

MINUTES

MEETING: Police-Community Relations Committee

TIME: Friday, October 2, 1970 - 10:00 a.m.

PLACE: Commission on Community Relations - 150 Michigan Avenue

PRESENT: Committee Members

Rev. T. S. Boone, Council of Baptist Pastors
Melvin Byrd, MCRC
Miss Janet Cooper, MCRC
Mrs. Pat Gray, League of Women Voters
Mrs. Mary Jane Hock, CANN
Rev. R. L. Jordan, Pastor, United Christian Church
Exec. Lieut. Sylvester (Bud) Lingeman, Community Relations
Division, Detroit Police Department
Aaron Lowery, New Detroit, Inc.
David Rambeau, Human Relations, Archdiocese of Detroit

Commissioners

None

Guests

Deputy Chief Insp. Theodore Sienski, Administrative Services
Bureau, Detroit Police Department

Staff

Lonnie Saunders
Burke Fossee

I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Minutes of the August and September, 1970 meetings were unanimously approved.

II. POSTPONED AGENDA ITEMS

The staff report on the assignment of police officers to selected Detroit public schools and the discussion of major outstanding police-community relations issues were postponed until the next meeting.

III. STAFF REPORT ON RACIAL DISRUPTIONS AT HENRY FORD HIGH SCHOOL

Mr. Saunders summarized the reports on the recent disturbances at Henry Ford High School, which staff had delivered to Common Council. (See attached reports) Lt. Lingeman commented that the incident which probably sparked the disturbances - but which in no way could be considered the cause - was a fight between a black student and a white student inside the school on the Thursday prior to the beginning of the disturbances. He said the police concentrated on keeping all students in the vicinity of the school moving, in order to prevent crowd formation and its attendant problems.

Mrs. Hock asked whether there had been any advance preparation for possible trouble at Ford High School this year. She felt that the large influx of mostly black students from Beaubien Junior High School into Ford High School, which she believed to have a history of minor racial disturbances in previous years, should have influenced school and police officials to plan adequately to prevent trouble. Lt. Lingeman responded that he knew of no such advance planning. The committee felt that the Ford High School disturbances should once again impress on everyone the necessity for formulating adequate contingency plans that will be effective in most kinds of disturbances which Detroit public schools have experienced.

Chief Sienski, in his report to the committee (described in a section that follows) said that an important step in developing a broad contingency plan would be establishing some sort of coordination among the various community relations and other community groups. Lt. Lingeman will soon contact appropriate community groups to form an emergency task force to be called upon immediately in cases of significant community eruptions. Each group would have an idea of its own area of responsibility and have a definite spot in a network of communications. It was also suggested that the groups should meet after any such disturbance to review their effectiveness in relating to it - and the applicability of procedures used - for other trouble events that might occur.

The committee noted that the problem of dealing with school disturbances is two-fold: 1) to assure safety and security of all students in and around school, during the time of such disturbances, and 2) to seek out and change the conditions which lead to such problems. Mr. Lowery said that in order to maintain security and restore peace in the school situation, it was necessary to: 1) control agitators, both from inside and outside, 2) to provide sufficient avenues of escape for students who do not wish to remain with the crowd and mill around the school area, and 3) to have sufficient transportation available for students who do not live within convenient walking distance of the school.

Mr. Byrd noted that by the time the police are called into any situation it usually has reached a crisis point and they have no alternative but to attempt to quell it. He felt that there was a need for parents to come into the school to calm student tension and to provide a kind of buffer between the students and the police. Mrs. Hock said the PTAs should be valuable in helping to fulfill this function, but most of them are not because they are status quo oriented.

In order to deal more effectively with the underlying causes of racial disturbances in the schools, the committee agreed that it is important for interested persons to be encouraged to gather in non-crisis times to search for solutions, in addition to those involving crisis. It was also felt that community relations groups and the clergy ought to play a role in extensive education of the community on racial matters to insure lasting racial harmony.