

**PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY COUNCIL**  
**WORKGROUP TO STUDY GUN VIOLENCE**  
**MINUTES**

**September 18, 2024**

- **Members Present**

Aisha Braveboy, State's Attorney  
Perry Paylor, States Attorney's Office  
Barry L. Stanton, DCAO for Public Safety  
Zachary O'Lare, Deputy Chief  
Dr. Tyreese McAllister, Ayanna J. McAllister Legacy Foundation  
Elana Belon-Butler, Director, Family Services  
Terence Clark, Director, Department of Corrections  
Dr. Matthew Levy, Health Officer  
Krystal Oriadha, Council Member District 7  
Tyrone Collington Sr., Chief, Police Chief's Association

- **Members Absent:**

Steven Upathanbhakul, Assistant Sheriff, Office of the Sheriff  
Lisa Reynolds, Secretary of Juvenile Services  
Melissa Pryce, Public Defender  
Carlesa Peterson, Assistant Director, Social Services  
Juanita Agnew, The Jayz Agnew Foundation

- **Others Present:**

Charlotte Kanner

- **Staff Present**

Sandra Eubanks, HHSPS Committee Director  
Rhonda Riddick, HHSPS Committee Aide  
James T. Walker-Bey, Public Service Aide  
Tiffany Hannon, Chief of Staff to Council Member Oriadha

- **Welcome, Introduction & Opening Remarks**

Co-Chair Oriadha welcomed everyone back from their summer break and reiterated the purpose of the Gun Violence Workgroup. The Workgroup was formed in response to community concerns about the widespread issue of gun violence, both locally in Prince George's County and nationwide. Recognizing that addressing gun violence requires input from various stakeholders, including agencies and non-profits, the workgroup aims to bring together voices from all sectors to develop solutions. These solutions will involve policy and legislative

changes and investment in government and non-profit resources.

The Workgroup will meet over 12 months, after which a report will be submitted to the County Council and Executive to implement the recommendations.

Co-Chair Oriadha also noted that although the meeting is held virtually and open to the public, non-members are limited to listening only.

Co-Chair Paylor thanked everyone for taking the time to participate in this vital workgroup. Gun Violence is a critical issue in Prince George's County, but we've made significant progress through a collaborative effort involving the State's Attorney's Office, community members, and law enforcement partners. About two years ago, we successfully tackled the issue of ghost guns, working together to pass legislation in Annapolis that led to their ban in Maryland. Co-Chair Paylor indicated that he is confident that by continuing to work together, we can further reduce gun violence in our county.

Co-Chair Oriadha acknowledged the presence of State's Attorney Aisha Braveboy, who expressed appreciation for her leadership and thanked her for the opportunity to support Co-Chair Paylor's presentation today.

- **Review Minutes of the meeting held on September 18, 2024.**

The minutes were approved as presented.

- **Presentation:**  
Deputy Chief Zachary O'Lare, Police Department

Deputy Chief O'Lare indicated that previously, he shared some statistics on violent crime, specifically gun violence in the county. There were questions about juvenile involvement and what actions the Police Department has taken to address violent crime.

Chief O'Lare stated that they identified that the best practices nationwide involved centralizing a non-fatal shooting squad. Previously, an investigator at each of our eight division stations managed non-fatal shooting squads responsible for handling other crimes like robbery, burglaries, and first-degree assaults. Within the Major Crimes Division, they have three squads with 16 officers assigned, and their primary focus is to concentrate on those non-fatal shootings, which are critical as they often precede homicides. A non-fatal shooting is one step away from a homicide.

Since the beginning of March, they have managed 300 cases, including contact and non-contact shootings, reckless engagements, accidental discharges, and gunfire violations. The investigators are dedicated to identifying prolific shooters and work closely with the ATF to gather leads based on cartridge casings linked to multiple crime scenes. About 80% of the leads received originated from D.C., highlighting the need to monitor gun use across the National Capital Region. Based on the current numbers, the forecast suggests a decline in the crime rate.

Chief O'Lare summarized data on juvenile arrests related to gun violence and robberies from municipal aspect and county areas under PGPD's jurisdiction. Juvenile arrests for theft this year stand at nine, which is one less than last year's total of ten. In the county areas under PGPD's jurisdiction, we currently have 115 juvenile arrests for robbery, down from 127 last year. While carjackings were previously a driving factor behind the rise in juvenile arrests for theft, we are now seeing a shift. Carjackings have decreased, but there's been a higher concentration of citizen robberies, with more juvenile arrests in this category compared to the previous year. Although citizen robberies are slightly lower this year, the trend has shifted from carjackings to these types.

- **Q&A**

A request was made to clarify the difference between contact versus non-contact shootings, reckless discharge, and vandalism by gunfire. Chief O'Lare provided examples of each.

A question was raised about the high number of vandalisms by gunfire cases and whether they typically involve situations where people discover their car or apartment was shot through without knowing the full context. Chief O'Lare explained that in some cases, individuals may have been shot at but fled without notifying the police. By the time authorities arrive, neither the shooter nor the victim is present, but there is evidence of rounds striking vehicles or buildings. These incidents are then classified as vandalism by gunfire because no specific target or person involved can be identified.

A question was raised about the impact of policy changes, such as those from companies like Ring, on law enforcement's ability to access camera footage. Chief O'Lare responded that these changes have not had much of an impact. Most Ring camera owners have been cooperative in sharing footage with the police.

In response to concerns about increasing numbers of juveniles becoming robbery victims, Chief O'Lare noted that while the school hours – when youth are traveling to and from school – are high-risk times, there are incidents in the evening hours. These robberies often involve phones being taken, and although such crimes rarely occur on school property, they typically happen a few blocks away, where groups of students may be approached.

A question was raised about whether after-school robbery victims typically report being targeted by adults or juveniles. Chief O'Lare explained that most suspect descriptions indicate that the perpetrators are juveniles.

- **Presentation:**

Perry Paylor, Deputy State's Attorney

Deputy Paylor provided a summary of the impacts of gun violence within the department, including the Homicide unit and the Major crimes unit. Deputy Paylor identified the root causes of gun violence: illegal carrying and transporting of firearms. The Specialized unit focuses on individuals illegally possessing guns. Most cases originate from traffic stops, probable cause

searches, arrests, and inventory searches. When illegal weapons are discovered through these procedures, individuals can be charged accordingly.

Deputy Paylor stated that the unit successfully concluded 159 cases from January 1, 2024, to August 31, 2024, with three attorneys specializing in prosecuting illegal possession cases. Deputy Paylor provided data on the outcomes of the 159 cases.

Deputy Paylor explained that a Nol Pros disposition means the state's decision and the assigned prosecutor's decision not to proceed with a case can be due to various reasons, primarily insufficient evidence, including lack of proof of gun possession. Another critical factor is the absence of sufficient probable cause and changes in Fourth Amendment search and seizure laws that were impacted by legalizing records. When the new law came into effect, it explicitly stated that the odor of cannabis alone could no longer serve as probable cause for a search. Officers had to adapt to this change, but despite this, there has only been an 18% reduction in traffic stops. This means they are successfully removing a significant number of illegal guns from the streets.

Deputy Paylor explained using the stet docket, indicating that some individuals not involved in any additional criminal activity may not face full prosecution and are typically placed on the stet docket instead.

- **Q&A**

A question was raised regarding whether the reported numbers are for individuals solely charged with gun possession or if they are also tied to other crimes, such as assault or robbery. The response clarified that the numbers only reflect individuals charged with illegal gun possession and do not include additional charges.

A question was raised about the cases that mostly yield to officers finding a weapon. The response was that the majority of illegal gun seizures occur during traffic stops, which is the primary way officers find weapons.

A question was raised about the average sentencing that you're seeing for convictions for possession. The response was for first-time offenders convicted of illegal gun possession; sentencing typically ranges from probation to six months of supervised probation or incarceration. Subsequent offenders may face longer sentences, leading to up to a year of imprisonment. In some cases, alternatives like house arrest are negotiated. These offenses remain misdemeanors, and the handling of these cases has shifted from district court under the current state's attorney.

A question was raised about repeat offenders, such as someone initially charged with possession and later appearing in court for robbery or other crimes. The response was that they do observe that, and the police maintain a list of violent repeat offenders. We also meet regularly to discuss these individuals.

Is there also a connection between gun possession and gang activity? Deputy Paylor stated that there is a correlation, particularly among younger individuals in their early twenties.

Regarding interventions in the court system for these younger offenders, are automatic measures triggered if someone is sentenced to probation or six months? Intervention and diversion programs may be activated based on specific criteria.

Aisha Braveboy, the State Attorney, emphasized the courts' limitations in adhering to sentencing guidelines for first-time offenders, typically sentenced within these parameters. To address this, they expanded the Back on Track program, initially designed for first-time felony drug offenders, to include individuals charged with gun possession.

Since its expansion, the program has been successful, with 30 participants graduates, all of whom have not returned to the court system. However, it faces challenges due to a lack of case workers and managers, which limits monitoring additional participants' progress. The program is currently funded through forfeiture funds; consistent external funding could enable the inclusion of more participants.

A question was asked about the program's success rate data: the percentage of graduates versus those who did not complete the program. The response was that the dropout rate could be higher, with only one or two individuals not completing the program.

Dr. Levy, the Health Officer, indicated they have a similar initiative for returning citizens through their Behavioral Health Program. This program has a meager recidivism rate of about 1% compared to the county's 22%. There may be an opportunity to connect and collaborate on these programs.

Co-Chair Oriadha stated that it would be beneficial to hold a session where various agencies and non-profit representatives can share what they are doing, as there may be a need for more awareness about existing resources.

Co-Chair Oriadha believes that both the State's Attorney's Office and the Health Department are paving the way in offering chances to intervene before lives are lost to gun violence. It's essential to step in when someone is heading down a dangerous path, not just after the worst has happened. She thinks there is an opportunity for mandatory intervention at this critical stage.

- **Identified Subgroups:**

Co-Chair Oriadha indicated that the subgroups have been identified, and an email detailing subgroup assignments will be sent out. The next step is to schedule recurring meetings for these subgroups.

The plan is to meet twice a month, once as a whole group in a public meeting and once as a smaller subgroup. Each subgroup's goal is to develop recommendations for its specific focus area. If a presentation is needed, notify the coordinators to schedule it for the whole group. Each group will receive a template to ensure uniformity in its recommendations.

- **Identify the Next Steps**

The Workgroup has a 12-month timeline, starting from June 12, 2024, with the final meeting scheduled for June 18, 2025. There are nine meetings left, and the group will work towards voting on recommendations closer to the end. After the final meeting, a report will be due within 30 days, and members will review it for any edits before it's submitted to the County Council and the County Executive.

- **Next Meeting**

The next Gun Violence Workgroup is scheduled for October 16, 2024, at 11:00 AM.

- **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at noon.