

The Procedural Justice Committee held a meeting in the Community Room of the Public Safety Building on Dec. 2. Attending were Yvonne Flowers, Sean McCarthy, Chris Libolt, Devon Zanin, Stacey Bottoms, Isis Benitez, Van Riley and John Penney.

Committee Co-Chair McCarthy discussed the group's mission statement, which is, "Maintain and improve the relationship between the City of Poughkeepsie Police Department and the residents of the City of Poughkeepsie through cooperation and shared goals."

He pointed out that there have been changes to the committee during its duration and if people felt the mission statement should change in some way, members could address that.

Committee Co-Chair Riley agreed, but added that regardless of any changes that might be made to the mission statement, it's imperative members continue to approach topics with an open mind and respectful tone.

McCarthy added that the committee is looking for new members, people who live in the city, but who could provide different perspectives.

Bottoms asked if the new members would have to go through the eight hours of Procedural Justice Training before joining, and the group agreed people could join, but such training would have to be set up for them as soon as possible.

Members also discussed the Implicit Bias Training they are hoping to receive in the near future. McCarthy said members will receive the same training that the police officers get. The group agreed to do this training on a Saturday in February, and Penney said he would set up a Doodle poll so the members can decide on the specific date.

Libolt talked about the recent shootings in the city and said police need people to come forward with information. Flowers asked if the anonymous Cash for Tips hotline is effective, and Libolt said it can help police pursue leads and give them some idea of particular situations. He added, however, that if a case goes to trial, witnesses are needed to testify. McCarthy added that the district attorney can protect someone's name in certain instances

but those cases are the exception, and there is no guarantee a judge will grant that request.

Flowers said shootings can occur at just about any time and anywhere now, and that gang members have less concern about collateral damage. Riley wondered whether more cameras could be set up in the city. McCarthy and Libolt said that is not a perfect solution due to costs and the need to have the camera at precisely the right angle to catch a crime in action and be able to identify the perpetrator.

Flowers asked if people were within their rights to videorecord an arrest or other situation involving police officers. McCarthy said that is permissible as long as the public is not impeding the work of the police in the process.

Committee members said it's important for them to continue to meet with people and have one-on-one conversations about the work of the Procedural Justice Committee, pointing out that not everyone attends public meetings where these issues are discussed.

Bottoms said the school district and police department can't do it all, pointing out that 80 percent of children's time is spent away from school. Bottoms said in many instances parents need to take more responsibility and need to seek assistance if they need it. Libolt agreed, saying there are resources available and connecting people to services is imperative.

The committee intends to continue its work in person and will meet again in January.