

Oakwatch: Public Safety Data and Policies

Minutes: June 15, 2022

Featured Speaker(s): Lizabeth Gray, OPDC; John Tokarski, Pittsburgh Department of Public Safety; Officer David Shifren, Zone 4; Officer Jamie Cunningham, Zone 4; Jamie Ducar, Pitt Community Affairs

Lizabeth Gray began the meeting by introducing the agenda and reading Oakwatch's mission statement. She then reviewed the property list.

Comment: Recommendation to advocate for the demolition of 2610 on the Engage PGH website. There is money for the Oakland Greenway and promenade to be studied and if it is demolished, it will be a perfect entrance to this greenway.

Q: What is the deal with the unfinished roof at the Orchard townhouses?

A: They had a stop-work order. They were not replacing the roof, they were repairing it.

Comment: They have left all of their equipment out for months—why is that? Ladders in the front, gutters in the back, etc.

A: I will go over and take pictures of the property and submit a 311.

Comment: Last week, the community discovered that Pitt police and the Pittsburgh police do not have a shared database system.

Officer Shifren provided a crime report.

Officer Cunningham confirmed what Officer Shifren stated about how nuisance properties will be addressed in the future. She stated that they will now be trying to collaborate on Mondays with the Pittsburgh Police to review the Oakland area for nuisance properties and other incidents that the city reports that the Pitt police don't. If citations are created by the city, then they receive the citation if it is for a Pitt student. Depending on the case, they will send conduct referrals when they go against the student code of conduct.

Q: How will nuisance property data be shared? For example, if a city officer gives a citation to students in Oakland, will that property be brought to the nuisance property board. Will Pitt be doing that, too?

A: We can discuss that.

Q: Will Pitt Police and Pittsburgh Police be sharing Data?

A: That is what our Monday meeting will be about. You can come into the office and view our public media log or request to see a report. We will corroborate information and organize weekly around problems of that nature.

Q: Jamie Ducar: can you give any outlook or input on the meetings for citations?

A: Since last month's meeting, we had to do a lot of coordinating between Pitt Police and public safety leaders to communicate with Zone 4. The Office of Engagement and Community Affairs will be involved in the standing Monday meetings and will be the ones communicating with the Office of Conduct. These will begin in August. The Zone 4 police will be sharing the knock-and-talk list and will try to build up the capacity of backup data to advance their internal conduct process that includes a database of addresses.

Comment: OPDC's concern is whether there is hard data involved or just word of mouth.

A: The focus on this will be what issues negatively impact the quality of life for other residents. They do not want all the details; they just need an idea of which properties have negative conduct reports to then act on those. Unsure of specifics of what exact data will be shared, but from Ducars perspective, would be to triage things that are most impacting our residents.

Q: The Zone has to hand in details and figures. If they do not have all the data to get the complete picture, that impacts staffing and funding. We are not able to give the city a clear picture of what is happening in Zone 4 since not all Pitt Police data is present.

A: The suggestion is that we are aligning to the list of report-outs that Officer Shifren provided; the University of Pittsburgh will also provide add to these from their same perspective. They will then have more accurate numbers before entering everything for the city.

Q: John Tokarski: is a lot of your operation based upon data?

A: All of our resources depend on it. Sometimes the numbers do not tell the whole story, since not all numbers are identified properly. We want to collaborate on these numbers to understand better the problem and the whole picture in Oakland.

If a knock-and-talk occurs more than once on a student's home, then a citation is enforced. Landlords allow the conditions to exist; the students change every year. The city has control over them, but the university does not. They are trying to expand their knowledge of what landlords own the properties that allow parties; they are doing their best to attend Landlord Alliance meetings and communicate with more landlords.

Q: Gallagher commented that she thinks it is great that the two police forces are trying to collaborate on reported data, but there is a lot of not-reported data. In the past, Commander Herman had a policy that if officers were called to a party, they had to report it either through a citation or a report on why they did not get a citation. Why does this not happen anymore?

A: I do not have an answer to your question, but I am aware of the zero-tolerance policy you are referencing. Even if our police force, Pitt police, arrives to a residence and does not create a report, they have a log of where they went and what they did. This will help us create better communication around properties and we will convey this to Pittsburgh Police. The University of Pittsburgh has a concerned connection network, which is like 311, so folks can send a text, call, or email to point out a specific address that is a problem. It is available to all units and across the system.

Q: Is anything being done about 210 Ophelia St, where a large Air B&B party was held? Is it high on the list of disruptive properties?

A: The mayor's office received all the council's names so they are reviewing them. We will hear an announcement soon and the police can then go back and enforce nuisance property laws. That property is on many lists of attention; Ducar specifically explained that it is on Pitt's radar. The mayor's office has to okay the nuisance property to start any legal action. It must follow the legal proceedings.

Comment: When Officer Shifren talks to Commander Griffin about how to write a citation, let them know that Oakcliffe residents want to see the zero-tolerance policy brought back. We do not like the idea of giving warnings only to students.

A: Once nuisance property is back in place, then this process will move more swiftly. Based on John Tokarski's information, the database should be up and running by September around Oakwatch's next meeting.

Department of Public Safety has established a reinvestment fund, and there is currently an opportunity for organizations that work with challenged or at-risk groups to apply. It is a grant process occurring and the application is due July 5; there is a total of \$1 million to be allocated.