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SPEAKERS

Marion Lang, Chief Atkinson, Karen Miller, Mary Riordan, Angie M., Vicki Sanchez, Sammie Jasper, Warren Lang, Kate

-
-  **Mary Riordan** 00:01
I don't need to introduce anybody I have been corresponding with the chief who is a really fine correspondent. And he has sent some some information for us some more information. And I really do think I'm just going to tell him to take it away.
-  **Chief Atkinson** 00:19
Sure, I can definitely go over some stuff. Would you like me to talk about some of the questions you had, or some of the information I brought?
-  **Mary Riordan** 00:29
So I think we were interested in the information you brought, we were particularly interested in the, in the increase in the numbers from, from your, your records, is what you keep track of. And then the other thing is, if you want to talk about what you're using in your training sessions and talk to us about that.
-  **Chief Atkinson** 00:51

Absolutely. So again, I'm going to apologize for my camera malfunction here at the moment, I'm, I'm running from home or operating from home at the moment here. So I ended up from the questions you sent about talking about demographics for what we what we keep track of. So the question was recalling correctly that what do we do we keep track of all the demographics for contacts, like gender, ethnicity, and we do to some degree, we don't do it for everybody. And I'll, I'll explain why. So we do keep track of the demographics, if we're taking an incident reports, or if we have an arrest or or ticket if, if you will. And we do that for record keeping purposes. So we can, we can hopefully extract that information and study it at some time. And we, we put in a new records management system here, about a year year and a half ago. And that's allowed us to do some of that, which I've been very excited about. And I'm going to give you some information here just a bit. However, we do not keep track of demographic information for every single contact and for an example would be as so if, if I was working and I just happened to speak to somebody on the street or say hello, we wouldn't, we wouldn't take their name information when asked their gender, or ethnicity. So for those it's not, it's not real practical, but anyone we're we're gonna have some kind of documented report, whether it's taken a theft complaint to investigate in a robbery, or if I pulled you over for speeding. Now, some of these some of those things, as far as keeping track of like race or ethnicity can be challenging. And the reason the reason is, is so if let's say I was on a traffic stop, and I'm pulling someone over who I believe is a black American, I may put, let's say it's a male black, I would list on the the ticket or the warning or incident that it's a male black. But the the black American may not identify specifically as a black American just could be a darker skinned, Caucasian could be could be Indian, American, Indian, could be any number of different things. And sometimes we don't get into specifics about an ethnicity with somebody, because some, some people are very sensitive about it. So whenever you're seeing statistics that are that are put out there about ethnicity, I would use some caution, because sometimes some people don't want to answer those questions. Some people are not exactly excited to see the police either that have that happens, and they don't want to answer questions. And then we're left trying to guess so to speak. But generally it's it's pretty accurate. Now, where I thought it was interesting as we got this new records management system, is that we can start kind of paring down or dissecting what we're doing for arrest contacts, and citations. So some of you may not be aware of this or not, but Don county has a criminal justice collaborating Council. And I'm a member of that, and former president of the of the group, and our chair, executive chairperson. So I'm very much involved with this. And one of the things that has, has driven Our group is the collection of data to try to be able to use that to drive policy decision making and those sorts of things. Now that that group has analyzed how many people have been in custody, and jail each month, and then over the course of the year. And one of the things that has brought us concern is so if you want to look at straight population like census information and demographics, we've seen a slightly higher proportion of persons that are

in jail in the population of black Americans versus Caucasian. And when I say in slightly higher going off memory, so forgive me, if I'm a little bit off, it's about 10%. And if you take a look at Don County's population, right around two or 3%. So it begs the question, what, why is that, and to go straight off census information can be a bit deceiving. But nonetheless, I think it's a starting point to ask a question, how come that is? What are the causes of that, and the other breakdowns. And at that time, when we started looking at that, that was about four, four years ago. Now, again, I mentioned about this records management system, which incorporates statistics from the jail, all the police departments, including the sheriff's office. And so we're starting to collect a more robust data to take a look at these things. So I ended up based on the questions that Mary had sent me, I ran a report. And and I wish I was as effective at mining for the data as some of the other folks but it was a good exercise to learn on how to do it. I wanted to see what we had for arrests and persons cited from March 8 2020 through March 8 2021. Bear in mind, this is this was an unusual year, because it was a pandemic year. And on a transparency to when the pandemic took place. I had ordered staff to minimize contact like self initiated activity, and only to take people into physical custody, if you absolutely needed to, like they needed to be removed from the situation because of violence, or because there was a law on the books that would require it. A good example of that would be anything with a domestic abuse enhancer, which you have to have a crime that accompanies that. But if it's domestic abuse related, so you would have victim at least 18 years old. suspect that 17 years or older, because 17 is considered an adult in Wisconsin, and they would have to commit a crime, they'd have to live together be part of having a relationship or share a child or formerly lived together to qualify. And then those if there is a crime that took place, a predominant aggressor would need to be arrested. So the numbers are down from what they would normally be in a given year. However, though, I did feel it was pretty interesting to pull the data together. So over the course of that timeframe, I mentioned, there was 714 people that were either cited, which is a ticket that you that you're probably familiar with, they were or summoned, which means that we were we gave them a referral. So if I caught you doing something you weren't supposed to be doing and I had probable cause to do it. But I didn't want to take you to jail, I can issue essentially a summons that I'm going to refer this case to the district attorney's office, and then you'll have to appear in court. I just don't, I'm just not bringing you to jail. There's also what's called an on view, arrest. And that typically happens with probation and parole violators. Our department of corrections, and Wisconsin is undergoing some drastic changes from what they used to do as far as operating with bringing people into custody, which I really don't have a problem with it. It's I think it's worked out fairly well. We're gonna see what the data shows here from them in the next few months. But an on view arrest is if I have someone who violated probation parole, and I just notified their agent that there was a violation. And then they have to connect with their agent in days of yore, which would Daisy you're being like a year ago, we would normally take a person into physical custody

and then they would have to meet their agent soul. That business has changed. And then we have actual physical custody. That's where we're going to put the handcuffs on somebody and then bring them to jail for booking so as i believe i mentioned we had 714 people that were taken into jail or excuse me either cited someone or taken into custody so what i wanted to do then is to find out exactly how many people we did the overall cited summoned on viewer custody and then break that down by ethnicity and then also i wanted to know who did we actually bring to jail and so here's what i have for some data as far as like this is the overall totals for sighted summon on view and custody we had 579 white or caucasian persons that were part of the overall group as far as black americans we had 62 asian americans 16 american indian five and then we had 52 of them were unknown and unknown could be either the officer couldn't discern one way or another or the person just flat out refused to which that can happen too so those are overall numbers that includes the tickets taking people to jail etc so then i wanted to see well what about physical custody bringing into the jail because that was one of the data points that our criminal justice collaborating council had wanted to kind of dive into to see why is this and for many of you you might have read over the last i would say four or five years a lot of attention has been brought to over incarceration in america and then also some of the disparities that are taking place between blacks being sentenced more strictly than whites for the same kinds of crimes so we're very sensitive to that want to make sure we're doing the right thing so now this this is the numbers i'm going to give you here are the numbers of people that were actually taken to jail out of that 714 so as far as white or caucasian that was 79 people that were taken to jail so out of the 714 11% of that 714 were white and taken to the county jail black it would be 10 and that is 1% and then so asian american would be 1% so that was four it's a little less than what i rounded of course solely we had four listed as asian or identified as asian being 1% american indian zero sum 0% and then unknown we had eight which is 1% so the numbers are pretty low normally in a year we would we would see that considerably higher for for tickets and contacts for self initiated type activity which then would lend itself that more people would be caught for offenses that would normally be either ticketed for or taken into physical custody i have not relaxed the the enforcement activities at the department so we're still operating under kind of pandemic instructions we call it a continuity of services and so for those of you who are interested in sociology and criminology it's going to be interesting to see how over the course of this year as far as enforcement how does that impact crime levels here in the city and into the to the next year also for those people that were referred essentially cited in summoned versus taken into custody and we're going to be curious we're going to be studying this at the cj cc so that criminal justice collaborating council if i use an acronym to that you don't know what it means please you know just raise your hand and i'll i'll stop myself we're gonna study that information to see if people are coming to court so some of the theories are are that that people will come to court unless they have a significant substance use disorder so if the offense was alcohol or drug

related which is tied to a fair amount of things they have a higher likelihood that they're going to potentially refund because there the addiction issues are are not necessarily being addressed versus those that don't so we're gonna start studying those things and then the other thing that we continue to do is we utilize what's called a law enforcement proxy and that is a simple assessment tool we use to determine our risk of recidivism so if a person is a low risk offender comes in at that level we can refer them for what's called pre charge diversion and if they're medium risk we still have the option of doing that high risk they need to be brought into custody on a normal normal year and in all likelihood if they're testing at high risk they will be brought in because it's just they've got some significant issues that makes it difficult for them to remain in the public so we utilize that tool and that helps guide some of the decisions to have all whether to bring someone into custody or not and and taking a look at different studies that are out there if you can identify people who are low to low medium risk it's actually more advantageous for the offender as well as society not to take them to jail so you might have heard the saying you take someone or put someone into prison they're going to come out a smarter criminal it's college for criminals essentially and so if you take a low low or medium or a low low to low medium risk person and you bring them into the jail and into the criminal justice system their chances to commit crime again so recidivate goes up exponentially however if you keep them out of the system it's called diversion if you can do that either officer led diversion or a what's called a pre charge diversion program which we have in dunn county the chances of them being successful and not coming back grow exponentially so that is something that we're going to be taking a look at is how these pandemic numbers are going to impact our court system now anecdotally i was told that we're having difficulty with some people coming to court because some of their addiction issues so that that part we will have to probably take the another good look at here this year in the next couple years as we implement different diversion programs and then ultimately deflection type programs so i thought that was that was rather interesting as far as collecting data to see where we're at the the next step that we would like to do is take a look at those persons that are incarcerated in the jail right now and examine what are their charges and what were their circumstances because just plain numbers sometimes can be deceiving you have to look at the context of the situation if you're going to study it so that's on the horizon for something for us to be studying and looking at and then that also that means what type of offense did they have potentially the background were they sentenced are they are they there for long stay are they there like for a pre sentence because they're a potential flight risk or not coming or risk of not coming to court so or is it because they are a risk to society so for those of you who might not be familiar with bonds i think miss miller you're an attorney right



Karen Miller 18:48

i have a law degree you have

C

Chief Atkinson 18:50

a law degree okay so are you part of the bar here in wisconsin no i'm not okay all right well i'll come i'll continue so in wisconsin we have a bond and a bond can only be issued on an offender to try to get either one guarantee their appearance in court or because society needs to be protected from the offender and that's that's a fairly high threshold so a lot of people will get pretty upset when someone has committed a crime especially if one that we find pretty reprehensible is allowed to bond out and so there's a lot a lot of factors to that so it just really depends on the type of crime but we cannot play such a high bond on someone to punish them in other words and so that's why you'll see some people get a lot out it doesn't mean we all agree with the bond level but that's the threshold that the judges have to use when determining when someone has been arrested if they're going to be out on bond and sometimes You'll hear what's called the signature bond. Signature bond is basically \$1 amount that you promise to pay if you don't come to court. So you don't have to put any money up. But you're saying that you will come to court and if you don't, you'll how you could pay it, and then potentially get a additional charge called bail jumping. If if you are a very high risk type person, then you may be held in jail until your court. And sometimes that'll happen. So we want to see if if that is an issue. Or if it's people that are consistently violating bond, if that's if that's a problem, and then we may take a look at implementing what's called pre trial services. But that that can be a sticky wicket, though, for people's, as far as I'm concerned, civil rights. And I think there are some groups out there that would also argue that so pretrial services are essentially services that would require the accused to monitor them basically like a probation, to make sure that they're not committing crime, make sure they're not drinking, doing drugs. And all that sounds great, right? Because we don't want them doing any of those things. But here's, here's where the sticky wicket part comes. our criminal justice system is an adversarial system that is based that the defendant is innocent until proven guilty, right? You know, it's the government's job to try to prove or the state to prove that this person did this, and they're innocent until that time. So if you require someone to comply with, like a pretrial services or probation, there's an argument made, you're restricting their freedoms when they're presumed innocent? And is that something that you legally can do? And And should you do? And so that that's that you're seeing being battled out in a variety of different states? Yes.

M

Marion Lang 22:18

I'm just wondering if anybody if we could just take pauses for a second? Because I know that we were really interested in the demographics. And I'm wondering any of these good

minds here? Not Yeah, no, it's just once. We don't want to stop you, because it's really interesting information, and tremendously interesting. But I just wondered if anyone does have a question just to move back a little bit about the information that's already been shared about demographics. So just unmute yourself, please wave your hand, if you have something you want to ask? Chief?

 Angie M. 22:54

I have a question. I'm not sure if you will know this answer. But when you're looking at demographics, and those that are in the jail, do you also look at the demographics? Like compare the trending, I want to Where to? How, like the how much the bond is compared to like those demographics? Like I'm thinking of like socio economic statuses, like, if somebody who is under the poverty level has the same amount of bail as somebody can afford to pay it, like how that affects, um, like reoffending? Or how long they're in jail, things like that? You know, I don't know if that makes sense.

 Chief Atkinson 23:36

It makes perfect sense. Because that that is an issue in the United States at times where a bond is, or a bail is so high, a person can't afford it. And Wisconsin's laws supposed to prohibit that. But we're going to look at those things at regardless to see if that's okay. Because some of those things still get applied. And you have to make sure that we're doing things the right way. So if someone can't, let's say afford something. We don't want them to just sit in jail because they're indigent. That's, that's not fair. Because again, it's supposed to be ball coming to court. And I would say this about judge Peterson and judge smeltzer. I think the both those two do a very fine job of being fair. And they do a fair amount of signature bonds. And they recognize that there are a lot of people that are struggling with poverty. So we we just don't want to have people incarcerated and create a debtors prison, which is basically what what that is. And you'll you'll see that at times, or at least, it's being argued that there are still places in the United States are pockets in the United States that are doing that. And so I do feel good about those two gentlemen and the work they're doing, but that's a that's a great question, Angie.

 24:59

Thanks. for answering,

 Chief Atkinson 25:01

yep. Mary had her hand she's waving. Go ahead. Hope you're muted. Now, now I can hear you.

M

Mary Riordan 25:14

Okay. I just wondered how can somebody caught? Where do you publish those are those available to public to the public, the statistics and the numbers.

C

Chief Atkinson 25:25

The criminal justice collaborating council statistics are available on the Dunn county website. If you go under, I believe it's their administration tab. And you can go to criminal justice collaborating console, they they publish what's called a smash board, and the Smash board will have the data as far as who's incarcerated, what our law enforcement proxy results are. And then some other information about studies that we have done. So I wouldn't, I would encourage you to check it out. And and as we're learning more about our statistics is all we can, we can basically calculate them. We're looking at doing different publishing or different data points to I think, some people are interested in that information. And we should put that out there now that we're learning how to utilize it.

M

Mary Riordan 26:20

I agree. Thank you, Kate. Yeah, hi,

K

Kate 26:26

I am wondering if in the data that you're collecting, if you if it is made note, if somebody is deaf, that then might signal down the line, if they're going to be in a court appearance, you might need a ASL interpreter, just wondering if that's a point that you also might be aware of.

C

Chief Atkinson 26:45

Yeah, if we're, if we're running into, and we have, we have some members of our community that are hard of hearing, and who use sign language, and we have a couple, we have one that's very good with sign language, and another one that's learning in our department. And if we do have occasion where they would need to go to court, we would alert the courts that we have someone that is going to be need a special services for that, as well. You're welcome. Sammy, you had your finger up?



Sammie Jasper 27:19

Yes. Um, say that's our executive director at monarch college. She's not here right now. But she had two questions. And you can tell me if this is more appropriate later. But the two questions were one, what kind of training is offered for the department to make the workplace feel supportive and accommodating for bipoc officers. And then the other one was, what kind of recruitment strategies and resources are in place to reach out to the marginalized groups of nominee.



Chief Atkinson 27:48

All right, so both good questions there. As far as the the part of all trying to feel comfortable, what we do is we have open conversations with folks want to let them know that no form of discrimination will be tolerated and, and if it is, excuse me, if we do find that someone is engaged in discriminatory conduct, they're just going to be gone. There's just no room for it, I'd have no problem bringing up charges against someone to our police and fire commission for it. So we're very upfront with it. The other part to that as part of ingrained in culture and continuing to learn how to be better police officers, and just, frankly, better persons. We're constantly reevaluating how we're doing, doing our work and how to respond to the community. And it's built into our mission, one to be one to be collaborate with our community shareholders. So that means everybody, and we do that to problem solve. So that way, it's a joint effort. So it's not just the police telling you, you know, what, what you got to do, and then into our vision, which we also constantly reiterate is that we want to be recognized as a department that can adapt to the ever changing social dynamic, culture and environment that we're in because the police are supposed to be a reflection of the community, right? We work for the community, we gain our ability to do our job based upon the trust they placed in us it's by the people's consent. And if the demands of the public change, then the job needs to change. So part of that is to to address those issues. And the other part as far as I clarify the last last one, I lost my train of thought because I started thinking about implicit bias testing because that was a question on an email so I'll I got distracted I saw something shiny dog.



Sammie Jasper 29:56

Okay. The other one was what kind of recruitments drive energies and resources are in place to reach out to the marginalized groups.



Chief Atkinson 30:04

Okay, very good. So that one is a tough one. And we've done well at hiring women. But

marginalized populations of persons of color has been more challenging for us. We had a just an absolute wonderful officer, some of you may know him to Markzware off just just a great guy. And he left us to go work in St. Paul, and which is, which is a very good police department, I know that our chief very well, we went to grad school together. For our recruitment purposes, what we'll do is we'll go to different colleges and go to the different career fairs at a just a bare minimum. As far as locally, we've reached out to groups like our Black Student Union, Multicultural Student Services, go to different events, picnics to try to, to try to one at minimum just develop any kind of relationship, build levels of trust. Because if you don't trust who you're who, who we are, why would you want to come work with us, or, you know, be a part of what we do. And that's been challenging, because, one, a lot of lot of the students, at least, this is, in theory, I should start doing surveys of this to try to get some more concrete data. But a lot of the kids that have shown desire to be in law enforcement, they're from more urban, or suburban centers. And, and although they like stout, and like Menominee, they want to get back to their home areas, so they can be closer to their families and folks they identify with, on occasion, we're able to get some folks that want to come in. And if they make it through the process with the police and fire commission in the background, then they have a chance to be able to work, work with us. But the other part of it too, I'm gonna be real honest, there's still a lot of negativity surrounding police right now. And if you're in a marginalized community, and let's say, you've experienced or had bad experiences with police, or that's been handed down, that's, that's going to be a problem because some people just don't, don't want to be part of that they see you, they may see us more as a part of a problem than a solution. And, and the other thing is to some folks, and I've worked with officers of color before they get beat up pretty bad at times in the community, not necessarily physically but emotionally beat up by persons who are also persons of color. So it's, I think it's a it's a hard job. To begin with, I think it's a very hard job if you're a person of color at times, too, because it's it just is you're dealing with a lot of stuff. This is a lot of still a lot of trauma, generational trauma, I would call it from just things that have happened in America over the last couple 100 years. And, and you see this stuff on TV, and in the news media, too. And it should be reported all the bad stuff. I I don't like to watch it, of course. But it needs to be reported. That's the media's job is to report on what government is doing or not doing. What it does, it does make it difficult, and it adds to the stress. So yes,



33:37

I want to walk in and just say, yeah, I think what you're talking about is that it's systemic. And a lot of times when people are uncomfortable in the community, yes, we are a very segregated community. We have very few we have pockets of people who are not white living in our community. And I saw I think it's really a community concern. And I think I mean, I think we have a few people here who've worked in the university with students of

color, and the LGBT community, who understand the isolation that the students feel in the community. So so it is a community concern. And, you know, everybody, our realtors, our shopkeepers, our churches, every aspect of community that touches an individual's life can have can be a negative or a positive experience. I think some people are shocked to find out that that there are people who aren't comfortable here because all the white people are so comfortable with the right that's what's happening now in our culture is that we're we're trying to, to really to work on that. So so thank you for all your work. And I am I understand everything you said yes, the police are often seen as the object that's causing all the problem. But no. And it's a community concern and a community responsibility as well as as for the policing. So I just

C Chief Atkinson 35:19

I would I would agree with you it is a community issue, and it is very challenging. Warren, you had your hand up?

W Warren Lang 35:27

Yes, thank you. I try to phrase this the best I can. It's interesting to have the statistics about the races and so on terms of actual reports made, but I'm assuming there are many stops of people that are made that are, you know, that are just let go there. They got the wrong person or, you know, there was nothing to report. Which, if you're a person of color, as I understand it, can be very traumatizing just to be stopped by the police. I think it's, it's scary for any of us. Honestly, if I got stopped by a police, police, car, police police person, I'd be a little nervous, too. But being white, I wouldn't be probably traumatized by I hope not anyhow. I have had that experience actually in the past. But I don't think I was traumatized by it. And I was treated pretty nicely. Not in Menominee, by the way. So I'm not sure how to put this exactly. But is there any training involved in one, when I say someone, I've heard incidents where a person was stopped, it was a person of color, because they were looking for some other person of color, maybe. And nothing would nothing really happened. And that person was able to just go on their way, but was traumatized by just that stop? Because as you yourself, no, that can be in that is an issue for people of color in this country, not just in Menominee. So I don't know if there's any way of training officers or trying to deal with that situation in a way that would ease the fears and trauma for a person of color? Is that a clear question at all there?

C Chief Atkinson 37:29

Yeah, I think it is very clear question. And so the answer to that is yes. So yeah, there, there are certainly a lot of opportunity for a police officer to to stop and talk to somebody. If

they're going to like what would be called a detainment like a reasonable suspicion, or a Terry stop, you might have it referred to as where we temporarily stopped somebody to determine if a crime was about to occur or had occurred. And those those get documented as far as who the who the person is, but getting more to your point, Warren about if let's just say I'm walking on the street, or I pull up alongside of a person thinking that might be somebody else and say, you know, Hey, where are you headed to. And it turns out to not be the person they go away for something that might be what I would consider not a big deal, that person of color might be lazy, very traumatizing, or maybe even seem like profiling to them. So what we do to address that is we really reinforce not just with our new people, but our veterans as well, that really it comes down to communication and a focus on service. So yes, you may be looking for someone in particular. But the point is that person that you maybe have had a brief contact with doesn't necessarily know that. And don't just anticipate the person is going to look at it the same way that you do. And especially if it's a person of color, or part of a marginalized population, share the information with them, say, Hey, how's it going? Where were you headed to? And then why asking? Well, I was looking for somebody who was a potential suspect and a burglary. Let's just use that for an example. But I can see, you're not the person. If you see someone who matches this particular description, please call this number and let us know. My name is Eric Atkinson. I'm an officer with the Menominee police department and I it's a nice It's nice to meet you. And so just kind of just just being able to explain who you are and what you're doing. It goes a long way with folks about easing their tensions because persons of color don't want crime any more than anybody else. So, but the we still have to be cotton Wasn't that there, there are still generational trauma use most cops are really great, but you still have some that are, that are frankly, just doing bad stuff, if not criminal stuff. And, and you have to be aware of it. And of course, because it's, it's so widely known in America, especially the last, I'd say, six, seven years, that you have to realize that this may be on people's minds, and you have to, you really need to go the extra mile and focus on service. We've always been pretty good on the protect part of it. But I, but I think our service is lacked over you as a profession as a whole. We haven't been great at sharing information or communicating. And, and it's it's time we get back to some of those roads and focus on that. So I hope that kind of answers your question, Warren, it it's different for everybody, you just gotta be patient and have empathy. And I'll add a little bit of humility will go a long way as with people,

W

Warren Lang 41:03

you know, I think so. And even maybe saying, I'm sorry to bother you or stopped you or something.



Chief Atkinson 41:10

All absolutely the power of I'm sorry, is this pretty strong. And most people will understand. If you if you explain it, and you're kind, if you're not, well, then I don't think people are gonna have a lot of time for you, regardless of who you are. And, and by the way, Warren, don't, don't worry about being behind having an office or following behind you makes me nervous, too, because then I got to look at my speed to make sure I'm not speeding. And I've been a cop for 23 years. So I can't imagine what it's like for somebody who may just have a negative outlook at what we do. Yeah.



41:47

Thank you very much.



Chief Atkinson 41:49

You're welcome.



Marion Lang 41:55

I want to mention that Vicki Sanchez has been able to join us. Hi, Vicki, good to see you here.



Vicki Sanchez 42:00

iThank you, I was detained at a meeting prior. So my apologies to committee. And thank you, Chief Atkinson. Even with the statement, just, you know, the conversation you just had, because I know for, you know, I've heard many stories, and I think that it is very triggering, because you don't know if that officers coming from a genuine place? Or is just, you know, in the eyes of a person of color? Or is you know, is it? Is it just meeting stop because I'm a person of color if I'm walking or driving, so I think the guard is, is up with many individuals who identify as people of color. And I think that that's, you know, when you're saying just an apology and in a genuine way or, you know, further with that explanation, and it's like oh, obviously you're not this individual. I'm so sorry to detain you i think that that goes a long, a long way. But I think just with the nature of how our society has been towards people of color, I think that that's it's just something that really hurts the soul I guess because they don't you know, you just don't know if it's legit or not. And so it's just it is a rough place to be

C

Chief Atkinson 43:30

I can only imagine I had a stop that I ended up Bob pulling someone over was black American, he had like red lights on the front of his car, and you only police or firefighters can have that. So I stopped them just to let them know that dam is no big deal of a stop to let him know he can't have red lights just turn them off and not a problem. I'll tell you what, the end by the way, this was about three four weeks after the George Floyd that that poor fellow was absolutely terrified of me but absolutely terrified. And all it was was the red lights I tried to say this is this is it you know you're you're gonna be okay to go No one's getting a ticket or anything like that. But regardless is still terrified of it. And slightly different one was a was a guy who I didn't stop for stop sign on Ninth Street by 13th and almost hit me I just slam on my brakes to avoid collision so I pulled the person over, but the person was experienced a psychotic episode and and because of that person's fear and that That That fellow was from Chicago. And he's like, please just don't shoot me. Not gonna shoot, you just wanted to let you know he didn't stop for that stop sign. Are you okay? And so after some time again, resources at the end of it, he's like, you're a lot nicer than Chicago cops. I thought I was gonna get shot. And I said, well, we're not you're not posing any any threat at all, sir. It's just, it's a traffic stop, you made a you made an error. But to kind of get what you're talking about nikitias that there's genuine fear that's out there. And and to be real frank, I think it's going to take decades of consistent trust building and open conversation and transparency to try to repair some of that. Because for those folks to have responded that way, I got to believe that the stress of everything that's been going on in their lives, and that fears, it's got to be soul crushing. I mean, really weighing down. I can't I can't even imagine what it'd be like. So it's, it's, it's sad, but I hope it does give us an opportunity to try to heal and do things right as we move forward as a country in a in a community on a more localized level as well.

M

Marion Lang 46:30

I mean, one of the reasons, I think we open this conversation is because of a understanding that sometimes people are traumatized by being met by the police in Menominee. And I think we've wondered if there's other ways to deal with that, especially since we are a small community. I mean, sometimes the reporting of that, you know, it turns up on social media, or, you know, then they don't turn to the police department, you know, because they're, that's that that's not going to feel effective. Right. And so, so I think part of this conversation that we're having is about how to, to bring some sense of balance to a person who was was stopped, you know, and, yeah, we stopped and went away, feeling very frightened. And, and, and as if there were not Whoa, yeah.



47:30

Well, sure.



Chief Atkinson 47:33

For a fit for an official piece of it, I can see why people would not necessarily feel great about contacting me. So if they have a desk, distrust the police any way, they may not feel that they can talk to the chief of police or or another supervisor, you can always reach out to police and fire commission member. So that's something that can be encouraged to people. The mayor is the CEO of the city. And complaints can always be made to him, he can refer them to either address them directly with me or refer them to police and fire commission. But I'm more of an info on formal level, I think what what it's going to really take is just time, willingness to to listen, and actually actively listen to what other people are saying and their concerns. And try to build trust. It's like any kind of friendship, it just doesn't happen. It takes time. Usually, a variety of courageous acts of trust between where you have healthy exchanges of information and can has positive reinforcement, and that's, that's just gonna take time. And it's a fragile thing. It really is. It's it's very challenging right now.



Warren Lang 49:00

On the issue of complaints, and I appreciate your insight into this whole situation and your concern. I didn't realize that police and fire commission could receive complaints. I thought when he had to go through the police department. I think that's a good thing. I wonder how widely known that is if someone gets stopped say and is no offense, like the person of color we've been talking, who is then traumatized, maybe the police officer has acted in a way that was racist, unkind, cruel to that person. I'm wondering if that is a way of, of making known to the public that there can be a complaint made that doesn't have to protect them, so that they would maybe be anonymous. For I don't know how I'm sort of wandering around here, but I want to know if we can, if they can be a process for complaining about a situation like that, where the person felt safe enough to do it. I've, I've sometimes thought myself, there should be an ombudsman or a person in between hired maybe by the city, who would play that role. Of course, that's in the future, if at all. But I wonder I may safely making a complaint making people feel safe that they can make a complaint like that.



Chief Atkinson 50:36

The the we do have our citizen complaint policy posted, which indicates a person can

make a complaint either to myself or another officer or to the police and fire commission. And the police and fire commission is empowered to do so by state law. And they they're all community members. So that's essentially like your ombudsman that you're referring to. That's, that's their role. So they're non police people, most of them are either teachers or business persons who are retired, and some still volunteer in the community. So that's, that's one way that people can, can make their complaint if they don't feel comfortable talking to me, and any one of those commissioners can make those groups or take that complaint. They can do it anonymously. They can do it, like formally where they're going to fill out a written complaint form. And that can be done to as well through my office if someone wants to do that. But again, if someone just doesn't feel comfortable, then they have the other options of police and fire commission. And sometimes the mayor will receive all our call.

M

Mary Riordan 51:54

So I'm wondering about the makeup of the Commission, because I'm I'm trying to think of who people would feel comfortable making these complaints to. And so I'm wondering if how the commission might think about encouraging more diverse community members to join

C

Chief Atkinson 52:19

the commission as five commissioners, and they're based upon who the mayor will select. And then the city council has to confirm. And they will have four year appointments. And they're, they're staggered. So if the even if there is a desire to, to diversify a commission, it's going to be dependent upon who's on it. And when their term is done, it can be dependent upon whom the mayor may select, and then who the council could choose. But if there is somebody that's interested in being on the police and fire commission, they would need to reach out to the mayor of Menominee. In order to get on there. And for our police and fire commission, they are the ones that have the ability to hire, fire, demote and promote. And they can also discipline to. And so for example, all the mayors, the chief executive of the city, he is not the one who hires me, the police and fire Commission has to do that. And they will meet and do interviews and then vault. And then the the mayor and the council will set my salary and benefits. But if let's say let's say the mayor has just had enough for me, I'm not doing what he thinks I should be doing. There, it's time for Eric to go. He can make a complaint with the police and fire commission that no longer has confidence in me or doesn't feel I'm suitable. And then I either Can, can accept it if the police and fire commission brings that forward as though let's say a termination, or I'm allowed a hearing contested. So there. There's a process for all that stuff. So if any of you are interested in being a member of the police and fire commission, I would encourage

you to reach out to Mayor Randy Connect. And if you need his number of contact information, I can certainly get that to you as well.

M Marion Lang 54:32
Thank you.

C Chief Atkinson 54:34
You're welcome.

V Vicki Sanchez 54:35
I do have a question. You know, I was looking up like the personal complaints and like how you do that, and according to your website indicated that there's a forum on like a physical form that is available at a police facility. Is there any talk of possibly creating something that's more online so people are more comfortable? Maybe, you know, not able to actually travel there or just to feel more anonymous if that's the case. And as well as looking at that policy and perhaps using the language of including feeling that there's a bias incident.

C Chief Atkinson 55:18
Oh, okay. So to get to the first part, yes, we're looking at a fillable type form where we can do one on like, anonymous tips, we have a, we do have a online report. And you can, you can make that anonymous too. And that can be used as a complaint against an officer. So then, if let's say, you don't want to give your name and information on like a regular statement, you don't need, you don't need to put your name on it. So it can be done that way. What I wonder if by your question, if that's confusing or hard for folks to find in case they wanted to utilize that, so I can, I can look at that. And then as far as like a bias complaint, so let's say your thought that an officer is profiling you or, or treated you poorly, because of gender color, sexual preference, all those things, then that would fall into our regular citizen policy too. And we also have the bias policing as well, which is different from our hate crime. So if we're investigating someone for a crime, if we have a bias incident, like, like, if we witnessed an officer doing something they shouldn't, or if you had a complaint about an officer that he thought was committing an act of bias, we would have you fill out a formal complaint, if you are willing to, if you're not willing to, we would take the information, then conduct an investigation on the officer to see if that in fact, was what took place, and gather as much information as we could. And that if it was sustained, where we found that someone was acting against someone, because of that

will just will not be tolerated. There's no room for that. today's society. She got a few things there. I hope that answered your question, Becky.



Vicki Sanchez 57:19

It's just hard to find a form online, because that's, I think, that's my other that's my go to is like, Where can I find this? Okay. And so, and I didn't, I mean, I just saw all the policies, but and that's why I chose to look was under that policy, which they indicated it was more of you having to go into, you know, the actual facility itself. And in that, knowing if that is the appropriate place to then report if there were if you felt any bias. So



Chief Atkinson 57:52

think would you feel that that? it because I believe I don't have the website pulled up in front of me. So I'm going off memory, I believe that would be under like filing an online report for like, either complementing or complaining against an officer. Would you find it easier if that was the front facing part of a web page? Yeah, I



58:15

would. Cuz,



Vicki Sanchez 58:17

you know, even where it says online reporting, you know, it just classifies as non emergency my reporting or crash or Crime Stoppers. So I wouldn't even you know, that reporting form a US citizen complaint. I guess there's a voluntary statement, I guess. I guess it's like, hitting next to see what other forms are available on?



Chief Atkinson 58:41

Oh, sure.



Vicki Sanchez 58:42

So and I'm, you know, I'm just used to seeing things just kind of like here, here it is laid out versus a PDF. I still don't see it.



Chief Atkinson 58:54

All right. Well, I'm writing notes to while you're while you're saying this, so I can bring it back to the person who sets up our web page.



59:05

Eric,



59:06

um, yes. Forgive me if I'm, if I missed this at some point or another, but I was wondering, do you,



Mary Riordan 59:15

you know, like, every time I go to the doctor at Mayo, a few days later, I get a survey from them



59:22

about my visit. And have you ever thought about or do you do random surveys of people you have contact with just to see how their their experience was, you know, to get any feedback.



Chief Atkinson 59:43

I've not done an official one on Well, I take that back. We have done official community surveys and we have found very few people will do them. We sent out interns to go door to door to do And then we ended up sending them into neighborhoods that tend to have a lot of what I would say a higher volume of police contact. So that way we had a little bit better sample. And those had a little bit better response. But some people didn't care for that. I've called people where I maybe have had concern about what happened to just to see what their take was on it. And I've done that both here. And when I worked at the Hudson police department, which is where I've spent the majority of my career as a lieutenant to try to gauge I don't know if satisfaction is the right right way to put it, but to determine what their experiences if they would be willing to share that. And, and I've gotten some decent results on that. And when I, when I say decent results me where people were actually willing to share what their experiences were both good and bad. So

I'm always I'm always very grateful when I can get that information. So yeah, so there's, there's a desire to have that. And we have the community survey on our regular city page for a very long time. Like any any survey, you have to constantly be pushing an advertising to get that out there. And then it takes time. And and people are I would say the society are much more about instant gratification. And and what we're asking sometimes is, is there a lot of questions to be filled in. So I'm wondering if there isn't a better way to do it? Or I'm open ideas, basically, because it's hard to get a good sample size? Yes, Mary.

M

Mary Riordan 1:01:53

I don't want to interrupt you. This has been an incredibly informative and helpful exchange. When I'm paying attention to time and I'm wondering, somebody has an immediate question, please ask it now. But otherwise, maybe we I am so grateful to you, for all of the time you've spent and how clear this has been? And how open you are to our questions and our suggestions. I really value that

C

Chief Atkinson 1:02:21

why I value given me the opportunity to take some of your time and the suggestions to especially on having the complaints front facing on there. I didn't realize it was that challenging to get it. So I'm, I'll make sure that we make that change. So it's more accessible,

M

Mary Riordan 1:02:39

exactly what I'm talking about. So thank you very much.

C

Chief Atkinson 1:02:43

Yeah, you're very welcome. Any other questions? Did I hope I didn't miss anything or someone who had their hand up? By the way, if you know anybody, I'm sorry, go ahead. And

M

Marion Lang 1:03:00

oh, I wanted to compliment the Facebook page in the way the police department publishes various contacts that the officers have within the community, you know, we don't have a newspaper, we don't have another way of having reported. I know, not everyone is on Facebook. But right now I think our community, that's a real lack of, you

know, information, getting information out. So if some of you don't already read what's posted on Facebook, I'd suggest that you that you are on the on the police department page.

C Chief Atkinson 1:03:38

Yeah, please, please check it out. And thank you for the compliment. I'll pass that along Brenda Jasper, who are crime prevention specialist, she manages that for us. And she's just amazing with the work that she does. And right now we're in a transition phase when it comes to our community crime maps. So we used to have a crime map published where you could go and you can see basically the areas of where different incidents are taking place. The records management system has been great for mining the data that we talked about today. But it has not interfaced well with our crime mapping as far as like how the different software programs talk to each other. So we're going to be exploring a different crime mapping service. So that way, we can get that information back out there to go along with notable calls, because the notable calls is a snippet of the types of calls we do, but the mapping would list all of them and in the locations or at least general locations so that way, we're not violating anybody's privacy rights. All right, it's kind of looking like we're near the end. Mmm hmm.

i 1:05:00

I think so.

C Chief Atkinson 1:05:02

All right, well, well, thank you everybody for giving me your time. I really appreciate it.

M Mary Riordan 1:05:09

You're welcome. And thank you.

M Marion Lang 1:05:10

Thank you so much. You're welcome. Have

C Chief Atkinson 1:05:12

a lovely afternoon, everyone.



1:05:14

You too.



1:05:19

Start Recording