



# Vermont Criminal Justice Council

## Council Meeting Minutes

July 14, 2021

10:00 AM

Teams Meeting and 317 Academy Drive Classroom 2

### **Members in Attendance:**

William Sorrell, Chair – Governor Appointed  
Major Justin Stedman - Proxy for Commissioner Louis Porter, VT Fish & Wildlife  
Erin Hodges – Vermont Troopers Association  
Tammy Boudah – Governor Appointed  
Anthony Facos – Proxy for Wanda Minoli, Dept of Motor Vehicles  
Chief Christopher Brickell – Vermont Chiefs' Association  
Christopher Louras – Governor Appointed  
Xusana Davis – E.D. Racial Equity  
Brian Searles – Governor Appointed  
Karim Chapman – Governor Appointed  
Shawn Pratt – Governor Appointed  
Michael Schirling – Commissioner of Public Safety  
Michael Major – VT Police Association  
Karen Tronsgard-Scott – ED VT Network DOMV Sexual Violence  
James Baker – Interim Commissioner Corrections  
Tammy Boyde – Governor Appointed  
John Federico – VT State Employees Association  
David Scherr – Proxy for TJ Donovan, Attorney General's Office  
Maria Tungatarova – Governor Appointed  
Evan Meenan – Proxy for John Campbell, States Attorney & Sheriff's

### **Other Attendees:**

Heather Simons – Executive Director Vermont Police Academy  
Lindsay Thivierge – Vermont Police Academy  
Cindy Taylor-Patch – Vermont Police Academy  
Gail Williams – Vermont Police Academy  
Christopher Conway – Vermont Police Academy  
Steve Coote – Vermont State Police  
Jennifer Firpo – Vermont Police Academy  
Sadie Donovan – Center for Crime Victim Services  
Daniel Trudeau – Vermont State Police  
Marcia Daoudi - Guest  
Teresa Randall – Vermont State Police  
Julie Scribner – Vermont State Police



## Vermont Criminal Justice Council Council Meeting Minutes

Jacob Humbert – Assistant Attorney General  
Ann Schroeder - Guest  
Matthew Birmingham – Vermont State Police  
David - Guest  
James Whitcomb – Vermont State Police

### **Call to Order:** VCJC Chair Bill Sorrell 10:01

Chair Sorrell reminded Council Members the next meeting will be in person and will include lunch. Chair Sorrell acknowledged Director Simons on her interview with VPR.

Approval of prior minutes: There was a correction to the date of the prior meeting minutes. The minutes had the date of April 12, but they were from the June 30th meeting. Chief Brickell made a motion to accept the minutes from the June 30th meeting. Second by Brian Searles. All in favor. Motion passed.

### Strategies for Law Enforcement:

Written Entrance Exam: Commissioner Schirling gave a brief overview of the discussion from the last meeting on the need for interactive exploration on modernizing the entrance test, discussion solutions for recruitment and retention, and the call to modernize practices. Chair Sorrell suggested looking at short-term changes that can be done quickly and pilot projects that can be implemented and evaluated.

Discussion continued around the proposal of letting agencies give the entrance test at their locations on demand. Cindy Taylor-Patch explained the current testing process and what the Academy has been looking towards from a couple of different vendors. The Academy is awaiting quotes. Chief Brickell asked if the Entrance Testing Working Group members could get a copy of the test.

Discussion continued regarding entrance testing options.

- \*Test opened to anyone.
- \*Waive the test if the education requirement is fulfilled.
- \*Eliminate the written entrance test.
- \*Provide an online tutorial an applicant can study with.

Some members felt anyone with a high school diploma or more should not have to take the test, other members felt an applicant should have at least a college degree not to have to take it.

Suggestions were made that the test needs to be evaluated and changed to a civil service type test, or something that rates an applicant's rate of empathy and emotional intelligence.



## Vermont Criminal Justice Council Council Meeting Minutes

Chair Sorrell asked for five (5) sample questions from each subject on the test to be sent to Council Members before the next meeting. This will be an action item at one of the next two meetings.

### Physical Fitness Test:

Commissioner Schirling suggests that the current test is outdated, and the Council should address what the 21st century standards should be. We should be focusing on overall health to include physical and mental, the possibility of leaving the standards up to each hiring agency. Cindy Taylor-Patch explained the current PT test was required to help ensure recruits are fit enough to participate safely in training and to help reduce the likelihood of being hurt during training. The test was originally designed by Cooper who has eliminated their involvement in law enforcement fitness programs. The Academy has reached out to other agencies about their fitness standards and is working with the Texas Department of Public Safety on using rowing machines in place of the bench press, sit-ups, and pushups. Once in the basic class, there is a strong emphasis on overall fitness and wellbeing. It was suggested if we change the current test, it should be something that an applicant will be able to practice like they can with the current requirements.

Chair Sorrell and Director Simons will be looking at which committee the physical fitness testing will go to, and discussion will continue at the next meeting.

Chair Sorrell asked for information at one of the next two meetings on how the larger agencies in the state are reacting to the changes being proposed in the 16-week basic program. He also asked Director Simons to contact Trevor Whipple at the Leagues of Cities and Towns regarding workers comp claims and how changing the physical fitness test might affect claims.

**Statewide Use of Force Policy:** The Council and staff will be approving training content delivered so members will be kept updated in the Use of Force curriculum.

Members will likely see more agenda items that will directly report where we are with best practices and training in specific content. Use of Force is at the top of the list, but other agenda items will be seen like Fair and Impartial Policing, De-escalation, etc.

As the Academy opens more members are invited to come and be part of training activities. Interacting with training will allow Council members to make decisions and understand the context of what staff struggles with, where we are under-resourced, or what we cope with in terms of the current climate or need.

**Motion to adjourn:** Brian Searles moved, second by Chief Brickell.



# Vermont Criminal Justice Council

## Council Meeting Minutes

**Meeting adjourned: 11:49**