AGENDA

Human Rights Commission

NOTE NEW LOCATION COMMUNITY ROOM at POLICE STATION

WEDNESDAY March. 25, 2015

7 pm

7:00 Public Comment

7:315 Call to Order

1) Introductions and announcements	(5 minutes)
2) Minutes Review for Approval	(10 minutes)
3) HRC in the Community:	
A) Kitty Callaghan Northampton Living Wage Coalition	(10 minutes)
B) President Obama's recommendations/Letter to Mayor	(10 minutes)
C) HRC website content update	(5 minutes)
D) Accessibility City Hall	(10 minutes)
E) New members	(10 minutes)
4) New Business	(5 minutes)

Adjourn

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POLITICS

Obama Calls for Changes in Policing After Task Force Report

By JULIE HIRSCHFELD DAVIS MARCH 2, 2015

WASHINGTON — President Obama on Monday called for prompt action to change police practices across the country after the deaths of unarmed black men in Ferguson, Mo., and Staten Island at the hands of white officers exposed frustrations about law enforcement in minority communities.

Mr. Obama, unveiling the recommendations of a White House task force created in the wake of the killings, said local law enforcement agencies should consider requiring independent criminal investigations and independent prosecutors in cases where the use of force by police officers results in injury or death.

He also said police departments should take additional steps to build trust with communities. They include adopting policies to address racial profiling, relaxing their approach to mass demonstrations and collecting more data on shootings and deaths by the police.

"The moment is now for us to make these changes," Mr. Obama said at the White House, where he met with members of the task force. "We have a great opportunity, coming out of some great conflict and tragedy, to really transform how we think about community-law-enforcement relations so that

everybody feels safer and our law enforcement officers feel, rather than being embattled, feel fully supported. We need to seize that opportunity."

Mr. Obama said that some of the recommendations, including requiring independent investigations when the police use lethal force, would be "controversial," and that others would be difficult to put into effect. But he said he would push the Department of Justice to press forward on them.

"It will be good for police and it will be good for the communities involved, and as a consequence it will be good for the country," Mr. Obama said. "Everybody wants our streets safe, and everybody wants to make sure that laws are applied fairly and equitably."

In an interim report of more than 100 pages, the panel offered 63 recommendations, including the creation of a National Crime and Justice Task Force to guide a broad overhaul of the criminal justice system.

The panel, led by Charles H. Ramsey, the commissioner of the Philadelphia Police Department and president of the Major Cities Chiefs Association, and Laurie O. Robinson, a former Justice Department official who is a professor of criminology and law at George Mason University, also offered more specific recommendations.

It called for the creation of a federal initiative to diversify law enforcement agencies so they better reflect their communities' demographic makeup, and suggested that federal funding be tied to those efforts.

The panel also recommended that police departments be required to collect and post on their websites information about stops, frisks, summonses, arrests and crimes, broken down by demographics. It called for less confrontational practices by the police and steps to "minimize the appearance of a military operation" when dealing with large protests.

That could include wearing "soft look" uniforms and removing riot gear "as soon as practical," the panel said.

The task force did not recommend that all officers be required to wear body cameras, although it said their use had been shown to reduce the use of force and complaints against officers. Mr. Obama has requested funding for the purchase of 50,000 such cameras. But the panel said use of the cameras

could raise concerns about privacy and costs.

"Law enforcement agencies and personnel also need to recognize that technology is only a tool for doing their jobs," the report said. "Just because you have access to technology does not necessarily mean you should always use it."

The panel also called for the elimination of policies that require officers to issue a predetermined number of tickets, citations, arrests or summonses. The task force said police officers should be required to obtain consent — ideally a written acknowledgment — before searches and explain to people that they have the right to refuse in the absence of a warrant or probable cause.

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