



Minutes - Final

Public Safety Committee

Wednesday, January 21, 2026

5:30 PM

Council Chambers

Roll Call: Chair Affa, Mota, Santos

Ms. Candida Affa stated that they can start the meeting stating Mr. Hanlon, the committee people are here. She stated that she is chairing. She stated Mota, Santo and with them tonight is also Gerlach, Binder and Santos. She stated that they can start the meeting. She stated that tonight she wants to discuss the priorities stating that this is the intent of this meeting is to set out a committee and administration profiles. One of the things and the first thing she wants to bring up is something that she is working on closely with the Chief of Police and several people. She stated that she wants to form a Quality of Life Task Force. She stated that they have and she wants to take the time to and started this, her campaigning and every time she campaigned it is always on Quality of Life and she feels she doesn't know that she has done enough. She stated that most of their complaints are of Quality of Life whether it is noise with the cars. Whether it's homes and the DCNR have helped them a whole lot and the Nuisance Abatement. They need a lot more so she formed a committee, not a committee and stated that she is not going to call it a committee. It is a Task Force. She stated that she has people from the city and on the advice of the Chief which she thought was a great idea, she also invited four members of the city. She stated what. She stated that she sounded pretty good there for a minute asking can you do that again. She stated that it was somewhere out of space and four citizens from different parts of the city to be on this taskforce. The idea of this is that they have to support and figure out what they can do to make this city a lot better and quality of life. She stated that she agrees with the mayor and the city on focusing on health and the environment and income and housing and jobs and so and so forth. She stated that she think there is also we sometimes neglect the quality of life issues and when she talks about quality of life, she is talking about garbage, weeds, dog feces, noise, cars, and so and so. And, that she thinks as a Council people that have been here for a while, this is what they get the most complaints on and she thinks that if she would get this taskforce together what she wants to do is have like a brainchild. She handpicked everyone because she feels that these are the people that are going to stating this is not going to be a b*tch session about what's wrong with the city. She stated that she wants this force, this taskforce to solve the problems. She wants to solve the problem of quality of life. She stated

that if they can spotlight certain things as what was spotlighted with the bikes. She stated that they didn't pass the legislation, she guesses it was Pat Browne who did and because of that they had 75 percent knocked off. She stated wasn't it Chief. She stated that they had very little problems so this is the things she wants the taskforce to be able to come up with their ideas. She stated how they can do it and of course, they will have the solicitor there. Then they can come to Council and pass legislation to help, not help, but eliminate the problems that they have here, especially the noise with the cars. She stated Mr. Santo she thinks several months ago, five or six months ago brought up the idea he worked with a City Councilperson from Philadelphia where they have cameras and this is something that they can look at. She stated something that they can kick around. She stated that ideas like that were if they did come up with certain things like that and they come to Council and see if they can pass legislation, but they really have to do something about it and this task force will do nothing, but Quality of Life issues. They will meet possibly once a month or every other month, but they will kick around all the ideas, ask questions, why this didn't work, why that didn't work because as far as she is concerned in the past 10 years that she has been here, they past a lot of laws, but a lot of them get kicked to the curb. If you are talking about the fireworks stating she remembers they passed that law, not after 10:00 clock, well, stating they have problems and if they can find a way to have or to solve it and she thinks they can solve it by the citizens and the Chief of Police, Council people, and people from the administration working together with nothing, but does she think that the rest of the city they do have a problem with homeless. They do have a problem with and our Streets and doing well stating she has to commend our Streets Department. She stated our streets are amazing how well they were maintained. She stated that they have a lot going on that is really good for the city, but they do have a problem with the Nuisance. She stated it is really a nuisance. She stated so um, she is announcing it today that they are eventually going to very shortly she has the committee together and got the people committed to it and she will give them more information on it and she is hoping that Genesis will join them in it because she can communicate to the public of what they are doing. It is going to be important for the public to know that we are doing something. Every time we have a meeting or something is put out there, they have to know. They have to be part of it, they have to know that the tools that we give them, they are going to have to be using them. She stated that they do have the tools out there and she thinks that this is out there and they know that we have a new committee going on that we are really going to address this and stated that she thinks it is going to help them and if they know that they can help them in some ways and they can help themselves and they can help their own neighborhoods. This is almost her last straw. She doesn't know what else to do as far as quality of life. She stated for 10 years, they have been

trying and they have done things. The Disruptive Conduct Board and different things like that, but it is not enough because there are too many complaints about quality of life and somehow, somehow, they have to fix it. Hopefully, by having this task force, to do nothing, but work on the Quality of Life issues. She stated that she thinks that they can really move forward with this and asked the Chief is there anything that he would like to add to this.

Chief Charles Roca thanked Ms. Affa for allowing him to speak. He stated that he just wants to say thank you for the opportunity to speak and he does want to first say that quality of life isn't just a police issue. It is a citywide issue and all of us play a part in it. He wants to take a moment to thank not only the police officers that work day in and day out to address many of the quality of life issues, but also our firefighters, our paramedics, or city street workers, our public health. All of these workers play a part of making the city of Allentown that much better. He was going to wait for this for later for instance Report update, but he did want to talk a little bit about what happened in '24 and '25 stating he is sorry from '25 to '26, and quality of life is very much a concern for the Police Department and we don't stop at that. Often times when he talks about the reductions in violent crimes, reductions in homicides and things of that nature, people accept it and understand it and then want to know what are we doing about the loud motor vehicles. What are doing about the noise issues. What are we doing about those types of things. He thinks a collaborative effort is one of the best approaches. When he was confirmed as Chief here in '21, one of the things he said was about breaking down silos and he thinks having collaborative approach is one of the best approaches that they can do in addressing quality of life issues because it may or may not be something that the Police Department can solve. It could be something where it is a street issue that needs some attention from Public Works or could be something else, but at the end of the day, he thinks it is about listening to the community. Hearing what those issues are and putting together initiatives, strategies that address those things. He stated that he fully support Council in its efforts to draft legislation that is fair in addressing some of the issues so that it is educational, but it also holds people accountable and through that we will see those types of quality of life issues be reduced completely or to Candida's point, Councilperson Candida Affa completely eliminated stating that would be great. He stated that he does support that.

Ms. Candida Affa stated thank you Chief and she believes that the people that they got together on this, we have a lot of people from the city. She stated Sweep, DCED department, a couple of Council people, but a lot of the main things are going to be that three or four people from the citizens that are going to be able to help us out and have them understand how it is

not easy to pass different laws. How it is not easy just to say we are going to do this and we are going to do that. She stated that they will have Solicitor's there, a Solicitor there. She stated that she thinks it is going to work. This is something she believes that it is going to be about listening stating we need to listen and we need to find a solution is what it is. It is not that this is happening and why is it happening. She stated well, let's figure it out and she wants all positive and want a lot of people that are going to have positive questions, positive answers and looking forward to this and she will keep reporting to Council individually and on the dais on how we are doing.

Chief Charles Roca stated that he would also like to be inclusive of the mayor's office as well because he thinks that is important.

Ms. Candida Affa stated that she has something from the administrative office. She stated oh, yeah she has that. She stated that she thinks that concludes and asked if there are any questions about this taskforce.

Dr. Cynthia Mota stated that they will elaborate with you and the administration. She stated that she is and stated that ever since she started in City Council, she has always talked about community policing. She thinks this is one of the things that hopefully this taskforce is going to be working on that so she is looking forward.

Ms. Candida Affa stated yeah, that is something to everything. They are bringing everything out. Everything and anything that could help the city and if we just pass one law and if they could spotlight and will use Santo's words, spotlighting one like they did with the bikes. If they could do this with cameras. If it is some way they can get these cameras that can pick up loud mufflers and loud music and boom, we don't need a policeman. It is almost like the school buses, there is a citation and they can always stating if they could do anything. One thing in a year that could help the quality of life. She stated that there is a lot of dumping that goes on. She hears a lot of dumping that is going to the bridges and so on and so forth. She stated that maybe they can work with Sweep on that. She stated that there is so many things, but community policing is one thing that we discussed. She stated that she is a firm believer in it too.

Dr. Cynthia Mota stated that she thinks that the nice things about this taskforce is going to be that you are going to be involved with the community. There are going to be citizens so she is looking forward to that.

Ms. Candida Affa stated that it is a different variation on the broken window theory. We can find different things to fight people for or pass legislation

for, but she needs the community, we need the community to help us with this. She stated that she is so excited that the Chief is on board with this.

Dr. Cynthia Mota stated amazing.

Ms. Candida Affa stated that we have DCR, the Nuisance Abatement, Vicky Kistler. She stated that we have a lot of the city and.

Dr. Cynthia Mota stated that she thinks that the community involvement is number 1 so she is excited about that.

Ms. Candida Affa stated that they can get them to understand also that it is not easy and she is sure that it is going to be the expectations, well this force isn't doing anything. It's been two months and she hasn't seen anything different. She thinks people out there in the community and with the help of Genesis and letting people know, they will see that it is not that easy to pass these laws. What we want and what we can do are certainly two different things. She stated that this is not going to cost us anything. This is just people trying to fix the city in any way we can. She asked any other questions or statements.

Ms. Natalie Santos stated that she just had a clarifying question asking did Ms. Affa narrow it down exactly who was going to be on the taskforce or is it more of an open meeting situation.

Ms. Candida Affa asked Ms. Santos to speak louder. She has trouble hearing.

Ms. Natalie Santos stated it is ok and asked have you narrowed down who exactly going to be on the taskforce. Do you know exactly how many community members we are going to have there and from what parts of Allentown or is it just.

Ms. Candida Affa stated that she is still working on it. She is very close to and do have the and spoken to the four people. There are four people that she talked to that are a possibility. She stated that everyone has to get back to her and let her know, yes. She stated that she made the phone calls. Let them know exactly what it is all about and need them to give them a firm answer on that and when she does, Council will be the first to know who is on the as far as the city, she has a good idea who on the city. She stated to Ms. Santos, that you are asking about the citizens. She stated that she is trying to get one from every part of the city: westside, eastside, northside.

Mr. Natalie Santos stated got you.

Ms. Candida Affa stated oh, yeah. She stated that the hardest ones, will be the westside. It is a little harder to get then the inner city. She stated that she has spoken to in the past week, several people and she just wants them to know and believes the people that she is interested in want the same thing. She stated that she just want them to know and don't want them to come in there and complain about everything about the city. She wants them to help fix the city. She stated that we all have complaints, but we all has to have some answers too. She asked Ms. Santos is that it.

Ms. Natalie Santos stated yes.

Ms. Candida Affa stated when she does, she will give the thing to Mike and Mike will send it out to everyone. He is going to be on that.

Mr. Santo Napoli stated that he just would like to add it is going to be great working with you, Ms. Mota, and Ms. Santos on this. He stated that it is something they talked about two weeks ago about forming this committee and would encourage some more residents from Center City just because that is probably where most of the quality of life violations kind of occur. He stated that maybe because of density and because of this add another person or two from Center City. He stated it is just his suggestion just because there are so many issues. He stated that there is a lot of work to do. He stated to your point, Ms. Affa, we have to understand what the current ordinance is. We have to understand what we are working with. We have to understand legally what we can do and we really need to focus on what we can do to prevent it going forward. He stated that a lot of it goes back to messaging. This cannot be a, we are going to find everyone on everything. It is about helping residents understand what the expectations are and trying to make what the city a little bit better for everyone. He is anxious to play a part in this. He stated thank you.

Ms. Candida Affa stated that it is not good to be and the first meeting she is really going to make it known that this is everyone's opinion is going to count. Everyone's opinion. She stated that she doesn't care if you are from the westside, eastside, downtown, the Chief of Police, Vicky Kistler. Whoever it is, everybody's opinion is going to count and it got to be positive. She stated that this is the only way and they are all in agreement about the quality of life. She stated that this is what our biggest problem is. The Police department is doing their job, everybody. The Parks, everybody. As far as the city is concerned as a whole, except she agrees with Ms. Gerlach, we can do more with the homeless. She stated that is her thing and willing to help her with it. She stated that this is her thing. She stated that she is hell bent on the quality of life in this city and hopefully, this will work out. She stated that everybody's opinion counts and when

they come to Council meetings and she is asking for letting them know about the Reports and so on and so forth and stated all of their opinions are certainly going to county also. She asked if there was anything from the public. She stated alright and stated that will conclude that part of it. She asked did they have anything from Cynthia, stating no. She asked Chief Roca.

Chief Charles Roca stated good evening Council.

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Chief Charles Roca stated good evening Council. He just wants to take this opportunity to thank him for allowing him to speak. He stated that what he is going to be doing now is something new. Yes, we have an incident dashboard that any resident can look at and see what happening. He is going to make a specific Report for Council to review and on there is going to have what type of incidents they are having. What sort of quality of life issues they are seeing and that type of thing. He stated expect that within the next week that you should have and will be able to tell you the DCR's from the Disruptive Conduct Reports that they are getting. How that is looking like for '25. He is seeing here that it was actually a decrease in the amount of noise complaints that they received from last year. The types of calls that they are going on and also what the end of the year stats look like. They are finalizing that right now, but some of the things he wants to share with them is that for 2025, violent crime was down 2.36 points from 2024 and in 2025, property crime is down 132.15 points from 2024. He stated that their officers are doing their job, but it is just not them alone. It is the good people of the city of Allentown that are helping out in investigations providing information. Saying enough is enough when they see the face of folks that are choosing to do crime in our city. It is important to know that the residents know that the Allentown Police Department is there for them. He stated that they are their advocates and here to make sure that folks are safe and the outcome we want to have is a safe, secure, clean city. It will make sure that people know that we are also willing to listen. He stated that this job isn't done alone. It is not done in a vacuum so he is very pleased with first passing the budget so they can fund the things that they need to do and as they grow as a Police Department, they will attract like minded individuals that want to serve our city and its residents for years to come. He stated that he just wants to say thank you.

Ms. Candida Affa asked if there are any questions

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Ms. Candida Affa asked if there are any questions for the Chief, Ms. Gerlach.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach asked is the CIS data uploaded on that dashboard.

Chief Charles Roca stated that it is going to take some time to kind of arrange how the medium is to be able to see that information and also how to put it out for public review.

Chief Charles Roca stated that they are meeting in February to discuss how data is going to be distributed so it is going to be able to be looked at to see what type of impact it is having, but for Council you will be apprised to normal updates.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated that ok because one thing she knows when she looked at the data, she talking about the data is probably four years old by now, but determining what is a mental health call is sometimes challenging. She stated that the ones that it is clearly checking on someone's, a welfare check. That is not necessarily a mental health call. That could be anything.

Chief Charles Roca stated right.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach asked is there a definition, like how do you determine if it is a mental health call and then will the dashboard once the CIS data is part of that. Will it be in just very layman's terms like welfare check, mental health, disorderly conduct and things that are more CIS.

Chief Charles Roca stated so from a mental data perspective, they are going to look at analyzing that data and being able to produce a product that will be easily understood. He stated that is being worked out right now as we speak.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated ok, alright stating that she looks forward to that. Thank you.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated that she

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Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated that she thought that they were going to do a separate thing for community policing so she didn't say anything. She looks forward to that committee and those conversations that will happen.

She stated that she does think it is important kind of following up on Councilperson Napoli who said you just can't find people to death. Along those same lines, she thinks it is important when they look at public safety. Look at our communities, the assets in our communities, not just a deficit and utilizing those assets. That's like the schools, the corner stores, the businesses, and incorporating them into a community policing model. She stated in her experience, there are usually a handful of troublemakers in our neighborhood. Most people in the neighborhood is just kind of living their lives. It seems like and she doesn't want to say easier because she is not a police officer, but it seems like being able to target the neighborhoods and the specific people who are causing most of the issues. From what she just read, it seems to be an effective approach. At least, conceptually. She doesn't know if it is on the streets.

Chief Charles Roca stated that is an accurate assessment

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Chief Charles Roca stated that is an accurate assessment of policing in certain ways. Part of the underlying function of that is being able for people to have confidence in being part of that process. Sometimes people don't want to take part in that because they fear retaliation, but we are going to create systems that people are confident and they are not afraid of reporting incidents, crimes, and things of that nature. In also, finding the most effective way be it through police, through partnerships with our nonprofits, jobs, education, different opportunities that contribute to public safety. He stated that he believes that they have engaged many of these things in identifying people who probably do the most problems here. He stated that he is very pleased with their investigators in the approach that they take because they conduct very serious investigations that hold people accountable, that choose to engage in that type of crimes. He stated that his hope is that those individuals will not engage in those types of crimes, but change their lifestyle and focus on education, focus their energy on contributing to being a good citizen in our city to make it that much better and to your point Councilperson Gerlach, we very much need the community to assist us with this because this job isn't done in a vacuum.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated that she appreciates that because when she thinks about assisting, she thinks about someone who runs a corner store or someone in the neighborhood might be more likely to talk to someone at and stated she doesn't know, Promised Neighborhoods then they would be

to an officer so those types of relationships where the folks who are most relatable or who are in the streets and the neighborhood and there is a very direct connection with the police, not just like an event type of thing, but like a very day to day relationship.

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Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach thanked Chief Roca.

Chief Charles Roca stated you are welcome.

Ms. Candida Affa asked anyone else. She asked anyone from the public wants to make a statement on anything with public safety. She stated alright, this meeting is adjourned.

The intent of the meeting is to set out a few committee and administration priorities:

Committee/Task Force on Quality of Life Issues - Affa

Community Policing - Mota

Incident Reports - Chief Roca

Updates

Adjournment: 5:55 PM