

The Procedural Justice Committee held a meeting in the Community Room of the Public Safety Building on October 7, 2021. Attending were Yvonne Flowers, Bishop Debra Gause, Sean McCarthy, Isis Benitez, Van Riley, L'Quette Taylor, John Penney and Marina Tarkos.

The committee announced that Van Riley and Sean McCarthy will serve as co-chairs of the committee going forward. Flowers and Bishop Gause have been serving as co-chairs since Mayor Rolison asked the committee to make recommendations regarding police reform.

Flowers led the group through a discussion to follow up on the city's Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative report sent to the governor earlier this year. The city held several public meetings and solicited comments from the public before finalizing the reform plan.

Mayor Rolison had asked the city's Procedural Justice Committee to first review the governor's order, to gain public input and to make recommendations for the Mayor and Common Council to consider and act upon. The Procedural Justice Committee suggestions touched on a host of topics, including creating a civilian oversight board, bolstering additional mental health partnerships, improving the police department's complaint form, creating more diversity in the ranks, increasing community policing and other matters.

The city also created a webpage to keep the public informed about the progress, to provide pertinent information about the governor's executive order and to offer ways for the public to give feedback.

The police department has increased its diversity ranks slightly based on the latest hirings. It still has open positions, and a police examination was recently held to broaden the pool of candidates.

Penney noted the department recently expanded its partnership with Mental Health America of Dutchess County (MHA) to address mental health crises and provide accessibility to professional services and programs. The department has now entered into a separate partnership with Hudson River Housing to get displaced people information on housing options.

The committee members discussed SNUG's role in curbing violence and said they want to get more information from SNUG about its strategies. Committee members also said they would like an update on Safe Passage initiative during the next meeting. Safe Passage involves having volunteers or people who were paid a stipend to be at designated places when schools let out to see that students can walk home safely.

Flowers said that most of the Procedural Justice Committee members have now taken Procedural Justice Training, and she would like to see the committee obtain training in implicit bias. Procedural Justice Training focuses on the way police interact with the public. Implicit bias training addresses the automatic association people now make between groups of people and stereotypes about those groups.

The Committee discussed whether its next meeting should be in-person or virtual, and the members agreed it should be in person. The Procedural Justice Committee plans to meet again in November.