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Guidelines for Protest Monitoring

The Police Advisory Commission regularly monitors protests, demonstrations, marches, and rallies that take place in Philadelphia, to observe an report on police action and interaction with demonstrators. By providing direct observation, well-documented monitoring can motivate policy change, ensure appropriate behavior, and promote good practices. PAC prioritizes safety and adherence to current state and local Covid-19 restrictions above all else. Monitors are not active participants in assemblies and should maintain independence and neutrality.

Monitoring activities focus on PPD Directive 8.3 Demonstrations and Labor Disputes. Directive 8.3 prioritizes PPD response to 1) preserve peace and order, 2) prevent the destruction of life and property, and 3) protect the constitutional rights of all parties. Additionally, PPD is expected to remain neutral and objective and to preserve both the protestors rights along with the person, place, or organization being protested against.

Safety

The PAC priorities the safety of monitors and strict adherence to the law, as well as mandated Covid-19 restrictions. Monitors should practice social distancing when feasible, wear masks, and practice good hygiene, including hand-washing and sanitizing. Maintain situational awareness at all times and be careful of sudden changes in the tone and tenor of the demonstration. Monitors can often find a safe vantage point and observe from a distance when necessary. When attending demonstrations, wear comfortable shoes and come prepared with weather appropriate clothing, water, a mask for Covid-19 regulations, and hand sanitizer. Also carry identification and contact information for another member of the monitoring team, the PAC, and/or a legal representative. When feasible, monitors should work in pairs for safety and support.

Monitoring Activities

Monitoring consists of observation and reporting. When making observations, consider using the “notes” application on your iPhone or other mobile device. You can also use your mobile device to capture relevant photos and video. Observations should not be limited to police and protester interaction, and should encompass some of the following:

Police

- Amount of police (visible presence) proportionate to crowd level
- Police units observed
- Perimeter established/protest area well defined/barriers in use
- Police staging areas
- Police formations and tactics
- Are front-line officers are being rotated out
- Civil Affairs Officers visible
- Other Law Enforcement Agencies and City Agencies/Representatives present
- Type of gear/equipment in use (riot gear, plain uniform, bike lines,)

Oversight is public safety



Event

- Legal status of assembly
- Event organizers
- Groups participating in event
- Moving/stationary/occupation
- Blocking roadways/streets/pedestrians/buildings/garages/parking

Crowd

- Displays/Signs
- Chants
- Speakers
- Presence of clergy/religious leaders
- News media
- Attire

Actions

- Use of force
- Individuals detained
- Use of weapons
- Police giving audible warnings and/or instruction
- Communications/negotiations between police and protestors

Documenting Activities

When you conclude monitoring, it can be helpful to verbally debrief to a monitoring partner or PAC representative. If you intend on writing up your observations in a first-person account, include as much of the information outlined above along with any relevant photographs, recordings, and videos and try to write your narrative within twenty-four hours.