

**TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND  
POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY BOARD**

Minutes of Public Meeting  
May 13, 2025

The meeting of the Talbot County Police Accountability Board ("PAB") was called to order at 8:30 a.m. on Tuesday, May 13, 2025. Present were Chairman Mitchell Ettinger, Members William Belding, John Gilbert, Brian Naranjo, Jo Ann Murray, Chris Rice, Connie Webster, and Board Secretary Victoria Bradley.

- I. **Call to Order** – Chairman Ettinger called the meeting to order and made welcoming remarks. The Chairman also introduced the newest member to the PAB, Mr. Brian Naranjo, who will be representing St. Michaels.
- II. **Minutes** – Upon motion made by Mr. Gilbert, seconded by Ms. Webster, the minutes of the Tuesday, March 11, 2025, PAB meeting were approved unanimously without modification.
- III. **Old Business** – We revisited the issue raised by the Easton Police Department ("EPD") regarding the necessity of redactions of juvenile identities on body worn camera film and in investigative reports submitted to the Administrative Charging Committee ("ACC"). The Chairman explained that he had consulted legal counsel to the PAB who advised that the ACC is subject to statutory confidentiality and that, for cases involving a juvenile, the ACC could review the information/data on One Drive and subsequently delete it upon disposition of the matter. Ultimately, the decision of whether to submit unredacted material to the ACC must be made by the individual LEAs. The Chairman recommended that the LEAs seek a legal opinion from the Attorney General's Office.
- IV. **Discussion with Law Enforcement Agencies ("LEA")**
  - a. **Submission of Quarterly Use of Force Reports** – The Chairman thanked the LEA's for their submissions of the Use of Force Reports and noted that the incidents in the reports all seemed straight forward.
  - b. **Criminal Activity Trends or Upticks** – EPD reported a recent issue with election signs and street signs being defaced. The Talbot County Sheriff's Office ("TCSO") stated their call volume was up, but that is normal for this time of year. St. Michaels Police Department ("SMPD") and Oxford Police Department ("OPD") stated they have not seen any upticks or trends in their jurisdiction.

- c. Community Relations Activities (Q2 and Q3 2025) –TSCO stated they have finished their Citizen’s Junior Police Academy and are midway through the corresponding adult academy. The TSCO is planning another Citizen’s Junior Police Academy early next year.

The current EPD’s Citizen’s Police Academy class is graduating as well. The Chairman asked if the LEA’s feel the police academy is helping with recruitment. EPD stated they hired someone last year who attended the Academy. TSCO stated two attendees have indicated an interest in applying for deputy positions.

OPD stated they recently participated in the Oxford Day celebrations that had about 1,500 to 2,000 people in attendance. The feedback from the public was positive and overall it was a good community event. OPD further stated most of the LEA’s will be assisting with local 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebrations.

The Chairman noted the Rotary Club in St. Michaels wants to donate day passes for the community pool for use by those who cannot afford a membership. The SMPD said it is interested in being a distribution point for pool passes as it would be a good addition to their community outreach efforts.

- d. Status of Pending Investigations within ACC Purview – The Chairman asked the LEAs to send any pending investigation information to Secretary Bradley so that the ACC can be aware of what is coming to them. EPD stated they have two that are currently in the investigation process. SMPD stated they have one they will be submitting soon. TSCO stated they have one for the ACC June meeting and two that are currently in the investigation process.
- e. Suggestions Regarding LEA Investigations of Alleged Police Misconduct – The Chairman had a few observations from the ACC regarding the form of investigations and reports being submitted. The purpose of providing these observations is to provide constructive feedback.
- i. Form of Questions – In a recent case submitted to the ACC, the officer subject to the complaint was interviewed principally through leading questions. The ACC would prefer that the officer be permitted to describe his or her version of events through direct questions, resulting in a narrative. Leading questions, used sparingly, are appropriate. When used as the principle form of inquiry, leading questions tend to undermine the credibility of the investigation.

- ii. Timing of Witness Interviews – The ACC noted that often interviews of the officer subject to the complaint are conducted months after the incident. It was suggested that the interview be conducted as close in time to the submission of the complaint as possible when the incident is likely to be top of mind to the officer.
  - iii. Inclusion of Outside Legal Opinions – The ACC welcomes the citation of case law with the investigative file. However, the ACC does not need (or want) outside legal opinions to accompany the investigative file. The ACC has counsel to assist it with legal questions and opinions. The Chairman made clear that the ACC would not consider outside legal opinions regarding the appropriateness of the officer’s actions when making its decision.
  - iv. Identification of Purported Discrepancies in Complainant’s Statement – The ACC noted that in a recent investigative file, the report identified “discrepancies” in the complainant’s narrative. The noted “discrepancies” were not internal inconsistencies but rather mere differences in perspective. Differences in perspective are properly noted, but are not best characterized as discrepancies in the complainant’s version of events.
- f. LEA Topics of Interest/Concern – Mr. Naranjo asked if the LEA’s are concerned about losing or not obtaining federal grants under the current administration’s directives. The TSCO stated that it is a concern, but it has only one direct federal grant, which funds its policing of Trappe.

The TSCO submitted its budget request to the County Council and is awaiting its action. The largest equipment expenditure pertains to front-mounted vehicle cameras that would simultaneously activate when the emergency lights are or body worn cameras are engaged.

The TSCO advised that Deputy Bob Musterman recently passed away. He had a distinguished career in law enforcement. His absence has resulted in a staffing shortfall at the Circuit Courthouse.

SMPD stated it terminated the employment of an officer recently, resulting in only five officers on staff. The town has authorized the employment of eight officers.

g. Report on PAB Appearance Before the County Council and Possible Next Steps –

The Chairman described the recent County Council meeting where the PAB was invited to present on the status of the PAB and ACC. During the presentation, the Chairman praised the cooperation received from the LEAs. The LEAs thanked the PAB and ACC members for their service and agree that they enjoy a good working relationship with each committee.

As a result of the interaction between the Chairman and the County Council, Mr. Naranjo suggested PAB members reach out to other PABs to learn about their successes and challenges. This suggestion was adopted and each member agreed to contact two PAB chairs and report back during the August meeting.

h. Report to PAB Regarding ACC Actions to Date – The Chairman discussed recent ACC decisions. In 2025, the ACC has decided eight (8) cases. Seven (7) of those matters arose from complaints filed in 2024.

**V. Summary of Closed Session Held on May 13, 2025**

A motion was made by Ms. Murray and seconded by Mr. Gilbert for the Board to move into closed session to discuss the possible reappointment of an Administrative Charging Committee member.

1. Statement of the time, place, and purpose of the closed session:

Time of closed Session: 9:46 a.m. to 9:51 a.m.

Place of closed session: Bradley Meeting Room

Purpose of the closed session: To discuss the appointment, employment, assignment, promotion, discipline, demotion, compensation, removal, resignation, or performance evaluation of appointees, employees, or officials over whom this public body has jurisdiction; any other personnel matters that affects one or more specific individuals.

2. Record of the vote of each member as to closing the session: Unanimous Aye

3. Statutory authority to close and listing of each topic actually discussed, persons present, and each action taken in the session:

<b>Topic Description</b>	<b>Statutory Authority</b>	<b>Reason for Closed Session Discussion</b>	<b>Persons Present</b>	<b>Action Taken</b>
To discuss possible reappointment of ACC member	GP § 3-305(b)(1)(i)	Public discussion would discourage individuals from volunteering to serve	Mitchell Ettinger, William Belding, John Gilbert, Brian Naranjo, Jo Ann Murray, Chris Rice, Connie Webster, Victoria Bradley	No action

A motion was made by Ms. Webster and seconded by Ms. Murray to reconvene in open session at 9:51 a.m.

**VI. Next PAB Meeting** – The Board set a date for the next PAB meeting with the Local Law Enforcement Agencies for August 12, 2025, at 8:30 am.

**VII. Adjournment** – There being no further business, a motion was made by Ms. Murray and seconded by Mr. Gilbert to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 9:52 am.