

Northampton Policing Review Commission Full Meeting

MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, January 19, 2021

6-9pm

Remote Meeting

Join the Remote Meeting:

Video conference:

<https://zoom.us/j/97330093582?pwd=MmdSdzVXMTI1ODdQVnJaWHB2NmQydz09>

Meeting ID: 973 3009 3582 Passcode: 999514

Or by telephone, call: +1 929 436 2866

1. Call to Order
 - o Announcement of Zoom Recording
 - o Roll Call
 - o Approval of Meeting Minutes
2. Public comment (30 minutes)
3. Introduction of new commission member
4. Update on Co-Chairs
5. Announcement of speakers for commission and subcommittees
6. Discussion: Gender equity and its implications for Commission work
7. Outreach and scheduling public hearings
8. Subcommittee Updates (alternatives, policies, and spending)
9. New business
10. Adjourn

1. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order by Commissioner Dan Cannitty at 6:10PM.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF ZOOM RECORDING

Administrative Assistant Noa Coffey-Moore made an announcement that this meeting was being recorded for the public record and would be available on Northampton Open Media, as well as, the City of Northampton website.

Commissioner Lois Ahrens present
Commissioner Elizabeth Barajas-Roman Not Present
Commissioner Booker Bush Not Present
Commissioner Dan Cannity (co-chair) present
Commissioner Nick Fleisher present
Commissioner David Hoose present
Commissioner Alex Jarrett present
Commissioner Javier Luengo-Garrido present
Commissioner Nnamdi Pole present
Commissioner Michael Quinlan present
Commissioner Josey Rosales present
Commissioner Cynthia Suopis present
Commissioner Carol Owens present
Commissioner Kris Banks present

1. Public comment (30 minutes)

Community member Robert Eastman asked the commission to work with city council to immediately recommend the money from the cut budget to be reallocated. He said he feels the Mayor is holding the money hostage.

Community member Al Simon said there is not yet a recommendation of an entity with full independent oversight and full disciplinary power. He suggested determining the appropriate staffing level before making recommendations about spending.

Community member Buju Dasgupta urged the commission to recommend the NPD to make annual public reports on race, sex, and gender identity, as well as what actions were taken, and the final disposition, with something that is easily digestible. They said these reports should be followed by public discussion to talk about what the data looks like and what biases look like.

Community member Nick Papouchis suggested the NPD police officials in training in sensitivity to mental health issues, to coordinate with services that are preexisting, to hire mental health professionals to augment police interventions, to improve the dispatch system so dispatchers can discern what is a mental health call, offer ongoing consultation to dispatchers, and to consider rehiring the police officers who were part of the first budget cut.

Community member Lilli said during a mental health crisis a cop was almost called on them. They asked that people get community based peer lead and conflict de escalation to be accessible to people like her. They said it's important to go above and beyond to care for kids who have mental issues and dont have alot of experience beyond-this person is armed and twice my size and I do not know how to interact besides running away. They said it's inappropriate for police to respond to mental health situations.

Community member Rye Buckley said police training has been found to be largely ineffective. He proposed the commission find peers and professionals outside of the NPD to respond to these calls.

Community member Ya-Ping Douglass urged the commission to listen to organizations and abolitionists and academics who have been doing abolition work for over 20 years. They read a piece about the Critical Resistance which historically was founded by Rush Wilson Gilmore and Angela Davis, which explains at length that training and community oversight boards don't work. They said that lead abolitionist organizers have stated this unequivocally and that a simple easy path is to invest our resources and support into institutions which are accountable to people they wish to serve.

3. Introduction of new commission member

Commissioner Kris Banks said he is looking forward to digging into this work with everyone. He said he would like to join the Outreach committee.

4. Update on Co-Chairs

Commissioner Dan Cannity said there is still an open co-chair position as well as an open commissioner position. He said after the last meeting, Commissioner Cynthia reached out and volunteered for the co-chair position.

Commissioner Dan Cannity moved to appoint Commissioner Cynthia as a co-chair. Commissioner Michael Quinlan seconded the motion. Commissioner Cynthia accepted the position.

5. Announcement of speakers for commission and subcommittees

Commissioner Lois Ahrens suggested Alyssa Klein as a speaker.

Commissioner Dan Cannity said the commission hasn't heard back from her yet.

6. Discussion: Gender equity and its implications for Commission work

Commissioner Lois Ahrens read a piece she wrote.

"The Commission is rightfully focused on the policing of Black people and people of color. The Commission's charge is to "transform how the city delivers policing services while ensuring community safety equitably and justly for all." We all agree that when we address policing we must focus on its consequences and harm to Black people and people of color. On the City of Northampton website it says of the Commission's composition: "The commission shall include representation of not less than eight members who are Black, Indigenous, People of Color, or from other historically marginalized communities who have been targeted and harmed by U.S. policing practices." Although not specified, women --most especially marginalized and criminalized women-- are one of the communities who have been and are harmed by policing. Despite the fact that 58% of Northampton residents are female, there is now a large gender imbalance on the Commission....10 men and 4 women.

Given this gender imbalance, going forward I ask Commissioners to be vigilant so that the ideas of women are fully recognized and considered. And, crucially, I ask the Commission to explore how policing differently impacts women, including policing responses to domestic and sexual violence, stalking, the treatment of elderly women and the particular and damaging contempt and shaming of women who use substances, women who are criminalized for sex work, and any women who becomes entangled and harmed by in the criminal legal system. Each and all are informed and impacted by sexism and misogyny. It is my hope, as the Commission moves forward in the next 10 weeks, that in addition to alternatives to policing for people experiencing emotional crisis and people who are unhoused, that Commission will focus on how the NPD responds to domestic and sexual violence as well as substance use---the lives lived behind closed doors--and that in addition to racism that sexism and homophobia/trans-phobia be integrated into the lens by which we do our work."

Commissioner Carol Owens thanked Commissioner Lois Ahrens and said when she was asked, she didn't know she was replacing a Latinx commissioner. She said she shares this concern that the commission is morphing towards representation of people who are not necessarily having lived experience, or having intimate knowledge. She said she would like to mark this moment as the story of the commission and how it has transformed itself since September. She said she hopes that there's a piece in the final report that addresses that story because she thinks it's a parallel process to the difficulty in getting voices in here that need to be heard.

Commissioner Lois Ahrens said her point is that policing is different for women because of sexism and misogyny, and that this is something the commission should be using this as another lense. She said a huge part of policing is in relation to domestic violence and sexual violence which is largely violence against women. She said the commission needs to really think about this.

Commissioner Josey Rosales said the way that feminine bodies are policed in general, especially with a large trans community in Northampton is important to think about in terms of where that intersects with policing. They said they think there has been a shift in the makeup and now resembles the main power dynamics in society. They said there's a huge sense of powerlessness they've been feeling until the commission pushes for more radical recommendations. They said they feel there is a level of tokenization and it feels weird and like they may be a dynamic of police apologists overtaking and pushing more towards reform versus abolition.

Commissioner Michael Quinlan said he sees the gender imbalance. He said he hears Commissioner Lois and thinks it's true. He said he exchanged emails with a city member who doesn't see the value of this commission and didn't see the compassion in their work.

7. Outreach and scheduling public hearings

Commissioner Javier Luengo-Garrido said he created the first draft of an outreach document which provides a basis of questions and how the commission would like to communicate with communities who have been affected by policing. He said yesterday there was an open workshop and that the outreach document is near finished. He said the document provides guidelines for people to be able to collect testimony in a way that respects individuals' experience and prioritizes their safety.

Commissioner Carol Owens said it is a gift to receive testimony from individuals with lived experience. She said the document makes it clear that individuals can share what they feel comfortable sharing, and that they can take their testimony back if they don't feel comfortable. She said the committee's process is to circulate this document and she wants people who are participating to communicate what would make them feel safer in this community.

Commissioner Javier Luengo-Garrido said the committee has set basic parameters for the testimonies. He said during the next meeting, he urged the public to look at the document.

Commissioner Dan Cannity shared his screen and walked the commission through the document.

Commissioner Kris Banks asked how the commission is planning to disseminate the document due to COVID-19.

Commissioner Dan Cannity said using a digital form could work. He said people may not necessarily have access to the site so he would like to have printouts that can be passed around to different organizations.

Commissioner Javier Luengo-Garrido said testimonies can be given with social distancing and that certain organizations may have innovative conditions already that would allow them to collect testimonies safely.

Commissioner Dan Cannity said he and Noa are working on a page on the website so that people can make a submission themselves without going through anyone. He said there's nothing saying they couldn't submit physical mail

Commissioner Nick Fleisher wondered whether the commission has talked about ways to publicize this invitation and wondered who he can recommend organizations to.

8. Subcommittee Updates (Alternatives, Policies, and Spending)

Alternatives

Commissioner Javier Luengo-Garrido thanked his fellow committee members for their work on the preliminary report document. He said focusing on domestic violence and sexual violence is the committees' next topic. He invited commissioners and the public to attend.

Policing Policies & Services

Commissioner Nnamdi Pole said the committee turned its attention to the complaint process which brought a discussion about reforming oversight with the complaint process. He said Commissioner Cynthia reported on domestic violence, and Commissioner Nick provided a report on the homeless liaison officer. He said the committee agreed to invite the chief of police to their subcommittee and started the process of generating questions for the chief of police. He said the committee plans to invite her to the subcommittee meeting two meetings from now.

Spending & Contracts Subcommittee

Commissioner Josey Rosales said their committee brainstormed actionable steps they could make. They said they looked at collective bargaining for the police union, in order to suggest ways to move forward in terms of the city of Northampton.

Commissioner Dan Cannity said the Chief of Police reacted very strongly to report logs of their time. He said the committee is trying to put together what the costs and time that are associated with policing activities. He said to have minute to minute data they would probably have to do a time audit but that the committee is looking into their time.

Commissioner Carol Owens said there are two major positions here. She said she doesn't see it as a majority minority report and that the commission doesn't have to come to a unanimous agreement, but thinks it will be more effective to have specific recommendations such as offloading pieces of tasks that police shouldn't be a part of specifically mental health concerns. She said achieving consensus without votes takes months if not years.

Commissioner Alex Jarrett offered a potential path forward. He suggested the commission could draft an outline of what a report would look like. He said there is power in putting forward a proposal even if there is no consensus.

Commissioner Javier Luengo-Garrido said it will also be more efficient if folks do their homework outside of meetings.

Commissioner Josey Rosales said there are commissioners here that lack an understanding of abolition on this commission and they are responding to their gut reactions. They said a more uniformed understanding of what an abolitionist framework would look like would do the commission a deep service.

Commissioner Nnamdi Pole said there may be some advantage to all doing homework or reading moving forward and to collectively discuss the content.

9. New business

There was no new business.

10. Adjourn

Commissioner Dan Cannity moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:34pm. The motion adjourn is passed unanimously.