

Johns Hopkins University Police Accountability Board Meeting

Wednesday, July 16, 2025

Accountability Board Members:

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| Aprille Weron | Present |
| Daniel Webster | Present |
| Ed Kangethe | Absent |
| Elizabeth Hazel | Present |
| Isabelle John | Absent |
| Jerrell Bratcher | Present |
| Jonathan Aguiar | Present |
| Laura Rossi | Absent |
| Natasha OrtizFortier | Present |
| Panagis Galiatsatos | Present |
| Sabrina Harris | Present |
| Sam Johnson | Present |
| Sonja Merchant-Jones | Present |
| Sumana Kondle | Present |
| Yuli Wang | Present |

Johns Hopkins Staff Present:

1. Branville Bard, Jr.
2. Calvin L. Smith Jr.
3. James Gillis
4. Amy Taylor
5. Gus Sentementes (Livestream Technician)

Opening

Aprille, JH Accountability Board (JHAB) Chair began the informal meeting at 6:00 p.m. and formal meeting began at 6:09 p.m. with introductions by the Board members and JH staff. The meeting was broadcast live via toll-free call-in and on the [Accountability Board meetings live-stream webpage](#).

Board Business – March Minutes

Aprille moved to approve the May 21, 2025, JHAB meeting minutes. The Board unanimously approved.

Administrative Updates from Dr. Bard

Dr. Bard shared regarding JPD personnel— they have a total of 25 employees. Of those, 22 are sworn officer positions, and 3 are non-sworn or civilian roles.”

He continued, “In addition to himself as Chief of Police, the team includes 3 Deputy Chiefs, 1 Captain, 3 Lieutenants, 2 Sergeants, and 12 Police Officers—9 of whom are currently in the Academy. We also have a Community Engagement Coordinator, an Assistant Director for Background and Recruitment, and a Police Athletic League Director.”

Dr. Bard noted that recruitment efforts are ongoing: “They continue to conduct interviews daily for entry-level, supervisory, and lateral officer positions. We’re at 25 employees now, having started the year with just 8. It’s been a successful onboarding campaign for this calendar year.”

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Question: Aprille: During a recent Baltimore City Police Accountability Board meeting, there had been inquiries about what specifically constituted an encampment. She asked Dr. Bard if he could provide some clarification.

Answer: Dr. Bard: There was no single, uniform definition of an encampment. He noted that an encampment did not necessarily require tents or sleeping bags—it could consist of various forms or even none. He referenced the events of May 8th, when individuals explicitly declared that they were starting an encampment and named the area a “free zone” in honor of a figure they viewed as a leader in the struggle. That declaration, he said, removed any doubt about their intentions. He emphasized that there was no universally accepted definition or specific physical structure required for something to be considered an encampment.

Question: Aprille: The audio from the previous meeting had been unclear, but there had been a concern regarding the absence of body-worn camera footage from Dr. Bard during the May 8th encampment. She asked if that was accurate and if he could explain why.

Answer: Dr. Bard: Dr. Bard confirmed there was no body-worn camera footage of himself from that time. The department policy required all personnel below the rank of Deputy Chief to wear a body-worn camera. Accordingly, both the lieutenant and the sergeant involved in the May 8th incident had their cameras activated, and that footage was made public. Dr. Bard stated that he did wear a body-worn camera during the event but did not activate it. He clarified that, moving forward, he would simply turn it on as a standard practice, which he had done since then.

He elaborated that part of his reasoning stemmed from the principle of “playing the way you practice.” His intention had been to activate the camera only if the situation escalated into serious enforcement action—such as making arrests or documenting formal agreements. Although he was not required by policy to wear or activate the camera due to his rank, he acknowledged that he had it on but chose not to turn it on at that time.

Chair Aprille opened the floor for questions, comments or feedback

Question: Natasha: Natasha Ortiz Fortier, a new member of the Board, expressed curiosity about the department's body-worn camera policy, particularly in the context of transparency. She questioned why the policy was structured to exempt higher-ranking officials, such as Deputy Chiefs and above, from the requirement to wear body-worn cameras. Her concern was that such exemptions could lead to questions or doubts about accountability. She asked how the policy had been structured and whether it was something that could be adjusted.

Answer: Dr. Bard: Dr. Bard shared that the department had previously discussed the possibility of changing the body-worn camera policy moving forward. He noted that many departments across the state had similar policies, typically requiring officers at the rank of lieutenant and below to wear body-worn cameras. The department's policy was shaped by the Community Safety Instruction, which mandated the adoption and use of body-worn cameras in alignment with state regulations. These regulations allowed for common-sense exemptions, particularly for officers who did not regularly interact with the public or who served in administrative roles.

Rather than explicitly stating that lieutenants and below were required to wear cameras, Dr. Bard explained that the department chose to define “police officer” in a way that excluded Deputy Chiefs and above. This decision was made in part because he intended to assign captains to patrol duties and wanted to ensure that their rank would be included in the camera requirement.

He added that, since then, he had issued a special order requiring all personnel—including those in leadership positions—to wear and activate their body-worn cameras. He acknowledged the importance of transparency and appreciated the question raised. Reflecting on the May 8th incident, he admitted that in hindsight, he should have simply turned his camera on and confirmed that he would do so in the future.

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Data Committee Updates – Develop the 2025-26 Work Plan

Elizabeth, committee chair reminded attendees that members from the previous cohort who had signed up for the Data Committee were still expected to participate. She had hoped to use the August 20th Scheduled Committee meeting with the Accountability Board to discuss goals for the upcoming year and begin developing the committee's work plan. With more officers now hired and deployed, she anticipated that the department would be significantly busier this year.

She added that she was unsure of the status regarding sign-ups from the new cohort but believed that committee descriptions had already been shared. She expressed interest in having new Board members join the Data Committee and contribute to its efforts.

Engagement Committee Update

Sonja, the Engagement Committee Chair, addressed the group regarding community engagement. She acknowledged that this was the first meeting of the year and emphasized the importance of everyone being involved in at least one committee, possibly even two. She expressed enthusiasm about working collaboratively with the Board and welcomed suggestions as they moved forward with community-focused efforts.

She mentioned that there had been initial thoughts about attending community meetings but clarified that the structure of those engagements would depend on knowing exactly who was on the Engagement Committee. Once the committee membership was confirmed, they would begin planning and organizing their approach. Sonja concluded by saying she looked forward to those discussions and the work ahead.

Old Business – Baltimore City PAB Meeting Recap

Chair Aprille shared that the **Baltimore City Police Accountability Board** held its meeting at the Enoch Pratt Library, which typically takes place on the first Monday of each month. The meeting included a recap similar to the one presented by Dr. Bard, but with more detailed explanations regarding police accountability as it relates to the Johns Hopkins Police Department.

Aprille described the Accountability Board meeting as very informative, especially for attendees who were previously unaware of certain aspects of police accountability. The meeting was part of the ongoing updates Dr. Bard provides on police accountability efforts in Baltimore City.

Chair Aprille opened the floor for questions, comments or feedback

Question: Natasha: I received an invitation from Baltimore City Police Accountability Board and admitted she was a bit confused by it. She asked whether the event complemented the current program or if it was something specific to Baltimore City. The invite had appeared on her calendar, and she wasn't sure how it aligned with the Board's schedule—especially since she knew they had a meeting that day, not on the Monday the invite referenced.

She requested clarification on how the event differed from the Board's activities and what their role in it might be. Specifically, she wanted to know whether Board members were expected to participate for visibility purposes or if there was a different kind of involvement required.

Answer: Aprille: The Baltimore City Police Accountability Board (PAB) worked in conjunction with various entities involved in police accountability across the city. This included the Administrative Charging Committee (ACC) and the PAB itself. She clarified that while the Johns Hopkins Police Accountability Board was a separate entity, it still operated under the broader framework of the Community Safety and Support Act (C SSA).

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Under the CSSA, the Johns Hopkins Police Department fell within the purview of the Baltimore City Police Accountability Board. As part of that oversight, Dr. Bard was required to provide quarterly updates to the Board. The recent meeting at the Enoch Pratt Library had been one of those scheduled updates.

Aprille emphasized that attendance at the Baltimore City PAB meetings was not mandatory for members of the Johns Hopkins Board. However, in earlier sessions, the Board had discussed the importance of collaboration and maintaining open lines of communication with the city's PAB. She noted that complaints received by the Johns Hopkins Board could eventually be elevated to the city level, making it valuable to stay informed about broader police accountability efforts in Baltimore. She concluded by saying that such engagement helped ensure continuity and provided useful context for the Board's work.

New Business – Elections

Aprille explained that the elections would cover several leadership roles, including Chair, Vice Chair, Committee Chairs and Co-Chairs. She then handed the process over to the Governance Committee to facilitate the election proceedings.

Jerrell thanked Chair Aprille and expressed appreciation before transitioning to the election process. He suggested beginning with the selection of Committee Chairs, noting that this approach would allow all present Board members to participate. He proposed handling the committee roles first and then circling back to elect the Chair and Vice Chair positions afterward.

New Business – Selection of Community Engagement Committee Chairs

Jerrell began with the Community Engagement Committee, acknowledging that Ms. Sonja Merchant-Jones currently served as Chair. He opened the floor for nominations and invited Sonja to speak if she wished, also welcoming interest from others who might want to serve as Co-Chair alongside her.

Sonja expressed her interest in continuing to serve as Chair of the Community Engagement Committee. Sonja emphasized that she was open to whatever was best for the Board but shared her enthusiasm for entering this new phase alongside the newly appointed Board members. In her view, having a Co-Chair in place and actively engaged and ready to step in was essential in case the Chair could no longer serve for any reason.

Sonja concluded by formally requesting that the Board allow her to continue serving as Chair of the Community Engagement Committee and turned the floor back over to Jerrell to begin the voting process.

Jerrell thanked Sonja for her comments and opened the floor to other members. He specifically invited Sabrina to share her thoughts, asking whether she was interested in serving as Co-Chair of the Community Engagement Committee or if she had anything to add.

Board members were reminded to review the updated bylaws for the PAB and the document that outlines committee descriptions and roles. He explained that these documents served as important guides for Board members, providing a framework for their responsibilities, the purpose of each committee, and the overall structure of the Board's work. Members who wished to be considered for the Community Engagement Committee Chair or Co-Chair roles were invited to come forward. Sabrina confirmed with a "yes," indicating her willingness to serve as Co-Chair alongside Sonja.

Jerrell initiated a motion and called for a second, subsequently recognizing the two nominations before the board: Sonja Merchant-Jones for Chair and Sabrina Harris for Co-Chair of the Community Engagement Committee.

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New Business – Selection of Data Committee Chairs

Jerrell turned the discussion over to Elizabeth, acknowledging her current role as chair of the Data Committee and inviting her to speak.

Elizabeth expressed her willingness to continue serving as chair. She noted that the upcoming year presents many promising opportunities for the committee and added that she would be happy to work alongside a co-chair. Elizabeth highlighted the positive energy among the new cohort and incoming board members and welcomed collaboration. She also stated that if someone else felt strongly about taking on the role as sole chair, she would fully support that individual. Ultimately, Elizabeth emphasized her commitment to doing what is best for the board and thanked everyone for the opportunity.

Dr. Panagis volunteered to assist as co-chair. His offer was met with enthusiasm. Dr. Galiatsatos emphasized the importance of teamwork, noting, “We’re all in this together.” A vote was called, and the motion passed with no objections.

With no further discussion or dissent, the Data Committee leadership was confirmed: Elizabeth Hazel for Chair and Dr. Panagis Galiatsatos for Co-Chair of the Data Committee.

New Business – Selection of Governance Committee Chairs

Jerrell, who currently chairs the committee, noted that China Sinclair had previously served as co-chair but her term has since ended. He expressed interest in having a new co-chair and welcomed others to either volunteer or take over the chair role entirely, stating he was open to collaboration and preferred not to lead the committee alone.

Aprille nominated Sumana to serve as co-chair, provided she was willing.

Sumana, after reviewing the committee descriptions, agreed to serve as co-chair if no one else was interested. Jerrell then clarified the role of the Governance Committee, explaining that its primary function is to ensure the board operates in accordance with its bylaws and within the framework of the Community Safety and Strengthening Act (Bill 973). He emphasized the importance of compliance and understanding the committee’s responsibilities, including the recent process of updating the bylaws. Jerrell opened the floor for additional nominations or expressions of interest. A vote was called, and the motion passed with no objections.

With no further discussion or dissent, the Governance Committee was confirmed. Jerrell Bratcher for Chair and Dr. Sumana Kondle for Co-Chair of the Governance Committee

New Business – Selection of Policy Review Committee Chairs

The meeting transitioned to the Policy Review Committee. Jerrell provided an overview of the committee’s purpose, explaining that it is responsible for evaluating both current and proposed departmental policies. These policies guide the operations of the JHPD and include procedural frameworks and training protocols. Committee members may participate in training and offer recommendations for improvements as needed.

Jerrell noted that the committee also reviews policy breaches and provides advisory input on updates and revisions. He acknowledged that Duke Tremiere previously chaired the committee but has since rolled off the board, leaving the chair and co-chair positions vacant. He encouraged members who had not yet committed to a committee to consider stepping into a leadership role within Policy Review.

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Daniel asked whether the committee would primarily review proposed changes or revisit previously discussed policies. Jerrell confirmed that both tasks would fall under the committee's scope. Daniel then volunteered to lead or co-lead the committee, and Jerrell enthusiastically supported the nomination, referring to Daniel as a "policy guru" due to his professional background.

Aprille nominated Natasha to co-chair the committee, but Natasha respectfully declined, citing her interest and expertise in the Training Committee. Jerrell then suggested Jonathan, but Jonathan declined, stating that he could not commit to the responsibilities at this time due to other obligations. Sumana expressed interest in co-chairing the Policy Review Committee in addition to her role in Governance. She shared that policy work aligns closely with her strengths and background and welcomed feedback from the group. Daniel strongly seconded her nomination, and others voiced support as well.

A vote was called, and the motion passed with no objections. Dr. Daniel Webster for Chair and Dr. Sumana Kondle for Co-Chair of the Policy Review Committee

New Business – Selection of Training Committee Chairs

The final committee addressed during the meeting was the Training Committee. Jerrell initiated the discussion by confirming that Laura Rossi currently serves as chair. He explained that the Training Committee was originally combined with the Policy Review Committee during its early stages but was later separated to better align with the Accountability Board's mandate and evolving needs.

Jerrell outlined the committee's responsibilities, which include evaluating current and prospective departmental training programs, analyzing metrics and data, and providing recommendations for improvement. These insights are shared with JHPD leadership to support ongoing development. The committee works in tandem with policy review efforts to ensure training initiatives are effective and aligned with broader goals.

Laura was not present for the meeting. Jerrell noted she might appreciate having a co-chair to support the committee's work. Natasha volunteered to serve as co-chair, formally nominating herself. Jerrell contacted Laura to confirm her continued interest in chairing the committee. Laura responded via text, affirming her willingness to remain in the role. However, Aprille the board's Chair raised a point of order, noting that since Laura was not present, her nomination could not be formally accepted during the meeting.

Aprille moved to proceed with the nomination of Natasha as co-chair and to defer the formal nomination of Laura as chair until the next general board meeting. Elizabeth seconded the motion, and the board voted in favor. Natasha Ortiz Fortier for Co-Chair of the Training Committee.

Sabrina expressed interest in joining the Training Committee as a general member, not in a leadership role. Jerrell confirmed that the committee would include additional members and welcomed her participation. The group agreed to formally revisit Laura chair nomination at the next meeting, acknowledging her intent to continue while respecting procedural requirements.

New Business – Member Selection to Serve on Committee(s)

Jerrell asked members to indicate which committees they would like to serve on. He emphasized the importance of participation, noting that while the work is substantial, the number of volunteers is limited. He encouraged members to commit to at least two committees, ideally three, to ensure adequate support across all areas.

Jerrell explained that although formal elections are held for chair and vice chair positions, general committee membership is based on interest and willingness to serve. He referenced past meetings where members' committee

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preferences were recorded, even if not formally voted on. To organize the process, Jerrell went through the committees in the order listed on the planning sheet: Governance, Engagement, Data, Policy, and Training. He began with Governance, noting that Laura had expressed interest in joining that committee.

Jerrell also clarified the meeting structure: board meetings alternate between full board sessions and committee-focused sessions. Committees typically meet during designated time blocks, but they may also coordinate additional meetings as needed. All meetings are expected to follow compliance guidelines and established procedures.

Governance Committee: Aprille, Sonja, Jerrell

Engagement Committee: Aprille, Jerrell, Daniel, Dr. Sumana, Dr. Panagis

Data Committee: Ed, Jonathan, Elizabeth, Jerrell

Policy Review Committee: Dr. Panagis, Aprille, Natasha, Jerrell

Training Committee: Elizabeth, Ed, Sabrina, Jonathan, Jerrell

New Business – Selection of Accountability Board Chair and Vice Chair

Jerrell acknowledged that Elizabeth currently serves as Vice Chair of the Accountability Board and invited her to speak. Elizabeth announced her decision to step down from the Vice Chair role, clarifying that her departure was not due to any issues but rather a desire to create space for new leadership. She explained that after serving in the position for a year and a half, she felt it was a valuable opportunity for a newer board member to step into the role. Elizabeth emphasized that the Vice Chair position offers meaningful exposure to the inner workings of the Board and public safety operations, including responsibilities such as setting agendas and planning for the year ahead. She also praised Aprille, the current Chair, as a wonderful colleague to work alongside. Elizabeth shared that she would like to redirect her energy toward the Data Committee, where she believes she can make a strong contribution. Elizabeth formally stepped down from her Vice Chair position.

Jerrell opened the floor for nominations or self-nominations for the Vice Chair role.

Jonathan Aguilar nominated Sabrina, expressing his confidence in her leadership and describing her as a warm and capable presence. Sumana Kondle seconded the nomination. Jerrell clarified the responsibilities of the Vice Chair, noting that the role is not overwhelming and does not come with an excessive workload. Instead, the Vice Chair supports the Chair—currently Aprille Weron—in setting agendas, guiding meetings, and stepping in when needed. He emphasized that the board operates collaboratively and that the Vice Chair role is a great opportunity for newer members to gain deeper insight into board functions.

Sabrina accepted the nomination. Jerrell asked if there were any additional nominations or self-nominations, and after a brief pause, took the silence as confirmation that no others wished to be considered.

Natasha formally made the motion to appoint Sabrina as Vice Chair, and Sonja provided the second. The board proceeded with a vote, and all members were in favor of the vote. There were no objections.

With unanimous support and no dissenting votes, Sabrina Harris was officially confirmed as the new Vice Chair of the Accountability Board.

To conclude the leadership nominations, Jerrell acknowledged that Aprille currently serves as Chair of the Accountability Board and invited her to share remarks regarding her interest in continuing in the role. Aprille expressed her appreciation for the opportunity to serve as Chair, noting that she has enjoyed her time in the position and is excited about the energy and engagement shown across the various committees. She stated her willingness to

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continue serving as Chair but also welcomed any other nominations from board members. **Jerrell then opened the floor for nominations or self-nominations.**

With no additional candidates coming forward, Elizabeth made a motion to reappoint Aprille as Chair, and Sonya provided the second. **A vote was held, and all members present were in support confirming Aprille Weron's continuation as Chair.**

Following the vote, Jerrell addressed committee participation. He reminded members that each person is expected to serve on at least two committees and encouraged those who had not yet selected their committees to do so. Yuli Wang asked whether committee membership was mandatory, and Jerrell clarified that while three committees were encouraged, the minimum requirement was two. Yuli agreed to notify Amy of his selections later.

Jerrell also checked in with other members to ensure no one was overlooked. Sam confirmed his presence and stated he would take more time to decide and email Amy with his preferences. With no further questions, Jerrell turned the meeting back over to Aprille, thanked everyone and congratulated the newly appointed leaders and committee members.

New Business – National Night Out

Aprille discussed National Night Out. She noted that the board had previously discussed participating in local events near the three jurisdictions associated with Johns Hopkins and asked for clarification on the specific plans for this year's event.

Dr. Bard confirmed that Johns Hopkins University and Medicine would once again partner with Operation Pulse for National Night Out, which was scheduled for August 5th, from 5:00 PM to 8:00 PM. Another board member shared that National Night Out is a nationwide initiative designed to foster positive engagement between law enforcement and the community, often coordinated with support from the mayor's office.

Natasha added that in previous years, Lakeside had hosted an event near Lake Montebello, which falls within the jurisdiction of Johns Hopkins. Aprille thanked Natasha and acknowledged that any additional information would be helpful. During the discussion about National Night Out, Jerrell shared that earlier that morning, while dropping off materials to colleagues, he noticed some impressive community engagement materials prepared by JHPD. He suggested that it might be beneficial for the Accountability Board to have similar handouts created by Public Safety—ideally including content specific to the board's mission and role in the community.

He acknowledged that the board had previously discussed the need for such materials and reiterated the value of having something ready to distribute at the upcoming events. Aprille thanked Jerrell for the suggestion and confirmed that updated handouts for National Night Out would be sent to board members via email.

During the discussion, Sonja added that several neighborhoods surrounding the Johns Hopkins campus—such as Abell, Better Waverly, Waverly, and Openshaw—typically host National Night Out events. She noted that Better Waverly, in particular, had a longstanding tradition of organizing a large gathering, often attended by Jennifer Milke, a Hopkins staff member who had participated for many years.

Sonja emphasized the significance of this time of year for the community, recalling the tragic loss of Mackenzie Elliott, a three-year-old girl who was murdered in the area in 2014. She explained that the community continues to honor her memory through these events, which serve as a way to bring residents together and highlight the role of law enforcement in fostering safety and trust.

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She stated that it was likely one or more of these neighborhoods would host events again this year and offered to follow up with the chairs of those community associations. Sonja volunteered to report back to the board with details, in case any members wished to represent the Accountability Board at those gatherings.

Aprille responded positively, affirming that it would be excellent to receive updates. She then recapped the discussion, confirming that the board would be receiving updated flyers or handouts from the Public Safety Office to support their participation in National Night Out. Dr. Bard committed to working on Jerrell's proposal to develop outreach materials. While the materials would not be finalized or approved in time for the August 5th National Night Out event, the board agreed to begin building them out and ensure that the Accountability Board would have access to them moving forward.

As the meeting approached its final eight minutes, Chair Aprille suggested postponing the discussion about the Board's annual Social Meeting. The social gathering is intended to be a once-a-year opportunity for board members to connect in a relaxed, social setting. Possible formats could include a dinner, group activity, or other informal event.

Aprille proposed that anyone with suggestions share them with either herself or Amy, so they could begin compiling options. She noted that the topic would be revisited at the next full board meeting, where the board could discuss or vote on the proposed ideas. **Aprille opened the floor to see if anyone had additional thoughts or input regarding the Social Meeting.**

New Business – Meeting with President Daniels

Aprille informed the board that a date had not yet been confirmed for the annual meeting with President Daniels of Johns Hopkins University. She explained that this meeting typically provides an opportunity for board members to engage directly with President Daniels regarding the Johns Hopkins Police Department, including sharing feedback, raising questions, and expressing any concerns.

Aprille encouraged newer board members to begin thinking about topics or questions they might want to raise during the meeting. She invited members to either share their ideas during the session or send them via email to herself or Amy for inclusion in the discussion list. A request had been submitted, but no official date had been set.

Jerrell suggested that it might be helpful for new board members to review materials from last year's meeting to gain context and better understand the types of topics previously discussed. He recalled that the board had compiled a document summarizing the meeting, in addition to a video recording available on the website.

Aprille agreed and assured the board that either a link to the recording or a copy of the document listing last year's questions would be shared with all members to help guide their input for the upcoming meeting.

Aprille also reminded members of the GAP training sessions scheduled for July 21st through July 25th and encouraged participation. Aprille reiterated that the sessions were in-person and thanked everyone for their participation.

As the meeting neared its end, Aprille asked if there were any final issues or matters to address.

Elizabeth raised a new business item for future consideration. She recalled that in past discussions—possibly dating back a few years—the board had expressed interest in organizing ride-alongs with officers once the police department was fully operational. She suggested that this idea be added to the board's work plan for the coming year, particularly as members complete their GAP training and may benefit from observing officer-community interactions firsthand.

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Aprille agreed and confirmed that the proposal would be added to the list of future discussion items.

Before concluding, Aprille addressed the importance of transparency during public board meetings. She requested that all members attending virtually keep their cameras on throughout future meetings, especially while speaking, to maintain a culture of openness and accountability. She emphasized that visual presence helps foster stronger collaboration and connection among board members.

Upcoming Meeting Dates

GAP Training Sessions – July 21st – 25th, 2025

Board Committee Meeting – August 20 | 6:00-7:30 p.m.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was moved and passed unanimously by the Board.

Closing

Aprille closed the meeting at 7:30 p.m.