

Latino Advisory Committee
September 11, 2020
Meeting via Zoom

Attendees: Chief Mark Jones, Chairperson Elder, Deputy Chief Zeller, Deputy Chief Turk, Justin Martinez, Trisha Escobar, Barb Lessman, Adolph Diaz, Joe Perez, Mike Salazar

Chief Jones started and welcomed the group. I would like to talk about a few things to start off with:

The Senate Bill (SB) 217 – We have all the policies in place now, all policies can be found on the PD website.

Chairperson Elder – You had the policies in place already, right?

Chief – We did, however, we had to make changes specific to SB217.

There was an incident a couple weeks ago at UNC. A person claimed that a hate crime had been committed and the president of the university sent out a public message with that info. This case was a Greeley PD case and being investigated. My concern was that this would bring unnecessary attention to Greeley for something that was false. I met with Dr. Feinstein and asked that he allow us to complete our investigation to get to the root of the incident. It ended up being two black males fighting over a female. UNC did send out another public message correcting their first message.

I would like to have this dialog with you and ask for your help and advice to help get correct messages out to the community.

Chairperson Elder – Are the university crimes separate or does Greeley get involved.

Chief Jones – If it happens on UNC property they handle it. If something happens off the campus property, we handle it. So, the President sent out an incorrect message w/out ever checking with us. This should never have happened.

Mike Salazar– I'm hoping this incident can help with the communication between UNC and the GPD.

Chief Jones – I had met with the UNC President several months ago to open up communication and that doesn't seem to have helped.

Justin Martinez – When I look at the makeup of our city and what's going on here, do you think there are organizations/people in the city that would have the ability to spark more serious protests in our city?

Chief Jones – I want to believe that the City of Greeley will not go to the extreme like other cities. My concern is that social media starts riling people up and that makes things go wrong. There's always a possibility something could happen.

Trisha Escobar – We were alerted there was a hate crime. I was confused where it happened, who reported it, how did it get reported? Tensions are high on campus; I know we have our own PD, and they investigate things. Going forward can we enhance the communication between the University and the GPD.

Chief Jones – The incident happened in Greeley jurisdiction so, the investigation was done by us, a UNC officer went with us to talk with people involved, on campus which is normal protocol. This happened because an incorrect/incomplete story was sent out to the public. I reiterated with the UNC president to please not hesitate to call me with any concerns in future.

Barb Lessman – The two men that got shoot, who were they?

Chief Jones – It was two Blood gang members that came up here, from Aurora, to cause trouble and they ended up dead.

Adolph Diaz – The concern that I have is how do we, as the LAC, prepare for anything that develops reflecting folks coming from out of town to cause problems, how can we help?

Chief Jones – That’s why I wanted to have a dialogue and see if you all have ideas. Maybe if you are on social media and you see something that looks like it could turn ugly, you notify us so we can investigate it. I don’t know if I have a great idea but to communicate and ask questions. It’s like the UNC thing, I heard about that through other means. So, if you hear something call me and we can look into it.

Chairperson Elder – I had a Facebook message from a retired police officer, she sent out a letter that she had received from the Sheriff, about them rebuilding, working on construction and their covid status. Have you heard about that?

Chief Jones – The jail is adding a huge addition and they’re at a point in this transition to the new addition, is causing issues that they don’t have enough bed space and then also with COVID and the restrictions. The jail has put out has put out a thing that they will not take anyone that is not a Felony3 or higher, which are serious crimes. We’re in a situation where our hands are tied, we can’t take people to jail. There’s an awful lot going on right now.

Chairperson Elder - This letter was posted on Facebook. This is scary. It’s a difficult situation for LE with their hands tied like they are.

Chief Jones – I had a conversation about the homeless – it’s becoming a bigger problem, and our hands are tied with what we can do with these people. We can’t take them to jail, and we don’t have enough resources.

One other thing I want to let you know. We reached out to North Range, with the calls for de-funding the police and we need more social workers/mental health workers. We wanted to let you know what the mental health community thought about this. And they said exactly what I thought they would say, they’re not prepared for this, they aren’t geared toward this type of calls. North Range thinks they would have a tough time finding people that would work that way. This is a conversation that needs to be held on a national level. We need to hear from the mental health professionals and what they think of this.

I’m also starting a dialog with the City Attorney’s Office, to see what it looks like for police to not respond to mental health type calls. The Rochester incident (naked man in the street, he was spitting, so they put a spit mask on him, and he ultimately ended up dying) is a perfect case for us to not go to those type of calls (mental health calls). We must get this figured out for our officers on the streets. It’s a huge problem to leave people out on the streets acting crazy, but that’s what our future may look like.

Justin Martinez – Clarification - You can't arrest anybody that is a felony 3 or lower.

Chief Jones – Felony 4 or lower. There are few offenses that can be arrested (sex offenses is one example). Once the new jail is open some of this will improve. I just don't have a timeline for that.

Adolph Diaz – Who's making these decisions of who can and can't be arrested.

Chief Jones – We don't run the jail, so that is out of our hands. The jail just doesn't have room, so they had to make tough decisions.

Joe Perez – I'm with you, I do think we need to have more dialog with officers and the community, and outside groups.

Chief Jones – I agree with you. Communication is so difficult with COVID and such.

Mike – With regards to mental health, would it be feasible to develop or extend LE, another branch of LE, that would have officers with advanced training in the mental health area.

Chief Jones – We do have officers who have had extra training in mental health. We have mental health workers, co-responders, that go on calls with our officers. The real dilemma is how do you deal with difficult cases, co-responders can't deal with someone being physical. People in mental health don't want to deal with physical altercations.

The community is going to have to understand what they're asking for. There is no easy answer for how to handle these situations.

Chairperson Elder – Has recruitment taken a hit?

Chief Jones – We're not going to know for a while. We were over-hired, we lost a few officers recently, so we have opened the hiring process, so we'll know at some point.

Justin Martinez – Has there been a hit on your reputation not being able to arrest certain people.

Chief Jones – I just tell people the truth, our hands are tied due to SB217. We just cover the calls and do as much as we can.

Do you DC's have anything.

DC Zeller – The Records move is going well. Hiring – we have gotten 40 POST certified applications.

Chief Jones – I have to brag on Mike – the DTF did a huge bust 100 lbs. of meth and much more.

Adolph Diaz – How would you rate your community support?

Chief Jones – Overall we have great support from our community. Officers are still getting unkind comments, but the vast majority is very supportive.

DC Turk – SB217 – We have to collect info about 18 different things from each person our officer's contact. We are working closely with North Range and the Fire Department for a lot of these calls.

Chairperson Elder – I appreciate you calling this meeting thank you.

Chief Jones - If you start hearing or seeing something, contact me, please.