Update from The Office of Oversight and Public Accountability

Public Safety Committee

5/24/2022
Office of Oversight and Public Accountability (OPA) Overview

- OPA serves as an independent City department that works to increase transparency and accountability within the City of Grand Rapids with a focus on our public safety departments.

- Through targeted change, accountability, restorative justice, empowerment, and engagement, OPA helps create and improve just outcomes and respectful relationships between public safety and the community.

- Primary work involves receiving and assisting community members with navigating internal complaint processes, providing education regarding public safety functions, and working to eliminate systemic oppression in the criminal justice system within the City’s span of influence.

- Additionally, OPA leads the City's evidenced-based violence reduction program, Cure Violence GR in partnership with the Grand Rapids Urban League.
OPA Strategic Plan Update: CARE+

Change: OPA will help improve public safety policies and operations through innovation and collaboration.

Policy and Data Analysis
- Collaboration with GRFD on recruiting methods
- Review of Arbitration process
- Independent Comprehensive Status Report on Police Studies and Recommendations Public Safety Alignment Project
- Improving diversity in recruitment and retention of public safety staff, specifically in relation to automatic disqualifiers for candidates.
- Reimagined Surveillance Policy in partnership with community
Accountability: OPA will help improve individual, supervisory, and organizational accountability for public safety activities through civilian oversight of all public safety operations.

Case Evaluation/Monitoring/Investigating
- OPA reviewed all 20 complaint disposition reports provided in 2021.
- Created a framework for reimagining the Civilian Appeal Board (CAB).
- Finalized review process of the OPA Policy, which includes CAB policy edits.
- Finalized Case Management System for incoming complaints.
- City Manager Administrative Order 21-06 (issued 4/23/2021) provided direction regarding sharing of information between OPA and the Grand Rapids Police Department.
- OPA was welcomed by Chief Winstrom to provide oversight and monitoring of an officer involved shooting.
- Commitment from Chief Winstrom to work with OPA to improve the sharing of information and the ability to perform oversight of GRPD.

OPA Strategic Plan Update: CARE+
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Restorative Justice: OPA will help reduce barriers to trust that have been created by systemic inequities in the criminal justice system or that cause disparate outcomes.

- OPA Clean Slate GR – Expungement Fair: OPA successfully established a Clean Slate program where nearly 500 community members were served to determine their expungement eligibility and receive necessary documents. Out of those individuals who were served, 297 were able to file & submit their expungement application.
Empowerment and Engagement: OPA will help enhance communication and education with the public regarding public safety matters.

- Know Your Rights webpage and program
- The Let’s Talk About It Program
- T.R.U.E. Action webpage
- Planning and participating in Town Halls and Community Meetings
- Attending protests and listening to the issues raised by community to inform policy considerations and recommendations
- Strategic Conversations with community leaders regarding public safety matters
In 2020, the City formally launched Cure Violence Grand Rapids (CVGR) in partnership with the Urban League and accomplished the following from October to December:

- 328 interactions with key individuals identified as involved in local violent activities
- 447 interactions with non-key individuals, who are not at-opportunity of inciting violence, but live in the target area and are impacted by community violence
- Defused 20 immediate conflicts that had a high-risk of leading to gun violence, including negotiating a “Peace Treaty” between rivaling street factions where they pledged not to use violence to resolve future disputes. Mediated with 43 key individuals involved in these conflicts
- 2,000+ interactions with households in the target area and provided 2000 pieces of public education materials
Crime Prevention: Cure Violence GR

- Organizing with families for disengaged parenting and at-opportunity youth
- Offered community engagement events (CVGR staff introductions for local leaders and the community; dinner for families in the target area; organized basketball)
- The Urban League of West Michigan has provided wraparound services to provide housing and economic security, including:
  - 20 key individuals were referred to Employment Services and are currently working with Urban League staff to find long-term employment
  - 45 key individuals were referred to Housing Services and are currently working with Urban League staff to find long-term housing
Community Informed Training

- In the City’s Strategic Plan, we have committed to elevating resident voice in City operations.

- In recent weeks, there has been a renewed request from community to be more involved in the creation and selection of training opportunities for police.

- The OPA is working to co-create training with community and/or that is responsive to community recommendations regarding necessary trainings for our public safety staff.

- These trainings will be co-created Training topic areas may include, but are not limited to: Cultural Competency, Understanding Immigrant and Refugee Experiences, Bias Reduction, Impacts of Racism on Building Trust, and the History of Policing in America.
OPA Community Engagement

- OPA continues to work with other City departments and Community Partners to increase engagement across Grand Rapids regarding public safety policies and initiatives.

- In recent weeks, the OPA has worked with OEE and community leaders to begin to assess specific engagement needs of our Refugee and Immigrant Community members.

- Amongst the needs identified, specific emphasis has been placed on Know Your Rights Programming specifically designed to address differences in legal expectations and cultural realities in the United States.
OPA Horizon Issues

- Creation of an administrative policy that governs oversight to increase accountability.
- Increased access to police records.
- Update Civilian Appeal Board (CAB) policy.
- Racial Healing Circles to support community dialogue with Police to create cultural competency and build bridges to trust.
- Expanded Capacity to provide permanent administrative support to OPA staff to increase efficiency and continue to improve accountability, transparency, and engagement on public safety matters.
- Evaluation of Traffic Stop Data (to be completed by the end of FY23) and continue to evaluate public safety policies for disparities with an eye for equity.
- Evaluation of officer involved shooting (OIS) policies and procedures including, but not limited to, public release of video evidence, identification of officers, de-escalation, and other relevant polices.
Questions?