

## **Body-Worn Camera Training and Technical Assistance Metropolitan Police Department**

Todd Maxwell: Hello again, listeners. This is Todd Maxwell, a member of the Bureau of Justice Assistance Body-Worn Camera team and today I'm speaking with members of the Metropolitan Police Department. Today, I have Commander Ralph Ennis of the Technical Services Department, Derek Meeks who is director of the BWC program and technology innovation, and Anita Ravishshankar, PhD research fellow.

Commander Ralph Ennis has over 22 years of police service under Metropolitan Police Department. He began his career as a police officer on September 1994 and quickly rose to the ranks achieving the rank of sergeant in 1999, lieutenant in 2001, and captain in January 2007. Chief of police, Cathy Lanier, appointed him her chief of staff and promoted him to the rank of inspector in October 2007. In February 2014, he has promoted to the rank of commander and transferred to the tactical information and intelligence division where he oversaw criminal intelligence. He joined Terrorism Task Force and the Department of CCTV and Shotspotter programs, the Command Information Center, and the Joint Operations Command Center.

In February 2015, he was then assigned to the executive office of the chief of police where he served Chief Lanier as her -- until her departure in September 2016. Commander Ennis was then moved to oversee the technical services division as a new division of the department task overseeing all the I.T. function of MPD. Commander Ennis is a veteran of the United States Air Force where he is a security police officer with a specialty in law enforcement. He served in the Pacific Theater.

Derek Meeks is a technology executive with over 25 years of I.T. -- in the I.T. industry, joining the Metropolitan Police Department in 2014. Throughout his career, he has worked as an enterprise architect project manager and chief technology officer. He started working in Chief Cathy Lanier's office in 2015 supporting the Body-Work Camera Program, an effort he has passion and believes in as these programs have successfully unfolded here taking on responsibilities for technologies, strategy efforts across the department.

Derek's expertise in project program management, technology operation, and processes suited the need to the Body-Worn Camera Program.

He also has expertise in I.T. governance, enterprise architecture and technology strategy, helping business executives articulate and achieve their vision for their organization. He provides leadership in multiple organizations, making their core business system replacement efforts successful. He's worked in law enforcement, insurance, lodging, automotive, and (helping) industries.

Anita is a PhD (candidate) in the University of Michigan's Policy and Political Science through its PhD program with theoretical and applied policy background, justice and security sectors for academic research focused on the study of public trust and political violence and she has experience with the design and implementation of multi-method research. (In the MPD), Anita manages the Body-Worn Camera evaluation and assisting with study design, implementation and data collection of efforts. She also coordinates research -- between the research team at MPD and provides additional analytics support as needed.

First of all, I just want to say thank you all for taking the time to join me today.

Male: Thank you.

Male: Nice to be here.

Todd Maxwell: So, what led MPD to adopting Body-Work Camera program?

Male: Well, at MPD, we pride ourselves on being an inclusive and open policing organization. We're always looking for ways to improve our legitimacy within our community in Washington, D.C. and we work very hard over the past decade to ensure that we have clear lines of communication with those that we serve. We particularly focus on keeping the community informed of our philosophy, our initiatives, and our activities related to policing.

About three years ago, MPD began researching in body-worn cameras at the then Chief Lanier's -- at her request. We began this exploration -- I just want to point this out and of note is that we began this exploration many years before the recent high profile incident set of, you know, in broader country in relation to policing and the heightened of the national attention on police accountability.

It was Chief Lanier's philosophy. She just wanted -- she wanted to make sure that, you know, the public knew how good of a police department we had and she felt that the body camera program would really heightened the public's awareness of our department. So, we did a bunch of research and confirmed our expectations that the use of body cameras would further our efforts of openness with the community. It would improve our police services. It would increase accountability for individual interactions, good or bad, and enhance public safety.

Our agencies -- other agencies -- so we looked at the various percentages. We looked at police agencies across the country and we noticed that they had through anecdotal reporting and through some small studies reported defines the (uses) of force, you know, better interactions with citizens and such like that.

So, given the expected benefits and the fact that more and more departments were launched in DWC programs, we decided to join too. We believe that body cameras are important step in restoring the public trust in law enforcement nationally. Of note, when we decided that we were going with body cameras, we made the decision early on that we were going to do a study, which we'll talk about I'm sure a little later on, but our deployment of cameras was designed by a team of national researchers who analyzed -- well, who will analyze and are currently analyzing the impact of body cameras on such issues that citizen complaints, use of force, and a host of other measurable outcomes. We're very proud of our researchers and we're very proud of our study here at MPD.

The lessons and findings that this evaluation will benefit district residence, the MPD and law enforcement agency and communities across the country that are also considering the use of body cameras. So, in a nutshell, we chose to do it as one more step in the logical process for our department, for our openness and then keep the community informed and better the trust within the community.

Todd Maxwell: Oh, thank you. I was -- so if you lived in this area, you sort of seeing from the public feedback and how you guys (going) with that but for our listeners outside the national capital region, can you just explain how the department went around garnering public feedback and promoting and explaining this program to the community?

Male: Yes. It's a very important point. So, I'll start back towards the beginning and how we got to where we are today. In 2013, we began researching the use, purchase and deployment of the cameras. While researching the program, you know, we collaborated with agencies from all across the country who were using body cameras to pull their best practices and to learn from their mistakes and to crack the policy that we felt was robust and would guide our officers in their use of cameras.

During that time, we also coordinated with some independent agencies we have in D.C. This is a little unique and the structure, and you know, how cases are tried and prosecuted. So, we coordinated with the Office of the Attorney General who prosecutes low-level cases here in D.C. We prosecute with the U.S. attorney's office who prosecutes most -- only collaborated with the Office of the Attorney -- U.S. attorney and they do most of our high level cases, anything -- you know, and adult cases. We also coordinated with the Office of Police Complaints, which is an independent organization that reviews complaints against and -- actually investigates complaints made against police officers and the district.

And one of the most important things we did is got our union on board from the get go. When we had decided that we're going to look for body cameras,

we brought our police union in and made sure they were aware of our process, why we were going down the road we were, and that we had their buy in.

So, that was more of the internal coordination that we undertook. We also did a bunch of external coordination. We discussed the program at community meetings throughout the city. Chief Lanier was very engaged in the community and she and her command staffs regular attended meetings. She made sure that we discuss it with our community members so that as they were hearing our progress on the news and through other avenues that they were aware of what we were doing and that we could (call) some of the rumors that maybe started within the community in relation to the Body Camera program.

We also engaged other stakeholders like the ACLU in conversation as well. Of note is that we participated in meetings that were facilitated through the Deputy Mayor of Public Safety and justice. These meetings included all stakeholders from across the city. So, from the far right to the far left, we had identified key persons from the organizations. We brought into a room and we had facilitated discussions about our program, about policy, about policy. But all the major policy and -- excuse me -- implications of having a program, we took their feedback into consider and they used that and (following) interest and regulations of public access to videos and the significant privacy concerns that were out there for body camera videos.

The (meeting) has elected regulations designed to ensure the district had proper protections in place to ensure the appropriate level of privacy for the members of the public and that all of our efforts were designed to ensure that we were open with the public about our ideas and our BWC program and we appropriately consider their feedback.

So, what that ultimately led to is the District of Columbia Council passed legislation that dictated some specific information about what would be able to be FOIA Freedom of Information Act or OPEN Government Act, what couldn't and to put some particular privacy implementations in place for certain types of interactions we have with the public like sexual assault or you

know complaint, trying to report sexual assault or domestic violence or stalking. So, it dictated what could and could not be released as a public on top of the FOIA regulations.

Todd Maxwell: So do you see as a unique (inaudible) it's a – it has multiple law enforcement agency, all working inside the districts, federal and local and then you have surrounding county police that also involved sometimes. So can you sort of talk about how you collaborated with those agencies and if any of that factors into your implementation program and the policy formation?

Ralph Ennis: Well first, I'll just start off by answering the question directly, yes, I did – I did -- we did consider a lot of feedback from various agencies when coming up with our policies.

Derek Meeks: Yes, one of the things that was really interesting as an outsider to the police department in some parts, obviously employee but being an outsider, not being very fluent with policy policies and these kind of things, sitting in these meetings and listening to and watching some of the best and brightest across the entire department come together and meet together all of the different concerns from different advocacy groups and different organizations, actual statutes in the city, privacy concerns and (move) together a comprehensive policy that truly is the cornerstone of the program.

To me, that was a really great process to watch and – and as the person responsible for going and making the program happened, it is this thing that is the fallback. It is what makes the program successful because now what we all we have to do, ha, ha, is go and actually make the program actually happened on an operational level. How we go about doing it and what we're trying to accomplish is the (thing) that was the outcome of this whole kind of inclusive comprehensive process.

Ralph Ennis: Yes, so D.C. as you indicated we have police agencies for all over the walks of life from different portions of government. I mean there's tons – there's dozens and dozens of agencies here in the district and each have their own unique mission. So, what we did is we work with our partner agencies first of

all to ensure they were aware of the program, the policy which Derek just spoke of and the protections that were currently in place for the release of video which is really most people concern as far as policing goes is that to make sure that the video is protected and not out in public where it could compromised people safety.

We consider their concerns, especially in relation to the fact that these videos would now be capturing sensitive law enforcement, you know, information and contact and operations on video. So, we wanted to make sure that they were comfortable that these videos that were being created weren't going to get out and to the public to where they could do harm to the agencies and their operations. So what we did is, you know, we work with them and we made sure that they were able to work within our policy and we just (weigh) your concern for overall security as a program.

It took some talking, it – but – but they eventually bought in, you know, the few agencies that did express some concerns. Overall though we received positive feedback from the agencies with very few concerns that had to be addressed. One example though that is not necessarily a law enforcement agency but it was between stakeholders from the fire department and the hospitals and they have particular concerns about the privacy of individuals who were interacting with them, and you know, the fact that we were filming interactions of people receiving medical care.

And after several meetings, you know, between the fire department and the hospital association here in D.C. and after we explained the security in place for the videos, we're able to work through it. And their privacy concerns were lessened and they (since then) mitigate it. We have a pretty good relationship with them. We made sure that they had information for decision makers within the department, within the program that could quickly address their concerns and we got positive feedback from that.

The last thing I wanted to talk about is that we feel that numerous inquiries from partner agency and the district who are thinking about implementing a BWC program themselves. Of note though is that, you know, D.C. was the

major – the main law enforcement agency within the district. When someone calls 911, they're calling the Metropolitan Police Department.

So, we – we control the technology systems for process and arrest and making reports in the city. So, the implementation of the program wasn't really going to affect what most of these agencies were going to do. As I stated earlier, the main concern was over privacy and make sure the videos didn't get out.

For example, videos that maybe – have made during a presidential motorcade or you know that maybe taken in a sensitive area in one of the government buildings in this city. But, we were fortunate and through our open dialogue that we started early on within the program and that fact that we didn't spring this on people that, you know, that was well thought out and timely and our implementation of the program we're able to work through all of those issues.

Dominique Burton: This concludes part one of our podcast with the Metropolitan Police Department.