

Academy Advisory Council – Meeting Minutes

July 21, 2020

PRESENT:

Ron Waters, AJ Director, College of the Redwoods
Chief Brian Ahearn – Arcata PD
Noel Brown – Community Member
Don Chin – Community Member
Chief Jeff Conner – Rio Dell PD
Dr. Kishan Lara-Cooper - Community Member

Chief Casey Day - Fortuna PD
Dr. Keith Flamer – CR President/Superintendent
Chief Richard Griffin – Crescent City PD
Michelle Haggerty – Faculty, College of the Redwoods
Monique Harper-Desir – Community Member
Jose Ramirez – CR Staff, Community Member
Debbie Topping, Recording Secretary

Ron Waters called the meeting to order at 2:00, welcoming the group and asking for short-term suggestions to make progress with the instruction level in the current Academy class. Later, we can look for longer term modifications for future classes and beyond. Asked for clarification and to “describe the problem”, he noted that instructional information comes from the P.O.S.T. (State Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training) standpoint. How do we improve on how we deal with cultural groups? What are the historical references? How can we prepare the students? Discussion took place on the concept of speakers coming in to the class. Ron explained the Modular format of the course, that the first two modules (Modules 3 and 2) compile the first half of the Academy and are where the concepts are laid out for the students (laws, Constitutional rights, basic skills). In the last Module, (Module 1), those concepts are put into play through the use of scenario practice and testing. Speakers coming in on occasion to guide discussions with the students on cultural groups, community perceptions, etc. could be best used in this last half of the Academy. It is important to have Community members as speakers, not just instructors. **Dr. Cooper** suggested coming up with key themes for the talks that Cadets could take with them into their futures.

Dr. Cooper noted that, in order to learn NEW information and make it meaningful, one has to relate it to something learned before. Repetition of these new concepts will help them to work with the community. She also clarified a point made at the previous meeting, that her suggestion was NOT that law enforcement GIVE UP power but that they SHIFT power, SHARE power with the community they serve. **Chief Griffin** suggested Cadets be asked what groups they CAN identify and ask what THEY think they need to know in order to interact with these groups. Foster discussion on these subjects. It was agreed that bringing the Cadets into the discussion is good.

Michelle Haggerty asked if gender roles are included in the diversity block? She could recommend films on specific topics, noting as an example, “The Mask You Live In” which deals with the expectations of masculinity. She also questioned the reason that some Academies (i.e. Fresno City College) have more hours of training? Why the difference? Ron explained that Training centers have latitude to add curriculum to POSTs 727 hour minimum (CR does 940) – in some cases, the Academies are training specific topics for Fish and Game or other Agencies which accounts for additional hours.

Noel Brown commented that the use of the term “tolerance” versus “acceptance” of cultural groups needs to be considered, that it can make a big difference in perception.

1. The first theme suggested to present to this class is **how one’s background and experiences influences how you respond/react to situations.**

What discussions take place in the classroom about current events? How might awareness of personal “triggers” and biases affect how a person can change how they react? **Dr. Cooper** noted that the

community AND law enforcement make reactive responses based on past experiences. We need to train ourselves to “think reflectively” also to recognize assumptions we make about cultural groups. She mentioned a book, “Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People” noting that this shift can BEGIN in the Academy but really should take place in the entire culture. **Noel Brown** suggested both self-analysis/reaction as well as co-analysis of other cops, noting that we can’t get away from reacting but can make informed decisions if we recognize our triggers.

2. Another suggested theme is to **encourage problem-solving/debriefing after current event situations. How they might have been handled differently.** **Chief Griffin** gave several examples of debriefs with his officers after incidents that could have benefitted from better de-escalation. **Dr. Cooper** noted that safety was a consideration for both the officers and the public. Law Enforcement are at risk every day. The group agreed that using real examples as discussion topics and examples of safe ways to interact. **Chief Griffin** noted that the future of law enforcement will need great leaders in the ranks, NOT just the Chiefs. He recognizes that so much of the training is “warrior” training where very few calls actually require it. He also suggested that members of the committee consider a night shift ridealong to understand the environment officers patrol in. **Chief Day** agreed with the need for the warrior attitude to remain as it is this attitude that keeps the officer alive but there is a time and place for both the “warrior” and the “guardian”. **Jose Ramirez** noted the prevalence of cell phones used by the public to record many police encounters and wondered if this should be included in scenario situations to acknowledge the potential that their actions are being recorded. **Ron Waters** noted that scenario tests are “secure” and recording is not allowed for test security reasons. It is something that can be included in other regular class scenarios to prepare the Cadets for future calls.

Don Chinn asked if the current teaching cover empathy. Is there a correlation between problem law enforcement and a lack of empathy? **Chief Griffin** felt it was not a lack of empathy but continual exposure. Officers need time off to decompress but don’t often have/take it. “We are failing officers”. **Ron Waters** mentioned “Kevlar for the Mind”, a piece taught in the Academy dealing with positive mental health practices for officers. From this came a third suggested theme:

3. Self care/wellness of law enforcement. Is counselling available? Voluntary? What is the protocol? **3.** Without help, they are “walking wounded”. **Chief Day** replied that most agencies have a critical incident “debrief” cleared by a mental health professional. **Noel Brown** noted that situational awareness of officers need to consider the combination of personal triggers + power + the regular stress of the job when responding to a situation. **Michelle Haggerty** noted a PTSD camp for firefighters and their spouses in Sonoma. Is there something similar for Law Enforcement? Unknown. **Noel Brown** noted that she leads a 2-day workshop in “The Whiteness Within” digging into personal biases and also teaches distressing techniques.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 pm with members considering ideas for speakers and topics for Academy discussions. Plans for an Advisory meeting in August will be forthcoming.

Respectfully submitted,



Debbie Topping
Recording Secretary