



**Community Activation Network: CAN
February 25, 2021 Meeting**

Meeting Notes

Members of the Community Activation Network (CAN) met via Zoom on February 25, 2021.

The agenda for the meeting was as follows:

- Gather and Welcome
- LMPD and Public Safety: A Conversation with Chief Shields
- *CAN-DID* Breakout Discussions and Report Out
- Final Comments
- Closing

Welcome

Ann Coffey, CNPE CEO and CAN host, opened the meeting – extending a welcome to new members of the group as well as previous participants. She then reviewed the purpose of CAN, its seven Guiding Principles, and the agenda for the meeting.

LMPD and Public Safety: A Conversation with Chief Shields

Ann introduced Erika Shields, Louisville Chief of Police, and asked her to share a bit about herself – something that might not appear explicitly on her resume. Chief Shields responded that she loves law enforcement and considers police work a personal calling. She believes police work, fundamentally, is helping people; however, she understands how it is not currently working – particularly within the Black community. This must change, and she is committed to that.

Ann then asked Chief Shields a series of questions based on the discussion and questions arising during the January CAN meeting on the city's response to public safety.

- *Chief Shields' views on transparency – particularly regarding the contract negotiations with the FOP.* Chief Shields feels strongly that LMPD should be as transparent as possible in everything it does. But the current contract under negotiation puts limits on the police chief's power and authority to drive the change that will allow the highest levels of transparency. Regarding the negotiation of the current contract, LMPD has not been at the table in a substantial way.
- *Chief Shields' views on community input – its purpose and how it is best put into action.* Chief Shields considers community input very important. The challenge, however, is that not all communities within the broader community agree on policies and procedures. While LMPD must listen to everyone, in the end it must police *consistently* across the *entire* community – so that everyone feels safe in their own community and not victimized based on where they live or who they are.
- *Chief Shields' views on the LMPD budget as a reflection of priorities.* Chief Shields is passionate about finances and feels strongly accountable to the community's taxpayers. She does not consider LMPD's budget "her budget." Rather, it is the city's budget. So, the question becomes, what does the city need to accomplish and how is this budget a part of that? Over time, as social services were cut in

our communities, police departments became the agency on the front lines of such issues as homelessness and addiction. They now find themselves engaging people exhibiting behavior that draws the attention of the police, but who do not need to be arrested. Police never wanted to be on the front lines of social work. Chief Shields is in favor of supporting and collaborating with programs and organizations (e.g., deflection and violence prevention programs) to manage these issues effectively. However, budget allocations for this work must be done intentionally and judiciously.

Anthony Smith, CAN co-host, then facilitated a Q&A session with Chief Shields. Topics of discussion included:

- *Intimate partner violence, sexual assault, and domestic violence.* Work in this area is a priority. The officers at LMPD are trained to make an assessment and reach out to a service provider depending on the points system.
- *Building a more positive relationship with the homeless community.* LMPD has officers assigned to work on homeless outreach and a downtown improvement team. LMPD does not have an explicit policy that explains job duties in this area, however, and that will be corrected. There has been dialogue between the homeless outreach workers and public works about a cleaning versus clearing of areas. Louisville Metro Office of Resilience and Community Service has to spearhead these initiatives and LMPD needs to stay in its lane.
- *LMPD contract negotiations.* Either the chief or her deputy will be at the table to ensure that contract terms don't impede running of department. As for transparency of the negotiations themselves, the Mayor's office has been looking at other cities' best practices in this area. LMPD wants a contract that allows it to operate in ways that meet community needs. The contract will be taken up by Metro Council, affording the community the opportunity for input via council members at that time – albeit in a limited way.
- *Building trust in the Black community and measuring progress.* There is no easy solution to building trust. LMPD needs to listen to the community. LMPD needs to take the recent audit seriously by ending debate about the existence or severity of the issues and problems it raises and using it as a roadmap for improvement. LMPD needs a system that gathers performance data in real time and permits giving feedback and dealing with performance issues in a timely manner so that behavior can be changed. We need to create a public scorecard for performance. Trust will come once behaviors have been changed. It will take time, however. There is no specific date by which trust will be restored.
- *Collaboration with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).* LMPD will continue to enforce the policy restricting collaboration with ICE. Currently, LMPD is not involved in such collaboration – and cannot afford to put resources in this area. The larger problem is murder and violent crime; LMPD needs everyone working on that. Chief Shields is willing to meet with the immigrant community and discuss their concerns.
- *Reduction in violence.* We need to get illegal guns off the street. The officers by and large care but have concerns about whether they will be supported doing the job. The mindset is reactionary and not proactive right now. Policing done properly is proactive but it has to focus on the individuals who are committing violent crime. Chief Shields is reassuring the officers that they will be supported, but they will also be held accountable. The current focus on illegal drugs has been effective but does not completely address the larger issue regarding violence. Address the violence directly and that will go a long way toward resolving the issues around illegal drugs – among other issues.

CAN-DID Breakout Discussions and Report Out

CAN co-host Ashley Parrott introduced the CAN-DID breakout discussions, asking participants to consider what resonated from the previous presentations and discussions:

- What reflections do you have?
- What questions do you have? What more would you like to know?
- How can nonprofits bring the community along in this work?

Ashley reminded the group that the CAN-DID breakouts have a dual purpose. One is to intentionally make new connections and strengthen relationships; the other to learn and generate ideas with a bias toward action.

Participants broke into small groups, shared what resonated, and reconvened in the large group to share their discussions. Anthony Smith facilitated the report-out; comments and points of discussion included:

- There are concerns that Chief Shields and LMPD are still in a reactive mode. We are not proactively addressing the root causes (white supremacy, racial bias, systemic racism). Until we do, real change cannot happen.
- The nonprofit sector can support LMPD, addressing issues and problems outside the desired purview and focus of the department.
- Patriarchy, misogyny, and institutional sexism are issues within LMPD. How can we support a woman police chief in resolving these issues? How can we assist her by providing accurate information/perspective from our vantage point outside of LMPD?
- Can we envision what a different kind of LMPD might look like? What does compassionate policing look like? Can we make compassion a focus of the new LMPD?
- LMPD's budget seems to be renewed year after year without serious, in-depth review. Wouldn't it be prudent to reallocate resources in a way that reflect the changes we want to see in policing? For example, mental health professionals could be contracted by the police department to provide a better outcome than handcuffs.
- Chief Shields did not provide measurable plans of action or specify changes in their approach reflective of a change in focus. We need to see more clarity there. We didn't hear anything about trainings, etc.
- Metro Council will vote on the contract negotiation in June of this year. The city says the community can have input when it goes to Metro Council, but it can only vote the contract up or down. The contract will limit Chief Shields' ability to do the root cause work that will develop trust with the community. We have an opportunity right now and we won't have it again for another five years. Chief Shields and the community need to be directly involved now.
- There is a lack of trust between LMPD and the immigrant community (exacerbated by a lack of neutral translators), so many within that community will not engage with LMPD. Chief Shield's comments about LMPD's involvement with ICE and meeting with immigrant groups do not jibe with the immigrant community's experience.

Closing

Host Ann Coffey thanked participants for their thoughtful and candid engagement and encouraged participants to invite others to be in this space.

She also reminded participants that CAN will next meet on March 25. The topic will be *The Community's Response to Public Safety* and will feature presentations by and Q&A/discussion with:

- Dr. Eddie Woods, CEO – No More Red Dots
- Deborah Barnes-Byers, Project Manager – Pivot to Peace (Peace Education Program)
- Trinidad Jackson, Project Manager – Youth Violence Prevention Research Center