

**NAACP Berkshire County Branch
General Chapter Meeting
January 2, 2019 6pm - Berkshire Athenaeum**

Attendees (See addendum)

Guests

Doug Mishkin of Heisler Feldman & McCormick, P.C
Pittsfield Police Department Chief Mike Wynn

Business

1. Dennis Powell called the meeting to order at 6:01pm.
2. Dennis wished the membership Happy New Year.
3. Dennis thanked Doug and the Social Justice Action Committee for their work on helping to create the Pittsfield Police Oversight Commission.
4. Dennis introduced attorney Doug Mishkin of Heisler Feldman & McCormick, P.C.
 - a. Wants to practice law in a way to join with the community and spend the last chapter of his career in the Berkshires.
 - b. Firm does not charge the client - the other side pays the fee.
 - c. Legal services organization that happens to be a law firm form
 - d. Cases are taken when firm is confident they can win.
 - i. Housing discrimination
 1. Eviction
 2. Bad conditions with affirmative claims against landlord
 3. Foreclosure work
 4. Mobile home parks
 - ii. Consumer protection - debt collection
 - iii. Civil cases against police departments
 - iv. Discrimination
 1. Housing
 2. Police department
 3. Banks/Redlining
 4. Employment (Racial and other)
 - e. Firm does not take cases
 - i. Where person simply cannot afford rent/mortgage/ect
 - ii. Owner occupied premises in rental cases
5. Doug spent the remainder of his time fielding questions from membership
6. Chief Wynn
 - a. Discussion of the potential Pittsfield Police Department Oversight Commission
 - b. Chief Wynn chronology of the ordinance
 - i. End of summer 2017 letters and complaints about the PPD.

- ii. Discussed with the Mayor and PPD HR on letter of complaint and request
- iii. Prompted administration to look at what has been done/on the books
- iv. Draft ordinance from Mayor's office
- v. Met with derision from the council
- vi. Ordinance stalled
- vii. Beginning of 2018 City revisited it
- viii. Mayor asked Chief to review what Cambridge and Springfield PD has done.
 - 1. Consulted
 - a. National president of the national review board
 - b. What passed in Cambridge was not executed the way the law
 - c. Springfield Commissioner created a new system.
- ix. Drafted new ordinance
- x. NAACP requested a meeting with Chief Wynn to look at versions of the ordinance
- xi. Subcommittee rewrote and presented to solicitor.
- xii. Another version was written
- xiii. Passed the subcommittee
- xiv. Jan 26 for full council to pass
- c. Drew Herzig spoke - has the current version of the ordinance
 - i. Can send to Secretary to send to membership at large
 - ii. Chapter added
 - 1. NAACP put in training as desired
 - 2. Quarterly ride along training program
 - iii. Reached out to Cambridge advisory board
 - iv. Discussion of Sec12
 - 1. Police can take you into custody if your health care provider says so
 - 2. Brien Center began ride along program resulting in 70% decrease of sec12.
- d. Councilor Peter White - ordinance is available on the website.
- e. Chief Wynn
 - i. Bad law doesn't make good policy
 - ii. Cambridge had a hard time working on policy that was in conflict of other laws
 - 1. Civil service laws and rights of officers
 - a. I.e. police officers cannot be forced to appear at hearings
 - b. Commissioner has given up responsibility to discipline police officers.
 - iii. Believe ordinance is a fair and legal compromise as possible.
 - iv. When police advisory uncovers a crime from the actual report and it gets caught up in the system. Gets sent to the DA's office.

- f. Rebecca Thomson - Commission can
 - i. Develop information tools on how to make a complaint
 - ii. Assist individuals navigate the complaint process
 - iii. Will get reports out on individual police officers
 - iv. Make recommendations on process
 - v. Work with neighborhood groups
 - vi. Provide summary reports
 - vii. Advocate/mechanism to address state level
 - viii. Does not have to be about disciplining police officers
 - ix. Help educate population on how the complaint process works and what to expect
- 7. Commission (in current draft)
 - a. 11 members
 - b. Mayoral appointees
 - c. Current proposal diversity based on organizations and ethnic/social groups
 - d. Complaint form currently only in English
 - e. No statute of limitations of the complaint
- 8. Discussion of section 12 and the procedure of removing people from their home.
- 9. Will Singleton asked a question about the Columbus community outreach office.
 - a. Looking for volunteers
 - b. No policing is done out of the office.
 - c. Toehold in Durant park
 - d. Work in progress
 - e. Space for community engagement
 - f. Technology will let them work where they want
 - g. Opened as response from people in the community
 - h. Volunteers would
 - i. Take complaints
 - ii. Fill out accident reports
 - iii. Make references to right divisions in police office
- 10. Time frame for passage of the PPD Oversight Commission
 - a. Passes in January
 - b. Populated by spring
 - c. Council approval of members after that.
- 11. Joel Priest asked what the rank and file police officers think of the oversight commission.
 - a. Most officers below level of attention.
 - b. They understand they have legal protections.
 - c. They don't expect this to change the discipline procedure.
 - d. PPD is held up as a model for other police officers
- 12. Leah Reid
 - a. Need to work on customer service skills of the department.
 - b. Fielded idea for social worker for the police department.
- 13. Drew Herzig

- a. Officer Grady said officers were in support of the effort and the spirit of the effort.
 - b. Positive sign the PPD Chief is at the NAACP talking.
 - c. Encouraged membership to sign up for ride along with the PPD.
14. Alisa Costa
- a. Suggested NAACP facilitate ride along requests.
15. Chief Wynn
- a. 16 year old can do it with parents okay
 - b. Have 20 active explorers now
16. Shirley Edgerton
- a. Asked how the PPD are trained to engage people outside of the complaints.
17. Chief Wynn
- a. Work with Barrington Stage
 - b.
18. Problem with lack of national standards for police departments. They only get best practices recommendations.
19. Joel Priest questioned monitoring of informal activities of officers such as spousal abuse, homophobia, white supremacy
20. Chief Wynn response
- a. There is a specification on off duty conduct. Fought hard with the union to keep that.
 - b. Can't touch first amendment rights. Social media posts, ect.
 - c. Special standard of behavior with police with domestic violence. Not acceptable.
21. Alisa Costa asked for what the best case scenario is:
- a. Chief has been asking for this for a long time.
 - b. His hope is that is additional communications organization.
 - c. Doesn't really change what info the public and get now.
22. Tommie Hutto-Blake
- a. Asks City Councilors Peter White, Helen Moon and Earl Persip about their opinion on the oversight commission.
 - b. Peter White asks people to educate themselves on the ordinance.
 - c. Ask questions of councilors.
 - d. Earl Persip recommended taking police citizens academy.
23. Dennis closes meeting thanking Chief for his time.
24. Motion to adjourn by (need to get name).
25. Seconded by Dennis Powell.
26. Meeting Adjourned 7:30pm