

DRAFT

Northampton Policing Review Commission
Policies and Services Subcommittee Meeting Minutes
Mondays February 8, 2021
6:30PM-8:30PM

1. Call to Order

Meeting is announced and called to order by Nick. All members are present. Nick says minutes were received this afternoon. The essence of the meeting was captured. David moved to approve, Nnamdi seconds. The meeting minutes are approved.

2. Presentation of time and format for meeting.

Nick describes the meeting as a way to become more informed about the police department. Participation by the public will be limited in this meeting, but will have more opportunities in this meeting and in future meetings.

Nick describes the subcommittee charge to review current practices and policies of the North Hampton police and to recommend changes that might lead to reforms that ensure Community Safety equitably and justly for all, and that this meeting is an opportunity for us to better understand aspects of the current functioning at the North Hampton police department.

The structure of tonight will be each committee member will have approximately 12 minutes, 12 minutes to ask questions of their choosing. Nick will be the timekeeper. There should be approximately 15 minutes to ask additional or clarifying questions. The order for commissioners is Nnamdi, Cynthia, Elizabeth, David, then Nick.

Questions have been submitted to the Jody prior to the meeting, but commissioners may revise questions or may have new questions.

Nick asks Jody if she has any questions. She does not.

3. Questions for Northampton Police Chief Jody Kasper.

Commissioners begin asking questions of Jody.

Nnamdi asks about what reforms Jody thinks are necessary and what are the barriers that are needed.

Jody says she was hired to be a reformer and supports reforms on racism, de-escalation training, duty to intervene and others at state and national level. She lists other reforms. She does not list barriers.

Nnamdi asks for a few times in which police have been uniquely qualified to handle a situation of great community importance like serious crime.

Jodi responds that the police receive many calls that are not crime but related to other work the police do. She lists the police actions and made arrests. She references crimes from a few years ago including cockfighting, fatal house fires, and child pronogrphahy.

Nnamdi asks what the police department is concerned about given the current political climate and the threat of domestic terrorism.

Jody responds there were no arrests or injuries at recent protesters, but there are concerns over protesters who have bad intentions. She hopes that things go well, but is preparing for the worst.

Nnamdi asks how Jody thinks about situations that are neither violations of law and or policy of your officers, but create a feeling of unease in the community.

Jodi responds that these are customer service complaints. They don't involve violations of the law which would be more serious and handled by internal affairs. Sometimes she can apologize when it was something the department should have handled better.

Nnamdi passes to another colleague. Cynthia asks if she can follow up on a couple points. Nick confirms the time is hers to ask what she would like.

Cynthia asks whether Jody has heard that training and increased trainings do not work, and why it might not work in cases of the police force based on its composition.

Jody responds that they don't want to waste any time on training that doesn't work. But it depends on the definition of "work". Training has to be consistent. NPD offers training in these areas. Having training speaks to the culture of the department. Jody received training that wasn't helpful, then saw it was important. She became interested, and is mid-way in her evolution through these topics. She read a study that says bias in police departments reflects the biases of the community it serves.

Cynthia asks if the chief has any reaction or response to the testimony heard over the past several months, especially by individuals of color, who feel the department is not serving them.

Jody responds that she never wants to hear. She and her staff are committed to serving everyone and if they are not doing that they want to know about it. She also knows some people and there are different perspectives to their experiences. She has a plan to move forward. She thinks change will come from chipping away at societal problems and that new officers will bring new perspectives.

Cynthia checks for time, and then asks why the number of domestic violence training hours is so low for such a dangerous situation.

Jody says training to improve officer safety happens in categories like deescalation training, and domestic violence training is updates on laws.

Cynthia asks about Jody's thoughts that a police officer presence escalates those scenarios.

Jody says you are talking about laws and danger. In the 70s women were being killed by the partners and more protections were put in place. Domestic violence is difficult to go on. People who are having an argument do not want an armed officer show up. Some may one. She knows people are suggesting alternatives, but that people are hurting each other now during covid.

Cynthia finishes and Elizabeth begins asking questions.

Elizabeth asks about police presence as not stopping crime but reacting to it, and what Jody's thoughts are on resources available for sexual assaults, and whether armed police officers are the right type of response to it.

Jody says if they can catch the person that did it that it prevents the next one from happening. That's the preventative power of police. The chief says there is misinformation in the report that they have more domestic violence training than drone training. There is no minimum number for staffing of sexual assault investigators.

Elizabeth clarifies and asks about distribution of expert resources across shifts, and where improvements might be made.

Jody brings up issues of language on the department's website and that sexual assault. She says that there's most likely someone on with special training and if there isn't they can be momentarily. Ideally there would be more civilian advocates, but that's expensive and they don't have that.

Elizabeth passes her time. David begins.

David asks how and why the police are involved in so many non-criminal calls.

Jody answers that police are helpers. They're on 24/7 so when calls come and no one else responds the PD have taken to responding. She also says that police are involved in preventative activities. And they are doing community outreach. They recently got grant funding for civilian advocates. She thinks it is impossible to cut police staffing even if they no longer perform functions such as mental health because officer response to emergencies can take an entire shift. Cutting staffing in half would require relying on mutual aid.

David asks if Jody has any sense of why police killings of black and brown people happen so frequently, and often in the context of a traffic stop.

Jody responds that she saw this question and doesn't feel comfortable answering it.

David asks what officers are told around traffic stops by their higher-ups.

Jody responds that they are not given specific orders.

David asks whether it is completely within an officer's discretion as to who gets pulled over, or whether someone can tell them they won't enforce something.

Jody says they do not give instructions for not enforcing laws at certain times. Officers have discretion unless there is grant funding for a particular time of law like hands-free operation or child seat belts.

David asks if Jodi is willing to limit minor traffic enforcement after dark, unless the driver was endangering the public.

Jody says that would be dangerous. That police officers pull over drivers for minor infractions and may find OUI.

David says he wouldn't want things to go back to when drunk drivers were ignored, but asks again whether traffic stops could be limited to only those presenting danger, and whether a lot of stops might be pretextual.

Jody says that officers are stopping people for legitimate reasons just as during the day.

Nick says David is at 15 minutes, and David passes to Nick.

Nick asks what kind of reforms Jodi imagined when she was hired.

Jody says she thinks about hiring a diverse department, and because she talked a lot about transparency. She thinks she is transparent with things like the Open Data initiative, and a focus

on professional training and leadership development on issues like mental health responses, implicit bias, and de-escalation.

Nick wants to be more specific and asks what Jody has and wants to change around hiring.

Jody responds that she has removed the written test to allow for more emphasis on in-person interviews and the thoughts of diverse selection committees. She values hiring good people at the end of the day. She says that new officers do not have job stability now and they are facing problems with retention.

Nick asks whether interviewees are asked any specific questions regarding racial awareness, or raising the awareness of racial bias in policing.

Jody responds they ask one question, and she doesn't like it. There are 2 other questions she would like to ask around racism in society and what reforms police departments should make.

Nick asks if there's always a person of color on the hiring committee.

Jody says it is always different.

Nick asks what the police departments position is on body cameras.

Jody says officers were interested in learning more about them. They're only useful if you have a lot of use of force complaints, otherwise they are not.

Nick asks if there is anything that has come from efforts to create a strategic plan, and who are the subject matter experts they work with.

Jody says subject matter experts are decided by the International Association of Chiefs of Police, and they oversee Cri-tech. They came out and did a few focus groups in early March of 2020, but haven't been able to proceed because of the pandemic.

Nick asks if Dispatch is under the police, and what the relationship is between dispatch and the police. Nick points to a specific complaint between a police officer and dispatch employee.

Jody responds that dispatch is outside of the police, and in a separate building. Both report to the mayor.

Nick asks how the police work with dispatch, what does and doesn't work, and what directions Jody wants things to go when there are complaints of a person of color.

Jody says dispatchers are trained through an entirely different process, but they do have a liaison with multiple departments.

Nick asks if there's any plans with dispatch around triaging calls.

Jody says they currently have filtering systems in place, and that dispatchers even have relationships with frequent callers.

Nick asks if there's anything the commission could do to help around officer misconduct.

Jody says that she doesn't know if there's anything the commission can do, and these cases are complex.

Nick ends the official question and answer time, thanks Jody, and reminds attendees that next week they will have public comment. He opens the floor to any further questions commissioners have.

4. Follow up questions if time permits

Nnamdi asks what the chief things are factual errors in the initial report. And then asked about the school resource officer.

Jody lists concerns including mischaracterizing police, she has concerns about the sexual assault responders, and that the policie officer salaries is confusing. She also is concerned about the accounting of police time. She is concerned that students in the school won't have someone to build relationships and that the administrators won't have a connection to the police.

Elizabeth says she would like to explore what the community impacts are of racial bias, of being stopped because she doesn't look like someone who is from here. And how that might reflect the relationships between officers and white community members.

Jody says that the police are being invited into communities now but that this is still an area of growth for them. She can understand resistance and is still growing in her understanding.

Nick checks to see if there are any other questions, and closes questions.

5. Planning next Subcommittee meeting.

Nnamdi would like to present a statement from Smith campus security. Nick says he will include consensus modeling on the agenda based on the full commission meeting, and a place for digesting and debriefing what they heard tonight.

NNamdi, Cynthia, Nick, and Elizabeth discuss concerns over the final report and the values that underlie and support it.

Nick says he won't ask for new business since it was just covered.

6. Adjourn

Nnamdi motions to adjourn. Cynthia seconds.