



Community Round Table

June 24, 2020
Real Time Record



Community Round Table Action Items

1. [Make camera usage/training policy available to civilians.](#)
2. [Contact the Sarasota police citizens' review board.](#)
3. [Build a timeline for accountability.](#)
4. [Include No Knock warrants and other issues in policies.](#)
5. [Establish deterrents.](#)
6. [Increase cultural and diversity training to yearly.](#)
7. [Round table community discussion focused on education.](#)

The above action items are linked to place in the document where the discussion took place.

Table of Contents

Welcome	4
Body Cameras	4
Policies.....	6
Wrap-Up and Next Steps	21
Artwork	22
Attendees	24

Welcome

**Ashley Maher, Executive Director, Charlotte Community Foundation:**

Good morning and thank you for allowing us to be a part of today. Today is follow up to the Cooper Street meeting to address certain requests and questions and have an open dialogue.

While we all serve in our respective roles, we share other roles, such as mother, father, daughter, and uncle; we are all humans and we share that. We may not agree on everything today, but we may agree to disagree, as long as it is constructive and respectful.

We have all taken time out of our day to come together collectively, and that means that we're taking the steps to have conversations and continue to be advocates in our community for topics that are sensitive. If these topics weren't hard, we'd be having more of these conversations and it wouldn't have taken tragic events to lead us here. So, hopefully when we leave today we'll have a better consensus and understanding of not only the inner workings of our local law enforcement agencies, but also the inner workings of these activist groups that are coming together, because we applaud what you guys are doing. I am in philanthropy and that's been my whole career so far. It takes a very special person to go out and advocate for other people; we all have adversities and barriers and you put yours aside to be there for our community. We thank you for being here. Please do not talk over people and let people finish their turn; we want today to be productive and solution driven.

We have hired Marketing Alliance to record today, and they will distribute the video today or tomorrow. Collaborative Labs is here from St. Petersburg College; Karin will be recording the meeting minutes and Jonathan will illustrate key aspects of the meeting. These items will also be circulated following today.

I would like to go around the room and have you introduce yourselves. *Participants made introductions. See the end of this document for the attendees.*

Going back to the Cooper Street meeting, we will follow up on some questions that came up there. We will start with asking about body cameras.

Body Cameras

**Chief Pamela Davis, Punta Gorda Police Department:** We have been working on body cameras for a little over a year. There are a lot of steps and bureaucracy to go through. They have just come in last week. We will have training by the vendor the second week of July, then we will train our people, and roll them out in early August.

Ashley: Are there any questions for Chief Davis on the body cameras from any of the groups?



Desmond Bowman, Unapologetically Black: We made one request that law enforcement would not enter the room with guns, and I see that that was not taken seriously.

Ashley: That was a difficult ask and not everything that was requested was able to be accommodated.



Sheriff Bill Prummell, Charlotte County Sheriff's Office: There was not a big push about cameras until the meeting at Cooper Street. Since that time, we have had three vendors come in do presentations with another one on Friday. We have a committee already put together, looking at the different camera options. They're also working on policy and potential upcoming training. This takes time; it has taken over a year for Chief Davis. We are hoping it is not going to take that long. You have to have the right equipment, it has to be compatible, there is an install processes, and you have to train your staff. We are taking it seriously and taking steps to find funding to make that happen.

Speaker: Will that training be available for civilians?

Sheriff Prummell: The training is for the staff on how to use the equipment but we can probably make some arrangements so you can come in and see what we are training our staff.

Chief Davis: From my experience up at the Baltimore Police Department when I was doing reforms at their training academy, our Citizens Academy did a whole class on body-worn cameras and showed the citizens how they work. They let them walk around and use them, so it's an easy thing once we get it up and running, we'd be glad to host a training.

Action Item 1: Make camera usage/training policy available to civilians.

Speaker: Is the teaching and training on the body cameras universal to a standard or does it vary?

Chief Davis: The vendor will come in and give us the overall training and then we will train to our policy as well. We have brought in a lot of our policy from Baltimore with the DOJ approval, and with this federal grant, the Bureau of Justice Assistance had workgroups that went through the whole policy. So, there are a lot of standards that are similar.

Speaker: If an officer removes the camera or turns it off during an arrest, what are the steps on how that would be handled?

Sheriff Prummell: That would be put into policy about how the cameras have to be worn and when they are to be on or off. If an incident is going on, it would be prohibitive for them to remove or turn off the camera. If they do, they are in violation of policy and they would be investigated and then disciplined to the extent of the violation.



Carson McNamara, March for Justice Charlotte: (*To Chief Davis*) What policies are you considering on the regulation of body cameras?

Chief Davis: They will have to turn on the camera with any interaction with the community. If it is not a crime and just a conversation, they can ask to have the camera turned off, but it must be asked on camera. It would be on anytime they are going to a call for service. If they are on foot patrol, it would not be on, but will be turned on if something is starting to occur or they are asked for help.

Sheriff Prummell: It is not viable to have them run continuously.

Speaker: Would School Resource Officers have them too?

Sheriff Prummell: Yes, they all will have them and jail officers as well.

Speaker: There are kids in some schools that cannot be filmed. How does that work?

Chief Davis: The body camera use is based on a crime. If it is a crime and we have to do an interview, they can use it. You are talking about records laws; they can be filmed but it would not be released.

Rev. Louis Anderson, NAACP: Once you get the policies implemented, can there be a community demonstration at Cooper Street to incorporate the community to what is going on? That is a key for transparency.

Sheriff Prummell: Absolutely, sir.

Policies

Ashley: If you have specific questions from Cooper Street let's start there. I want to try to get a better understanding of what occurred at Cooper Street, what results-driven action is being taken, and what solutions have been developed. Are there any specific questions to policies that you want to hear about right now from Chief Davis or Sheriff Prummell?

Speaker: Do you use StingRay technology (*cell phone tracking devices*)?

Chief Davis and Sheriff Prummell both answered no.

Speaker: When wrongdoings occur and people feel like something happened that shouldn't have, as far as reporting it, there are people that have had difficulties. Can there be a resource sheet available with steps as to what they can do?

Chief Davis: Yes, we are in the process of doing that now. We are also looking at other ways, like having a community advocate that could help that person out as a third party. We haven't finalized any of that yet but it's the kind of thing that we've been kicking around.

Sheriff Prummell: We have put that out on social media platforms as to how to file a complaint against a member of the Sheriff's office. You can also phone the Sheriff's office anytime and ask for the Internal Affairs unit. You can file a complaint, or you can call anyone in the district offices and ask for the district command. There are various avenues that you can go through the Sheriff's office to file a complaint.

Speaker: What are the steps IA (Internal Affairs) takes in investigating their friends? I mean, officers in it are generally friends when they work together. How can the public follow up on the investigation that IA takes?

Sheriff Prummell: The Internal Affairs investigation is dictated through state statutes for the Police Officers' Bill of Rights. There is a strict protocol that must be followed. The law also states that a complaint must be investigated by the agency, and only this year they changed it whereas if you have an agency of less than 30 members, you can request assistance from an outside agency. If they do not follow those steps, the investigator will be held liable for not following the law. It is confidential until it's complete. Once it is completed, it becomes a public record. In our case, we notify the complainant as to what the findings were, and they have an opportunity to come in and review the report.

Speaker: What if they do not agree with the findings?

Sheriff Prummell: We will go back and see what they disagree with. If there is something that was missed, they will go back and reinvestigate. If the question has been answered and it is just a kind of a disagreement, we have to go with the findings of the investigation. I have been very transparent with my investigations through my years as Sheriff. I have fired and disciplined dozens of Deputies that did not live up to our core values. I can understand the concern about officers investigating officers. But I do hold my people to a higher standard. And I will continue to hold them to a higher standard.

Speaker: What is the next action of recourse if they do not agree with the findings after that?

Sheriff Prummell: Unfortunately for the law, there is no other. If an officer is found to have violated certain policies or laws, it does go up to the state and the Florida Criminal Justice Standards and Training commission can issue sanctions against their ticket. They can also suspend or withdraw other certification. But, if the findings of the investigation are not sustained or proved either way, it means that the complaint was unfounded, that it wasn't a violation of policy or of law. A sustained case means that the violation did occur.



Alissa Perry, March for Justice: When it is an internal investigation, that is where people have an issue with trust. If it is unfounded or the investigation took place within the office, that could be some of the question. And so, when we talk about issues of systematic disproportionality and things going on in a system built to protect the officer, such as the officers' Bill of Rights, the citizen has no form of recourse within that policy. And if your office has more than 30 members, it's like you're fighting a giant that you can't do anything about.

Sheriff Prummell: I understand your frustration, but we have to follow the Police Officers' Bill of Rights and, unfortunately, a lot of that state statute was union driven. We are forced to follow that law.



Javon Spikes, Unapologetically Black: We need to end qualified immunity now. There is a bill out now to end qualified immunity that protects cops from lawsuits and holds them to a different standard.

Sheriff Prummell: Qualified immunity protects officers from clearly established violation of law. The law does not protect an officer from being sued or being held criminally liable for a violation of an intentional tort or violation of the Constitution. This just outlines that; it was not a clearly established law. So, it doesn't fully protect an officer or deputy.

Speaker: When you have a situation with a police officer with another one on the scene, and they feel like one is being too aggressive, is there a new mandate you may have?

Sheriff Prummell: I always felt that was common sense, but we have now outlined that in our policy and made it very clear that they have a duty to intervene when they see somebody doing something they shouldn't be doing.

Chief Davis: We also have it in our policy and one of the things that we have been talking about is to make sure our culture also allows for that. We are creating scenario training to intervene.

Speaker: I want to go back to when an officer is being judged by Internal Affairs; who is doing the judging?

Sheriff Prummell: In Internal Affairs, it is left up to the administration in the law enforcement organization. For example, in our organization, Internal Affairs are the fact finders and they write up the report. Once it's drafted, it goes through various commanders for review. They can make their findings and agree or disagree, or they can send it back to the Internal Affairs investigation to ask for clarification on something. Ultimately, it comes to me for the final decision.

Chief Davis: In our department, we are very small, but we only have our lieutenants and above trained in Internal Affairs, so it is the supervisors doing the investigations. It is not

officers investigating officers. But that is because we are small. Typically, officers stay away from Internal Affairs officers; there is not a friendly banter back and forth.



Sarah Norris, Unapologetically Black: I have seen officers in trouble in the past in Charlotte County for international drug trafficking and they were not fired or arrested for it until later, for another offense concerning indecent exposure. How do we know that if that has happened before, it won't happen again?

Sheriff Prummell: That was a criminal investigation, and we asked FDLE to come in and investigate that. We did our Internal Affairs investigation and he ended up getting fired. I have to go off of what can be proved and the evidence. It is either found or not found. That's the same thing with any criminal or civil complaint that's filed in court, you have to have evidence to be able to prove it. That is just the reality of the law.

Javon: Citizens can get arrested on hearsay under less evidence than officers.

Sheriff Prummell: For an officer to effect an arrest there has to be probable cause.

Desmond: But probable cause is subjective. I have no agent in a fight between me and you. Who is on my side to argue against me? If I am on probation and you pull me over and say you smell something in the car, that is a VOP that I can go to jail for.

Sheriff Prummell: I do not see where the mere smell of something in the car is going to violate you. You have to find something or have a dirty test.

Desmond: You are telling me there have been no VOPs or people getting pulled out of their car, strip searched, cavity searched, humiliated, put on the ground in cuffs over smells in vehicles?

Sheriff Prummell: Do a cavity search over scents? They may ask somebody to exit a car and do a search based on a scent.

Speaker: I thought you just said the scent is not probable cause. How can they ask me to get out of the car?

Sheriff Prummell: A scent is a probable cause for a search but not an arrest.

Sarah: Homeland Security tracked the drugs here to the cops. That is a lot of evidence compared to "he smells like weed, let's search the car." Feds tracking the drugs to the cops should have been substantial enough to weed out the bad cops and keep from ruining the good cops during the investigation. It took the officer showing his privates to lose his job, meanwhile this man over here can lose his life, his career, his freedom because of something with no evidence no real probable cause, because it's not in the officer's best interest.

Ashley: I want to make sure there is a chance for everyone to ask questions. Clearly, there is mistrust. We are looking at what we are trying to get and what are we trying to achieve. Examples from beforehand aren't going to change what happens tomorrow unless we start to become solution driven on what those policies and different things look like. I am looking for what we are working towards right now.

Andrea Jenkins-Morris, Unapologetically Black: You mentioned something at the first meeting about the field training officers showing the other officers it is okay and culture. Have you gotten progress in that department?

Chief Davis: I was saying that is key to pick the right field training officers and that it is one of the biggest culture-changing measures you can take. I feel that we have the right ones in place. That is a very important part of our agency.

Sheriff Prummell: She's absolutely right; you need to hand pick your officers. That is key. We have a patrol training program where the recruit does a neighborhood portfolio and presents to the command staff what they have learned about their community. They are tasked with patrolling the zone area, identifying what the problems are with regards to crime and quality of life. We have them come up with solutions on how we can improve that community. We try and get them from the get go into that community policing and problem solving. It is key to have a good training officer.



Stephanie Proux, Unapologetically Black: I want to go back to what we discussed earlier. If it goes into Internal Affairs and it comes out clear or you can't get a direct answer and the community feels the investigation wasn't correct, is there a place we can go with FDLE or DOJ where we can put in an appeal to get another investigation from the outside? If it is stopped there, then we will never get the trust.

Chief Davis: You can try to go to FDLE and tell them you feel it was not done properly and they can look into it. I think the body cameras will help us going forward, so it will not be so much he said/she said.

Stephanie: Would Charlotte County be open to putting in appeal paperwork so someone else can look into it? Are there multiple people within the Internal affairs that could?

Sheriff Prummell: If you are dealing with a criminal accusation, you could go to FDLE and see if they will open up a criminal investigation. If you are talking about a policy violation, the Police Officers' Bill of Rights dictates how we are to investigate it, and the agency that employs that person is the one who investigates it.

Carson: I have been noticing discrepancies between the police agencies. When you talk about policies, you also talk about the cultural change that needs to be done, which I appreciate. Sheriff Prummell, what emphasis are you putting on cultural change in the policies you put in place to match what you are telling us? In the *Charlotte County Sheriff's Office Report*, it says

accountability is one of your weaknesses. It seems like there is a discrepancy between the information available to the public and what you are saying.

Sheriff Prummell: We do hold our Deputies to a higher standard. It is a positive culture, we do training that is over and above, I share our core values with our new hires.

Carson: I think it is more about creating a positive environment for the community than within your staff. How did accountability become one of your weaknesses in the report? (*Looks to the report for specifics.*)

Desmond: How long have you both been in your positions?

Sheriff Prummell: Eight years.

Chief Davis: Two and a half years.

Desmond: (*To Chief Davis*) You came from Baltimore and dealt with Freddie Gray, so you've seen what can happen. The difference is, that you have seen what this can turn into. Sheriff Prummell, you seem to think that Charlotte County is above the fray. If you think that this cannot turn into something else, and you are very wrong. You are saying words that do not mean anything; you are not even talking to us. You are not speaking with conviction. I have grown up here, you do not know my interactions with the county Sheriff's office here. You told us people have cell phone guns. I cannot even afford insulin, but can buy a cell phone gun? I don't understand how you can feel you can keep being Sheriff. This is all I have to say to you right now.

Sheriff Prummell: I don't believe that couldn't happen here; I want to prevent that. I am not sure what you want me to say.

Desmond: There is nothing you can say.

Ashley: Do you both have open door meeting times to speak with people in the community?

Desmond: I am not going to have a discussion without witnesses or cameras. Anyone carrying a gun does not make it conducive for dialogue. Last time, you said I made you feel nervous. You try to handle situations, but there is no handling this; this is years' worth of mistrust.

Melody: With the internal review, is there room to make changes within that? I will be moving so I can run for office here in Charlotte County. I live in North Port and shop in Charlotte County. In Sarasota County, we have a citizens' review board for our police department. It is implemented within our Internal Affairs department and when they get complaints, the citizens' review board reports directly to the commission. They are looking for a Chair, which they extended out because each term is limited. Is that something that can be implanted here? Community members can have more say along with eyes and ears to give you feedback. That is something that has made a difference in Sarasota. We can look at complaints and make suggestions.

Ashley: Could you get the roles and responsibilities of that from Sarasota County, if I email you?

Melody: Yes. The review board makes recommendations on how to improve policy and handle complaints.

Ashley: (*To Chief Davis*) Did you have that in Baltimore?

Chief Davis: We did not have that in Baltimore. I called them to ask about that and they referred me to a book by Samuel Walker, a civil rights activist, and they found that sometimes they lose structure without a Chair position. They recommended a third party, an inspector general or a name from the ACLU, to look at an investigation to ensure it was handled fairly. I am looking at that now.

Melody: The Sarasota one is very active and stable.

Chief Davis: It would be good to talk to them.

Action Item 2: Contact the Sarasota police citizens' review board.

Melody: It would give the community a chance to give input, to see what is going on, and to give you a direct line to the community versus someone from the ACLU or an inspector general. The community would like more say on what and how complaints are being handled. The pendulum has swung to the police having more rights than us. I believe in police rights. To stop that perception, there needs to be a format that handles citizens. People have been arrested based on probable cause and officer discernment. Like she said earlier, why was the probable cause heavier for the officer, when for a normal citizen, it would have resulted in an arrest. It causes mistrust. Sometimes you cannot see what someone else is saying because they do not have a seat at the table. It is important for the community to have a voice.

Ashley: So, a next step would be to look at other departments and counties, in and out of the state, and build a timeline for accountability. I am happy to assist you with that with what we do at the Community Foundation. We can talk, but until we have a plan to move forward, we cannot expect anything to change.

Action Item 3: Build a timeline for accountability.

Speaker: I am with the Sheriff's office and I would like to add that we have pulled policies from different law enforcement agencies for citizens' review boards and we are looking at how they are run from in and out of the state.

Javon: We brought that up at our last meeting at Cooper Street, and I will say that there are loopholes in everything. You can have people that are not actual people, such as a politician or officer, or they would not allow people with previous charges.

Melody: I am following you, but this would be normal, everyday people and you have qualifications from both sides. It would be actual citizens, people within the community, not just people in stature, not just people in this or that organization.

Ashley: You have to have policies going into how you are doing it. You have to go into it without unconscious bias. We cannot go into it with a completely pessimistic outlook and expect things to just change. There is a lot to be upset about; these are sensitive things, but within your community you have to have some level of trust.

Gerald Anderson, NAACP: We are talking about relationships. I am safe with that man there. We need to hear what they are willing to offer from their side of the table to educate the community.

Desmond: It doesn't matter. They were not forced into their jobs. Now, uphold the law. The problem is, you are discerning between officers that commit crimes and citizens who commit crimes. This is all about who is holding you accountable. It's not about relationships. It is about what do you do when no one's looking?

Gerald: What programs do you offer to allow citizens to come in and learn about how you operate?

Sheriff Prummell: We have a citizen Police Academy where they learn about different aspects of the Sheriff's office. We have a Junior Law Academy where we bring youth in to learn about public safety and the justice system. We have a volunteer program where citizens volunteer in different areas of the office and learn what is going on. They share that with their family and community members what the Sheriff's Office is doing to keep our community safe, because that is our number one goal. I always try to do the right thing, even when no one's looking.

Chief Davis: We have Citizens Advisory Council that has representatives from all over the city and a Business Advisory Council and we discuss what is going on in the community. We give tours of the agency and talk about policy, procedures, training, etc. We do a youth outreach basketball league for free and the officers coach the kids. We were going to put together our first youth police academy this summer, but that had to be canceled due to Covid-19. At any given time, someone can come in and take a tour. We offered to anyone that wants to come in to see our programs, do our training simulator, or go on a ride along.

Carson: The report I referenced earlier was the *Charlotte County Sheriff's Office Multi-Year Strategic Plan for 2019 to 2023*, and it lists a weakness as "inconsistency in personnel evaluations and accountability."

Sheriff Prummell: We have been working on that and we recently started a Supervisor's Academy with our supervisors. We identified that we did not have a solid training program, so there were inconsistencies among evaluations agency wide. The academy trains the supervisors how to evaluate their staff.

Melody: I did not see an agenda and I was not at Cooper Street meeting, so I do not know what came up there. But I want to know if there are any suggestions or solutions. I want to say to the young man sitting here (*Desmond*), I understand you. I have two sons, one who dealt with the police often. Forty years ago, I was the first black female police officer. The gun is part of the uniform. One time, I went to a meeting one that became hostile; I did not have my service weapon and wished I had. I know these are different times, but we do have to see both sides of it.

As far as Cooper Street, trust has always been an issue for the community. But within the city, we had officers that walked the beat and interacted with the community and formed trust with them. Jim Walters is one that the community respects because of his position as an officer. People felt comfortable and trusted going to him. I do not know if we have that today. We have got to come together and come to a solution.

Desmond: I had a couple more questions for the heads of the offices. What are your policies regarding crowd control suppression? Do you use tear gas, which is against the Geneva code? Do you conduct No Knock warrants? What are your thoughts on felon voting rights?

Chief Davis: We do not have a crowd control unit but for the protests, we partner with the Sheriff's Department. Our feelings about handling issues like a protest is to come out in "soft" uniforms, not riot gear. It is about de-escalation.

Sheriff Prummell: We always look for de-escalation. We have an emergency SWAT team and they train for worst-case scenarios and would only use tear gas and pepper spray in extreme violence. We have never had to use tear gas on crowds. In certain search warrants and hostage/stand-off situations we have had to use gas.

Chief Davis: Generally, we do not have No Knock warrants. If we do, it is part of a SWAT team. Most judges do not sign them anymore.



Rev. Carl Brooks, NAACP: I am all about the implementation of policies, and because we were discussing No Knock warrants and other issues, I feel it is important, in the short term, to include that in your policies. We need a commitment in your policies, which is going to be the key to your success. I saw that changes are being made in the Police department, but I haven't seen anything from the Sheriff's department yet. If we can look at the policies closely and implement the No Knock warrant, then the citizens review board can look at it. I realize that everyone is in pain. We need change. Because there is a distrust, it is going to take a while to build trust up. Everyone has valid points and concerns. The racism and prejudice issues have to be addressed.

Action Item 4: Include No Knock warrants and other issues in policies.

Chief Davis: We asked for this roundtable because we are eager to have this happen. Ashley said she could make this happen. I want you to come to my department with any problem and feel comfortable.

Andrea: Chief Davis has started to implement a few things since our last meeting. Sheriff Prummell, what steps have you taken and what are you working on?

Sheriff Prummell: We are working on getting the body cameras; that is our priority right now. Our policies are sound, and we are tweaking them here and there. It is now in our policy to intervene when they see somebody doing something they shouldn't be; it was not in there before.

Javon: The community needs you to put your character on paper. It is hard to build trust if you say you pull guns on the black community because they have cell phone guns. You say you are telling the officers this and that, but put that on paper. Make them accountable on paper and have actual deterrents. When you have deterrents, the only ones that should worry are the bad officers. You said the policy in place is a recommendation of five days off with no pay. That is not a real deterrent; a charge or monetary impact is a deterrent.

Action Item 5: Establish deterrents.

Stephanie: Back to the trust issue when guns were brought up earlier: I don't understand how you feel threatened to be here when we do not have guns, yet you carry something on your hip to kill people. Where is the trust?

Chief Davis: I am wearing my gun because that is part of my uniform. I must be prepared if something comes up across the street. It has nothing to do with coming in here and being worried about you guys. Everywhere I go, even city council meetings, I have my gun on. It is just part of the uniform. If that offends you, I am sorry.

Sarah: Are Punta Gorda Police and Charlotte County Sheriffs both part of District 4?

Sheriff Prummell: District 4 is us (Charlotte County Sheriff's Office) and the Punta Gorda Police municipality is within the city borders.

Chief Davis: Charlotte County Sheriffs can come into Punta Gorda, but generally they don't. We do not go outside the city.

Sarah: There are more officers in District 4 than any other district. The Punta Gorda area has the highest population of the black community, which is five percent. Why was there a double up of officers when the black community only makes up 5% of the population? Why are there more officers there? There are more crimes across the bridge and there should be a double up there, more than here.

Chief Davis: We are only in the city, and generally, the Sheriff's Office doesn't come into the city. I don't think there is a double up.

Sheriff Prummell: District 4 is not double the other districts. There are more Sheriffs now because we are preparing for the growth in Babcock in east county, which used to be farmland.

Speaker: I have never had to fear someone with a badge because of my (Caucasian) skin color. Never. Some people are expressing fear that the officers are carrying guns. If we are talking about trust, it seems like you are not getting that. The officers do not represent the community and may not understand what they are talking about. I do not think the officers are representatively serving the community.

Speaker: I am male and black. I understand the frustrations; I have had situations where you have probable cause. I will give you an example. A couple weeks ago, my brother wanted to show me the moon. We were walking down the street to get a better look and a police officer saw me walking and started approaching me with his hand on his gun. Then he recognized me, and once he did, it was cool. But what if I did not know him? Relationships do matter. When we talk about trust, we have to talk about culture. I am black, I am a male, I understand I am a threat to society. Even when you have diversity in a police force, you need to have the right culture. I had to have the talk with my sons on how to talk to a police officer if he ever gets pulled over. We need to have training of specific racial biases.

Carson: As important as policy recommendations are, officers do not understand the reasoning behind them. It is important to understand the emotion behind it that we are seeing here today. That ties into community outreach; I believe a better job needs to be done here. I live in Port Charlotte and did not have support as a person of color. We need to do a better job at including the black community in Port Charlotte as well, specifically when the Charlotte County Sheriff's Office is the main office that we are having problems with.

Ashley: What we have to bear in mind when we're looking at true cultural change is that others may not experience what you have, but we all have our disparities. We have to utilize our differences to advocate issues for the community so that everybody is afforded an equal opportunity to thrive. Pain causes growth. We should use that disparity to build and move forward.

Carson: I would never speak for you, but I would want to understand where you are coming from before I started to fight for you. You have to be educated about it before you can fight for it.

Rev. Brooks: I have been here for forty years, pastoring a church. I have seen racism in the police department, and it is because of the culture of superiority. We have never gotten past that. I have two earned doctorates and three honorary doctorates. We have people come to the church for free food that are broke and destitute, and they call me "nigger" because they think they are better than me because of the color of their skin.

Police officers need to understand that I have a wife and a family. I am an ex-Marine, a war veteran with bullets that left me in this wheelchair, so I understand what being an American is. I do not want to be a black American, I want to be an American. Until you get that, these laws are not going to work. Israel had 10 commandments and they could not keep them. The cops at the top have to weed out the bad cops and rule breakers. I understand why the young people are angry. I fought for this country and nearly lost my life for using a toilet at a service

station. It is deeply embedded in me. I have learned how to deal with it; I respond, I don't act. I have been stopped for being black going home. It is in your police department. You have black racists. You have to deal with the situation. I understand this man's pain, you have to learn how to deal with it.

Desmond: Why? I am an American.

Ashley: You should not feel you have to conform because it makes it easier.

Desmond: You have to learn from your elders. I do not think America understands that I am done asking. What he said was a campaign of the Sixties. They had to say, "I am a man, I am a human being." I want America to be America for me too. No one is listening. Buildings burning don't mean anything to me. I believe we all have the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. If you think you can take my life because you wear a badge, it is going to be a shootout in the OK Coral. Whoever is left standing is the only one they listen to; that is why they shoot for the mid rib.

Speaker: Everyone can be included in the problem of the culture of superiority. The way people are treated by people who think they are superior is what we are here for today. It is across the board. It needs to be acknowledged.

Sarah: What is the school board doing to train teachers, especially when there is a lack of diversity in teachers?



Dr. Michael Desjardins, Charlotte County Schools: We just had our secondary teachers go through a round of cultural training. We are creating a positive school climate. The school administrators you hire is important because it is a trickledown effect. You can have all the training and policies in the world, but if you don't walk the walk, what is the point?

About two years ago, all our administrators went to cultural and diversity training. One of the things we looked at was the suspension rate. In Florida, 42% of out-of-school suspensions are African American students. That is a problem, so we sit down with administrators four times a year and we make sure we are treating all kids properly. We want to make sure the black kids are not being targeted. We do not do cultural and diversity training every year. We have kids do climate surveys and principals look at it and try to make improvements.

Sarah: If there is a staff issue, possibly with some racial injustices, who can parents contact?

Dr. Desjardins: They can contact the principal or Human Resources. Sometimes we have to do an outside or criminal investigation.

Carson: It would be important to have cultural diversity training every year. Clearly, it is not working. I was harassed every year for four years because of my skin color and I reported it twice and nothing was ever done. There is a disconnect when my history teacher says the n-

word out of nowhere. Cultural change starts with the youth. If the systems that are supposed to be changing the culture are not doing so, we are never going to have that.

Action Item 6: Increase cultural and diversity training to yearly.

Dr. Desjardins: You should not have to deal with that for four years. If the principal does not react then you need to take it up the chain to the superintendent, then ultimately, the school board.

Desmond: Cultural diversity training is supposed to protect me and make me feel *safe*?

Stephanie: I have noticed that the history books kind of belittle us. Is there a screening process for the books chosen for the public schools? Is the screener the same person that chooses the manufacturer of the books?

Dr. Desjardins: The state of Florida has a list of books from which to choose. They have a screening program, but I do not know who screens them. As a citizen, you have a right to object to the textbooks selected. If you object, you can complain to us. They are changed every four to five years and it depends on the budget how quickly we turn them over.

Ashley: The last question Desmond had was about your opinion about felony voters.

Chief Davis: I have no issue.

Sheriff Prummell: I have no issue either, the voters spoke.

Ashley: I want to be respectful of your time and offer an opportunity for last minute thoughts. I want to follow up on body cameras: how the community will be updated and when they will be utilized. I will get the answers on that and send it out.

Abigail: Does the Charlotte County Sheriff's Office have in-car cameras?

Sheriff Prummell: We have them in certain units where we have the most traffic stops. They are not in all cars because there are incurred costs.

Speaker: You talk about incurred costs, but why is funding going to tear gas supplies, instead of securing funding for community mechanisms to ensure accountability?

Sheriff Prummell: It is not a significant amount of funding for tear gas because we do not use it often. It is budgeted for the Sheriff's Office.

Sarah: There was 4.2 million dollars used for a substation gym in the Englewood area; what was that supposed to benefit instead of the cameras?

Sheriff Prummell: That was from the 1% sales tax.



Emily Lewis, Deputy County Administrator, Charlotte County: The 1% sales tax is for capital infrastructure only, such as roads, buildings, and sidewalks.

Desmond: What are the roadblocks for getting a municipal broadband network for Charlotte County?

Emily: Broadband is a very expensive undertaking that would need a funding mechanism. Charlotte County is very large, land wise. We have worked with FDOT (Florida Department of Transportation) to expand the capacity of fiber along state roadways, but not in neighborhoods.

There are infrastructure barriers. I do not know if there are neighborhoods that have asked for it specifically. There must be a funding mechanism. Charlotte County roadways are funded by municipal service benefit units, which are neighborhood advisory boards that tell us how to spend their dollars, such as road improvement, drainage, etc. That would probably be the effort to fund it.

Desmond: It seems like the county can only build banks and retirement communities. I want to know who would I talk to about that?

Ashley: That would be me and I would be happy to talk to you and figure out other funding sources to get what is needed. We have the network to start to investigate those types of policies.

Emily: Our economic development office can help with that, too. You have to have infrastructure to bring in new businesses.

Ashley: So, also on my list is a request to see more officers interacting with community, more "boots on the ground." We want to review and look into the Sarasota citizens' review board policies and procedures. Additionally, the school district is to look into having cultural diversity training more often and look at screening process of books.

Javon: How is a book rejected?

Dr. Desjardins: We hire an independent arbitrator that listens to the concern and makes the decision without the school board's involvement.

Sarah: Are there any people of diversity that review the books?

Dr. Desjardins: I do not have knowledge of that.

Javon: When I was in school, reading *To Kill a Mockingbird* was when kids could come to school and say "nigger" all day. There are no books showing us in a good light.



Melody: A majority of today was directed to the Sheriffs Office and Police Department. But there was a good point made earlier by Carson, who did not grow up in the black community. She never experienced a black teacher and did not learn about herself growing up. We are feeding society. The majority of people grow up through the public-school system. We are responsible for feeding them into society, as future law enforcement and teachers, and they take biases or lack of knowledge and limited experiences with them. For example, we talk about Martin Luther King, Jr. only in February. If we never learn and we push them out into the society, then they become the problem. Teachers are the ones that have hands on our children every day.

Ashley: The purpose of today was centered around following up with law enforcement. This is not a one and done. The next step is an education task force. This is a whole other conversation and you need to have the right people at that table to effectively move that forward. What Carson said gives us a few concepts to start with. If you want to be involved with one of those you will have my email after today's meeting when I send a summary to each representative.

Melody: How often are we looking at kids and telling them they can become an officer when they graduate. If there is no one on the review board that is a person of color, then subjective issues of racism are hard to substantiate. We need more people of color to represent our community. When we have more boots on ground, people of color understand a complaint and where they are coming from. It has to start with schools and our reaching out. You have to have diverse representation. That is the solution I am offering.

Abigail: (*To Dr. Desjardins*) Did you or the school board review the ACLU report on the school-to-prison pipeline?

Dr. Desjardins: Yes, it helped us look at our data and the direction we need to go. We looked at disproportion suspension and expulsion rates. I agree that we need to hire diversity, which is a challenge, but we can meet that challenge. That report fixed our suspension rate demographically. I share this data with Rev. Anderson on a regular basis. In our district this past school year, 15.1% of external suspensions were African American students; in the state of Florida, that number is 41%. We had zero expulsions for the entire district for this school year, although we had a short year. The data I am giving you is transparent.

I want to talk about representation. We have two African American committee members out of twelve or thirteen on the expulsion committee. I want them to speak up if they see something that does not look right; we all should speak up. Expulsion is a big deal and I want to make sure we get the right representation around that table. Sometimes we have to agree to disagree. We make the best decision possible based on the individual situation that happened.

We are not perfect, and I have made mistakes in my career and learned from them. It is not rocket science of how to treat a human being.

Comments: Unfortunately, it is.

Sarah: It is insane that you have to have training and structure policies about how to treat a black person the way you treat me.

Ashley: The unconscious bias is a huge thing. You have to have diversity training because there are biases that people aren't even aware of.

Javon: I believe the best teacher is a whopping; that is what my mom did to me growing up. You could train somebody all day, every day, but if you are not punishing that person. It means nothing. Accountability is the best deterrent there is.

Carson: We need to have zero tolerance policy for racism, just as we have for bullying. When racism happens, the outcome shouldn't be "just don't talk to that person anymore." It either needs to be a punishment or a learning experience, where they have to understand why it is wrong. When racial incidents happen, we need to find a way to fix that culture rather than just slapping people on the wrist.

Abigail: I would like to ask for a round table on education.

Stephanie: I think the officers should be involved. And the SROs.

Action Item 7: Round table community discussion focused on education.

Wrap-Up and Next Steps

Ashley: If you want our next roundtable on Education to be in a similar setting as this, I ask that you work with me, because I wasn't at Cooper Street. We need to set an agenda and we can work together on who should be there.

In closing, thank you for taking the time to be here, being candid, and having an open dialogue. Being a volunteer in your community is a big job. I appreciate you and the law enforcement. I appreciate the respect that was shown for one another today. If you want me to email you, leave your email address on your name card. I will be sending out a follow up email to each respective organizer, so please circulate that.

I also wanted to mention that Community Foundation grants are opening on July 6. If you know any nonprofits in need of grant funding, go on the website to apply (<https://charlottecf.org/grants/>). It will be a fast, three-week cycle for \$15,000. Thank you!

Artwork

Business illustration by Jonathan Massie, Collaborative Labs, St. Petersburg College.





Attendees

Punta Gorda Police Department

Chief Pam Davis
Captain Norm Nahra
Lieutenant Dylan Renz
Lieutenant Justin Davout
Kaylee Licata

Charlotte County Sheriff's Office

Sheriff Bill Prummell
Colonel Rodgers
Captain Casarella
Captain Westlake
Claudette Bennett

NAACP

Rev. Carl F. Brooks
Rev. Louis Anderson
Gerald Anderson
Melody Washington
Dr. Paul Curtis

City of Punta Gorda, City Manager

Howard Kunik

Charlotte County Deputy**Administrator**

Emily Lewis

Charlotte County Schools

Dr. Michael Desjardins

March for Justice Charlotte

Abigail Kirshy
Shaunte Manuel
Alissa Perry
Carson McNamara
Ana Belevitch

Unapologetically Black

Javon Spikes
Sarah Norris
Desmond Bowman
Stephanie Proux
Andrea Jenkins-Morris

Group unknown

Dr. Ricardo Gauthier

Charlotte Community Foundation

Ashley Maher