



PUBLIC SAFETY COMMISSION

Public Safety Commission Meeting - 2/26/2026

Date: February 26, 2026

Location: Willie L. Hinton Neighborhood Resource Center

Time: 6:00 PM

Quorum: Yes (More than half of the commissioners present)

I. Roll Call

- Commissioner Burris. Here.
- Commissioner Charles. Here.
- Commissioner Doyle. Here.
- Commissioner Fowler. Here.
- Commissioner Gilbert. Absent
- Commissioner Herts. Here.
- Commissioner Lopez. Absent
- Commissioner Morshedi. Absent (resigned)
- Commissioner Thompson. Absent
- Quorum confirmed. Proceeded with meeting.

II. Opening Comments and Announcements

- **Staff Liaison** – Christopher Harvey, Senior Advisor to the Mayor - proposed consideration of shifting commission meetings from monthly to quarterly, citing the commission's current positive trajectory and the desire to focus time and effort on tangible, accomplishable goals. Key discussion points included:
 - Subcommittees should continue meeting on an ongoing basis regardless of the frequency change for full commission meetings.
 - New commissioner applicants should be allowed to acclimate before the quarterly schedule begins — a transition beginning in the third quarter was suggested.
 - New members may bring fresh ideas and should be oriented to subcommittee work upon joining.

- The commission retains the flexibility to revert to monthly meetings if circumstances require.
- Quarterly meetings were viewed as promoting greater intentionality and efficiency.
- Consensus: The commission informally agreed to target quarterly meetings beginning in Q3, contingent on filling vacancies and onboarding new members.
- ***Commission Vacancies and New Appointments***
 - Mr. Harvey noted that a new round of commissioner applications is expected. At least two applicants were known at the time of the meeting. Vacancies remain open, and appointments are anticipated to be announced by the Mayor at the upcoming Board meeting (6:00 p.m., the following week).
- **Department Liaison – Lynette Perez, Chief Deputy City Attorney**
 - The City Attorney's representative advised all board and commission members — as consistent guidance provided citywide — to exercise caution regarding personal social media activity during election season. Key points:
 - The Supreme Court affirms the right to post personal views on social media.
 - Members with large social media followings are advised to include a disclaimer that content represents personal views.
 - Posts by volunteer board members could potentially be used in political campaign materials.
 - This advisory applies to all city boards and commissions, including Planning Commission and MEMS Board.
 - The City Attorney's representative characterized the current period as "election season" and noted that heightened attention will continue through November.
 - In response to a commissioner's question about potential duplication of work across boards, the City Attorney's representative explained the following coordination mechanisms:
 - Attorneys actively work to prevent duplication — for example, discouraging reconvening a Citizen Review Board given existing processes through the Public Safety Commission and Civil Service Commission.
 - Established statutory processes exist for disciplinary matters involving police and firefighters (demotions, terminations, suspensions exceeding approximately three days), with appeals going to Civil Service Commission.
 - Matters raised at one board that are more appropriately handled by another are redirected accordingly.

- Mr. Harvey - reiterated that the Public Safety Commission is specifically focused on collaboration with law enforcement — not oversight. Citizens with complaints about officers should be directed to the Police Chief, while those seeking increased community engagement or collaboration should bring concerns to this commission.

- **Department Liaison** – Heath Helton, Chief of Police

A. Crime Statistics

- Chief Helton reported the following current-year crime data (year-to-date, noting it is early in the year and data remain fluid):

Category	YTD Change	5-Year Avg. Change
Violent Crime	-12%	-21%
Property Crime	-6%	-27%
Overall Crime	-8%	-28%
Homicides	2 YTD (vs. 13 same period last year)	-78%

- Both homicides recorded were domestic/acquaintance-related. The Chief noted that spring and summer typically bring increases in crime as more residents are outdoors.

B. Staffing Update

- Current vacancies: 78 (due to retirements, disciplinary separations, and voluntary attrition).
- A recruit school class of 9 will graduate in the coming weeks.
- A new recruit class of approximately 25-30 is planned to begin in late April.
- Lateral officer recruitment is increasing; 3 laterals starting the following week (2 from Arkansas, 1 out-of-state).

C. Upcoming Events

- The Little Rock Marathon is scheduled for the weekend following the meeting.
- The installation of Philander Smith University's new president is also occurring that weekend.
- The Chief confirmed all logistics and staffing plans are in place for both events.

D. Youth Engagement and Summer Planning

- Curfew enforcement in the River Market and entertainment districts was credited with reducing incidents last summer and will likely be implemented again.
- Meetings with parks, community programs, and other city departments are scheduled to develop proactive summer youth engagement strategies.
- Midnight basketball was noted as a particularly successful program.

E. Group Violence Intervention (GVI) Initiative

- The Chief announced that the Group Violence Intervention (GVI) program is now in full swing, describing it as a potential "game changer" for the community. Details:
 - Initial GVI meeting is scheduled for two weeks from the meeting date.
 - The initiative is a partnership between Mayor Scott (Little Rock), Mayor Hartwick (North Little Rock), and Judge Hyde.
 - Initial phase involves data gathering to confirm qualification of the Pulaski County metro area (the Chief expressed confidence the area will qualify).
 - The GVI model brings together law enforcement, social services, and community members to address violent crime and provide intervention pathways for at-risk youth.
 - Phase 1 meeting is law-enforcement only (data sharing). A subsequent phase will open to social service stakeholders.
 - Long-term expansion to Jacksonville and Sherwood is anticipated once the initial three-jurisdiction partnership (Little Rock, North Little Rock, Pulaski County) is established.
 - The commission expressed interest in observing the GVI meetings. The Chief agreed to contact the organizers to explore observer access.

III. Approval of Previous Minutes

- **Adoption of previous meeting minutes**
 - December 2025 - Fowler motioned, Charles seconded. Approved.

IV. Old Business

• CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM (CRT) UPDATE

A. 2025 Annual Statistics

- The following CRT metrics were reported for all of 2025 (prior to the Crisis Stabilization Unit closing):

Activity	Count
Crisis Stabilization Unit (CSU) admittances	27

Hospital admittances	287
Inpatient behavioral health admittances	74
Outpatient behavioral health admittances	35
Shelter admittances	399
Court referrals	134
Jail diversions	103
Follow-up contacts (wraparound services)	1,313
Agency assistance requests handled	205
Care packages delivered	160
Transportation/hotel vouchers issued	20
Calls responded to (requested)	732
Self-initiated contacts	130

- *Note: 103 jail diversions represent individuals who received services rather than incarceration. Care packages consist of water, snacks, wet wipes (summer) and blankets and supplies (winter), donated by grocery stores and community partners.*

B. January 2026 Highlights

- In January alone, CRT admitted 400 individuals to the warming shelter — exceeding the entire prior year's total of 399.
- This was partly driven by severe weather. CRT officers were stationed at the shelter while additional officers patrolled at night to identify individuals in crisis outdoors.
- The team consists of just 4 officers and 4 social workers. The Chief noted they are likely overworked and plans to expand staffing and split shifts when resources allow.

C. Homeless Encampments — Growing Challenge

- The Chief described a notable shift in encampment locations and a significant increase in the overall challenge:
- Homeless encampments are increasingly concentrated in West Little Rock, particularly near Walmart on Bowman Road and the Financial Center corridor.
- Downtown encampment numbers have decreased while west-side camps have grown substantially.
- Camps present multiple public safety hazards: fires (several out-of-control fires reported recently due to wind), weapons, needles, illegal substances, and sanitation concerns.

- Camp clearances result in relocations, not permanent solutions — residents quickly move and re-establish camps elsewhere (described as a "whack-a-mole" problem).
- Little Rock functions as a regional hub for homeless services, and other cities (Fayetteville, Hot Springs noted) have historically directed people here.
- Restaurants in West Little Rock that distribute leftover food at night are inadvertently drawing camp populations to that area.
- The Chief emphasized that homelessness and mental illness are not crimes, but police are frequently the first — and often only — responders.
- A dedicated CRT team now exists specifically to address this issue, fundamentally changing how the department operates.
- The Chief noted that the closure of Little Rock Community Health was a significant blow to crisis response capacity, as it had been a key stabilization resource for individuals in crisis.

D. Tiny Home Village — Update

- The City's micro-home village off Roosevelt Road (adjacent to the Magnolia Inn) has broken ground.
- Infrastructure is being installed; the goal is to open by the end of the year, with a possible ceremonial target of sometime in June.
- The village will contain 75 temporary housing units, with wraparound services designed to transition residents back to stable, independent living.
- Pulaski County is developing a similar project focused on permanent supportive housing.
- Units may house 1-2 people depending on circumstances (e.g., couples).
- The Mayor is pursuing coordination with public entity CEOs (Port, Airport, Library, CALS, LRWA, Visitors Bureau) to align resources — including a planned connection between village residents and the Port's new workforce development training center for trade certification and employment.

V. New Business

A. Agenda Preparation

- Commissioner Burris reminded members to email agenda items in advance so they can be added to the agenda properly.

B. Inviting Other City Departments

- The City Attorney's representative suggested inviting departments such as Public Works, Planning, and Code Enforcement to future meetings given their intersection with public safety topics.

C. Traffic Signal Concern — Fair Park Overpass at I-630

- Commissioner Herts raised a traffic safety concern regarding the two traffic signals at the Fair Park Boulevard overpass at I-630 (southbound, near the Zoo

and War Memorial). The signals are reportedly out of sync and causing confusion, near-misses, and accidents. The commissioner requested this be forwarded to Public Works. Mr. Harvey confirmed she had recently met with Public Works traffic operations staff and would transmit the concern.

D. Meeting Schedule Reminder

- Meetings are scheduled for the fourth Thursday of each month. Meetings in November and December 2026 are canceled due to the holiday season. Members were reminded that the meeting is only canceled if they receive a direct email notification from the commission coordinator; calendar invites remain standing unless otherwise notified.
- Next meeting: March (date referenced as "March 6th" in discussion — commissioners should confirm the correct fourth Thursday date).
- The March meeting will include commission officer elections, as it is the anniversary of the commission.

VI. Adjournment

- Doyle, Burris - motion to adjourn at 7:04.