

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Lily Haight with local news for May 26, 2021.

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The Port Townsend city council met with county officials, including county commissioners Greg Brotherton, Kate Dean and Heidi Eisenhour, as well as Sheriff Joe Nole and County Prosecutor James Kennedy at their meeting Monday night in an attempt to create consistent law enforcement policy throughout the county and city. This meeting was spurred by a year-long process by the city council to address issues within city policing, following the police murder of George Floyd that led to the global consciousness rising to end anti-Black violence.

Yesterday marked the one year anniversary since George Floyd's murder. After his death and the resulting protests in Port Townsend against police brutality, the city council created an ad hoc committee on law enforcement and public safety. The committee did not make any direct changes to the way our law enforcement operates. Instead, they created a set of recommendations to continue digging into law enforcement and public safety issues. One of the recommendations was for the council to reach out to county law enforcement officials and align values on issues such as use of force policy and using body cams. This was the reason for the meeting on Monday night.

City manager John Mauro started the meeting off by explaining that both the city police department and the sheriff's department use a standardized policy from Lexipol – a private, for-profit company that helps local law enforcement agencies draft their policy manuals. More than 8,100 public safety agencies use Lexipol nationwide. Mauro specified that the PTPD and Sheriff's Office both use a customizable yet standardized policy from Lexipol, which he said applies efficient and consistent policy to both departments. Reporting from The Intercept has shown that Lexipol policies aim to protect law enforcement agencies from lawsuits, and Lexipol has regularly opposed de-escalation policies, including the regulation of use of force, and growing calls to forbid police from shooting into moving vehicles.

Sheriff Joe Nole explained that the sheriff's department and city police department have very similar Lexipol policies, and they go through the same de-escalation training. The biggest difference between the two departments is the fact that Sheriff's deputies do not wear body cameras. The reason for this, he explained, is that when they considered purchasing them, the cost was too high and he decided to use the money to buy an X-ray machine for the jail instead. Commissioner Kate Dean added that the commissioners are currently working with undersheriff Andy Pernsteiner on drafting next year's budget, and hope to fund the purchase of body cameras in the next budget cycle.

City and county officials also discussed state legislative changes that will affect our current local law enforcement policies. Governor Jay Inslee signed a slew of law enforcement reform bills last week, including a bill that bans the use of chokeholds and neck restraints by officers, restricts the use of tear gas by police, and prohibits police agencies from acquiring military equipment. He also signed a measure that establishes a new Office of Independent Investigations to investigate police deadly force incidents. Sheriff Joe Nole and police chief Thomas Olson said that our departments already abide by the new legislative changes to law enforcement policy. But in an article in the *Peninsula Daily News* back in February, Undersheriff Andy Pernsteiner was quoted as saying he had serious concerns about legislation banning neck restraint holds. The 2021 Sheriff's Office policy does allow neck restraints, limited to times when use of deadly force is authorized.

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At the end of Monday night's meeting, Undersheriff Andy Pernsteiner gave an update on the county's mental health navigator, Jon Walsch. Walsch was hired with grant funding that the Sheriff's Department applied for to

assist deputies with individuals who are in the midst of a mental health crisis or drug addiction crisis, and need help instead of jail time. Pernsteiner reported that within the first 28 days of riding along with deputies, Walsch contacted at least 30 people in crisis. He said it has taken some time for the deputies to get used to having someone who is not a cop riding with them on calls, but that at this point they are getting along well with Walsch and that it is a good fit.

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And that's it for today's local news. KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon Monday through Saturday and at 5pm Monday through Thursday. You can contact us through [news@kptz.org](mailto:news@kptz.org). I'm Lily Haight. Thanks for listening.