and really appreciate them and appreciate people that are coming out. But often find myself being one of just a few. Few meaning like three people typically, that will actually tackle the blocks of Hansberry between Greene and Knox. I realize I'm being really direct but are people intentionally not wanting to clean those blocks for variety of reasons? I often find myself alone in the task of cleaning those particular blocks, where I feel like the 5200 blocks of Knox and Hansberry, between Wayne and Knox are getting cleaned by a lot more people. |
| Angela Steele: | Yes, so as a person who lives on that section of Hansberry between Knox and Wayne, we have more participation. More being a handful of folks who've started coming out from that section to clean. I think that's part of it, is cleaning kind of around your home and maybe to the end of the block but not venturing too much farther. We haven't, unfortunately, gotten much more participation from actual renters or homeowners on that portion of Hansberry, between Knox and Greene. So that I think is a factor, of just we haven't gotten that many people to actually come out to participate. But we continue door-knocking and doing outreach and trying to get more people to come out. We certainly welcome more community members to come down and help out on Hansberry Street as well. But I think that's part of the challenge and will be part of challenge in kind of having this sustainable and keeping the block clean. So the goal is that eventually, there'll be enough momentum on Hansberry Street, among people who live on Hansberry Street to keep the block clean and to increase our litter score or decrease our litter score. That's what ultimately will take. |
|  | But my personal opinion is we don't have enough people participating in that area. Then just a handful of folks and you're one of the few that show up regularly and we'll clean on that area. I don't know if that answers your question, probably things you already knew. |
| Birdie: | Yeah, but thanks for explaining. I understand, I'm just kind of approaching the topic I think more directly. I'm just thinking about it in the past for myself and I get it. The area's volatile and unpredictable as well, I understand. |
| Kevin Zuber: | Hey, this is Kevin. If I can add to it. Out in Maplewood Avenue we are typically two, maybe three people at a time also working on our block. But I will say it's encouragement. When people do see us consistently doing it, there has been a lot more participation or at least a promise to. I think that's been very helpful in bringing people out. Especially on those days when it's kind of rainy or something along those lines but people see us doing it. It's been encouraging people to participate. So don't give up, just keep it going |
| Deneene: | Hey, this is Deneene, so from the 5200 block of Knox Street. I think that we've had our people who come out on our block, who live on our block come out and clean the block on those days. I think maybe after we tackle our block, I think we're going to... I can speak for myself, I'm tired, and may not necessarily have the energy to move around the corner. But I have cleaned on Maplewood and I have cleaned on Hansberry. So maybe this go-around and I'll make a concerted effort. I'll leave Knox Street into the hands my wonderful neighbors and Birdie, I'll join you down on a Hansberry between Marion and Greene. |
| Birdie: | Thank you. I guess my concern is I feel like there's a stretch that it's almost like an isolated vortex. Where the epicenter of a lot of what's going on, a lot of violence has kind of been painted into a corner. It's not my block either that I live on directly. But I'm really torn and I'm sure everyone else is. Just completely abandoning these blocks, where so much of this is happening or trying to do the reverse of just being present and doing positive things. I know that it's a struggle for everyone, especially the people that have been so directly affected by the violence going on. But I'm just trying to think about different ways to kind of just keep being present on this blocks as a positive presence and a positive force. If anything, just so that people don't feel completely kind of aside from everyone else's blocks. I guess that's mainly my concern. |
| Angela Steele: | I guess I'll add one comment, something we're trying to figure out, as well as how many homes on that stretch are vacant or abandoned. So that is also a challenge in kind of getting people involved if there's no people to get involved. So we're trying to also kind of figure out and work with LNI to see. There are a lot of abandoned or vacant houses on that stretch. Just to see what can be done to kind of get them active again. |
| Birdie: | I appreciate you all and we'll continue to think about positive ways to go about the group cleanings and other things. |
| Angela Steele: | Thank you. Other open mic, new business, questions, comments, reflections? |
| Terese: | Just one quick thing. We forgot to ask this earlier and I think we lost a few people. But just for the record, for the minutes, if you could type your full name in and your address, we'd appreciate it. Thank you. Type into the chat. |
| Angela Steele: | Okay, I'm hearing nothing, I guess we will wrap up this month's meeting. Next month we're going to have a presentation from Germantown Friends School and another initiative we're trying to bring from the board is doing some community spotlights. Making sure we're also bringing in information and exciting things that are happening in the community. I know we've had some heavy topics the last few months and trying to be addressed. Real things that we're dealing with in the neighborhood. So we'll try and bring some balance and have some positivity as well with some of great things that are happening in the community. So thanks, everyone for joining. Again, please put your name and your address in the chat for the record and we will see you next month. Have a good evening. |
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**Below are the questions that we did not get to during the meeting, but for which we received answers later via email.**

Q: Is it possible to give a brief summary of where gun control legislation stands, and how optimistic the police department is about productive implementation of that?

1. We unfortunately cannot answer this question as this is a legislative question and we are not the proper authority to ask.

Q: What about community-oriented policing – can police walk the neighborhood? (Captain Anthony Ginaldi)

1. We encourage our officers to walk the neighborhoods as much as possible. I’m a firm believer in community policing and in police and community member partnerships. I believe that these hand-in-hand partnerships help build stronger relationships and better communication between the police and the community.

It is important to keep in mind as well that the Police Department has been experiencing staffing shortages and unfortunately some of our officers have to redirect the time that they would normally dedicate to walking the neighborhoods to taking more calls.

Having said that, I think it’s important for folks to be aware of other community stakeholders and services that are out there and available for use. As community members, we have to implore these other entities to do their part. The police cannot be responsible for all aspects of social issues. We are just one piece of the puzzle—and there are others who have expertise in areas that might better suit certain problems or issues.

Q: Can PAL programs and outreach to youth be expanded in our neighborhood? (Captain Krista Dahl-Cambell)

1. There is a PAL center very close to the Penn Knox section—it is located at 5332 Germantown Avenue—the Paley PAL center. I have been in contact with Captain Krista Dahl-Campbell who has informed me that she attempted to reach out to the association but there has not been a response back to her. Captain Dahl-Campbell has asked for contact information for someone at the association that she can reach out to. This information can be left with the Paley PAL center and it will be relayed back to her.

The Paley PAL center is open from 3pm to 9pm Monday through Friday. Programming is available for children ages 6-18. The Paley PAL center has a wide variety of programming. If the programming available does not work for the child, there is also a Boys and Girls Club at 25 W. Penn Street.

Q: What is going on at the 39th for most of the day that no one answers the phone? I’ve called, no one that answers the phone ever knows anything about when the community meetings are happening or if they’re in person, or at the station. When I’ve asked for the community liaison, they’ve been stated to be ‘in the field’ multiple days in a row. Is there like a white board or a poster you could put up next to the phone or at the front desk that communicates to the officers what the information is for the meetings that happen each month? (Captain Anthony Ginaldi)

1. Unfortunately, one of the main numbers for the 39th District is down. The Captain of the 39th asks that if you have questions and can not get through on the main line, to please call his office at 215-686-3393/3394. He would be more than happy to have his staff assist you.

As far as the community meetings in the 39th go, the Community meetings are posted on the 39th District’s Twitter page. The 39th District also has a newsletter. The Captain asks that if you would like to be added to the newsletter list, to please provide his office with your e-mail address so that you can be added to the list.

In addition, Captain meetings occur every 4th Monday of the month and PSA meetings are held every week. Please reach out to the 39th District for more information. The Captain has relayed to me that he will make sure his officers are aware of when community meetings are taking place.

Captain Ginaldi of the 39th District believes that his Community Relations Officer should be interacting with community members so his officer does not spend a lot of time behind their desk. You can always leave a message with someone in the Captain’s office and the CRO will reach out to you when they become available.

Q: How are we getting the drugs off the streets on the 5200s block on Knox Street? (Captain Anthony Ginaldi)

1. Captain Ginaldi has also relayed that his officers are consistently patrolling 5200 Knox Street. Yesterday, officers made an arrest at that location which resulted in the confiscation of 81 vials of narcotics. These officers are out there every day, keeping residents and visitors to the city safe.

We understand how frustrating ongoing drug issues can be but we are committed to making our streets safer. We ask that the community stay involved in reporting drug use/trafficking in the area. Please call 911 when you see drug activity or call the district to relay information to the officers on suspected drug houses in the area. Those numbers are:

215-686-3390  
215-686-3391

Respectfully submitted,  
Terese Vekteris