

Northampton Policing Review Commission

Preliminary Report - January 7, 2020

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
Background	3
Alternatives to Policing Subcommittee	3
Context	3
Why is this Policing Review Commission Here ?	4
Overview of Alternatives Sub-Committee	6
Houselessness and Policing	7
Substance Use & Policing	9
Mental Health Calls and Policing:	9
Data to support our recommendations for new responses to mental health crises	12
Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault	14
Further work to discern alternatives to policing domestic violence	16
References & resources	17
Policies and Spending Subcommittee	17
Activities To Date:	18
Traffic Enforcement Findings	19
Mental Health and Addictions Findings	20
School Resource Officer Findings	21
Domestic Violence Findings	21
Rape and Sexual Assault Findings	22
Drone and Surveillance Findings	23
Housing Findings	24
Future Directions.	24
Spending and Contracts Subcommittee	25
Reallocation recommendations for the recent 10% funding	25
Opportunities for reallocation	26
Salaries, detail pay, and expenditures	27
Costs of Police Activities	29

Background

In response to both national and local outcries, the City Council and Mayor of Northampton created a joint commission as part of a process to rethink the city's approach to policing, rethink whether and what police services could be delivered by others, and rethink how we structure and fund community safety moving forward.

The Northampton Policing Review Commission began meeting in September of 2020 and continues to work to understand the complicated histories and current issues facing Northampton, its residents, and its visitors. To handle this task, the commission created 3 subcommittees, each tasked with an avenue of inquiry related to the Northampton Police Department and/or community health and safety. These subcommittees are the 1) Alternatives to Policing, 2) Policies and Services, and 3) Spending and Contracts.

This preliminary report represents much of the work of the commission up to this point. It is not a finalized report, but a statement of progress and intent. The report itself is divided into 3 sections generated by the subcommittees. Within and across the subcommittees are areas of convergence and tension as we work to unravel what we know, continue to ask questions and find answers, and reach towards consensus as a body.

Alternatives to Policing Subcommittee

Members: Booker Bush, Javier Luengo-Garrido, Alex Jarrett, Carol Owen

Context

After the brutal murder of George Floyd by the Minneapolis Police Department and the abuses and killings in the United States of other Black and Brown people, including Breonna Taylor, people across the country mobilized in their own communities, demanding that police departments and their budgets be reformulated. On June 3, 2020, more than 500 people attended the Northampton City Council Budget hearing on Zoom. The hearing lasted seven hours (1).

In that hearing, an overwhelming number of speakers, residents of Northampton, called for a cut to the Police Department budget and to diminish the NPD footprint. City Councilors also pointed out that they had gotten hundreds of emails urging them to take these same actions and not approve the Mayor's budget. At the end of the process, the police budget would be reduced by ten percent(2). Because of the mobilization of hundreds of people including a massive protest in front of the Police Station (3)(4), the City Council and Mayor decided to create a Policing Review Commission to write a report and bring recommendations about changes to the Northampton Police Department, based on careful discussion and research.

- (1) <https://www.gazettenet.com/Hundreds-attend-city-council-budget-hearing-speak-about-cutting-police-budget-34612436>
- (2) <https://www.masslive.com/news/2020/06/northampton-votes-to-cut-police-department-budget-by-10.html>
- (3) <https://www.gazettenet.com/Protests-outside-Northampton-City-Councilors-homes-ask-for-significant-cuts-to-police-department-budget-34830767>
- (4) <https://www.gazettenet.com/Northampton-marches-against-police-brutality-34560085>

Why is this Policing Review Commission Here ?

We are here because of a recently understood story of black people not being protected by our police, but instead being made to feel less safe by the police.

We are here because a larger community recognizes that if some feel unsafe, all feel unsafe.

We are here because none of us wish to have mental health problems treated by police.

We are here because addictions treatment is not a problem to be diagnosed and managed by police.

We are here because we see homelessness treated as a crime, and the solutions run through the police.

We were brought here by the experience of black and people of color who have poverty, neglect, discrimination, trauma and systemic racism managed by policing, prisons and contempt by others.

We wish to change these experiences. We seek safety for all and access to treatment for poverty, homelessness, violence (domestic and in the larger community) mental health and addiction services without the involvement of the police who serve as a failsafe rather than its current primary care role.

The work begins because of our appreciation that Black lives have not mattered so far as safety has been concerned. Black lives that have been troubled by the lack of treatment for addiction or mental health services have instead been treated with incarceration or violence.

Although the Black population for Northampton is only 2.2 percent, the number of arrests in Northampton for blacks ranges from 14 to 16% over the last 5 years.

We do not know the number of people of color in Northampton who are homeless.

We do not know the number of people of color called for Domestic Violence related calls.

What we may know is how each of us would wish to be treated if our own safety was called into question-

How would we want our child who is experiencing a profound bout of depression to be treated; by police, or by a supportive team of providers?

How would we want our sibling who has been evicted from their apartment to be assisted; by a police officer, or by a case worker who can assist with obtaining alternate housing.

How would we want our child who has been awakened from a drug overdose with naloxone treated, by a forcible ride with the police or with people who can assist in drug treatment?

Black people have a long history of feeling unsafe, unprotected and subject to acts of random violence. So, it is for people who are houseless in Northampton; as well as people who live with mental health disorders or post-traumatic stress disorder; people who experience poverty or interpersonal violence or community violence; people caught in the throes of addiction.

Should police response to all of these vulnerabilities be the answer ? The default? If a community has nothing else to offer - the police become the answer.

The Alternatives for Policing Sub-Committee of the Northampton Policing Commission wishes to offer alternatives to policing as the default solution. We wish to recommend services that would make us all feel more safe, more comfortable. We want to view policing for our public safety rather than as the primary treatment for all of the issues that trouble us.

Overview of Alternatives Sub-Committee

The Alternatives to Policing Subcommittee has met during the last three months to examine the experiences of residents within the specific context of Northampton and its various forms of policing. Early on, testimonies from community members and advocates made it clear that negative interactions with police officers in Northampton have a clear impact on the homeless population and those without stable living arrangements.

Testimony highlighted the lack of access to bathrooms and warm water during winter, along with the issue of police officers attending mental health related incidents and other non-criminal incidents on the streets of the city. Based on these public testimonies and additional research on model programs in the United States and Canada, the Alternatives to Policing Subcommittee is concluding that a respondent with no gun would be more appropriate than is dispatch of an armed officer. The Sub-committee will continue its investigation, focusing on incidents of domestic violence, sexual assault, and drug overdoses to document residents' experiences with police responses.

The Alternatives to Policing Subcommittee has explored several non-policing response models. These have included:

- Co-respondent models
- Peer-led models
- Use of existing non-police human services in Northampton

To make concrete and sustainable change, we must address the issues underlying the targeting of minorities. Policing should never be used to control others who are powerless in our community, and who may not be in positions of privilege that would allow them to address negative interactions with the police. The successes or failures of any changes made to the current structure of the Northampton Police Department must be measured by the negative or positive impacts in this area.

One of the challenges in this work is the lack of awareness among community members related to their own privilege and position in the community. When the current policing policies and practices have benefitted some groups of people while being harmful to minoritized people, it is critical that those with privilege recognize this dynamic, work proactively to understand it, and partner to change what is historically not working for those without privilege.

This subcommittee has examined these dynamics and is attempting to create options for alternative forms of public safety and public health that ensure that those community residents most affected by policing are not left voiceless. Our investigations have yielded much data on alternative response models that involve the replacement of police presence in street situations that do not require an armed officer with crisis professionals and peers with lived experience of the types of distress that leads to a 911 call. Alternative models of response are the primary focus of this sub-committee's work and its recommendations to the full commission.

Change in our public safety system will take time. We envision a phased process whereby we put increasing resources into programs that will research, design and implement proactive, data-driven practices that will reduce the scope of policing, focusing on supporting people rather than policing them.

Houselessness and Policing

People who live without housing are a great concern for the people in our community. Their lives are unsettled and frequently endangered. They are at risk of starvation, disease, exposure to the elements and worst of all, live at the whim of their larger community.

There are multiple comorbidities that accompany houselessness.

- Poverty
- Mental health conditions
- Domestic violence
- Substance use
- Past incarceration
- Lack of employment or employability

When these comorbidities persist, it becomes more and more difficult for people to exit the cycle of on-going houselessness.

There are additional, structural barriers that actually promote houselessness:

- Lack of affordable housing
- Income inequality
- Ongoing effects of structural racism

The Police are frequently called on to deal with issues that result from houselessness. The police are called for:

- Agitated behavior
- Concerns about property trespass
- Domestic violence within the homelessness community
- Offensive behavior
- Concerns about safety within the homelessness community

The Policing Commission has heard from several community witnesses to the houseless residents of Northampton. Witnesses inform us that houseless individuals do not feel protected by the police. Instead, they feel endangered by police involvement in their lives while living on the streets.

We are aware that some support services offered to those living on the streets are delivered by the police in partnership with other agencies. We urge development of alternatives to police involvement in providing services to the homeless. What follows are some services & resources that we consider urgently needed in Northampton:

The Resilience Hub

The city needs a *Community Center* where people can gather, learn about services, and access water, showers and storage. (See more detailed description in the “Resilience Hub Report for the City of Northampton”)

Housing First

Getting people into supportive housing situations reduces their police interactions, time in the correctional system, reduces health care costs and has better outcomes for them as individuals. Recognizing collective accountability for outcomes instead of fixed institutional role.

https://www.csh.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Report_FUFBooklet.pdf

Creation of a structure that facilitates access to housing: An Employed, financially supported staff to coordinate housing options for individuals

There are currently many organizations that assist with housing related issues. However, the process is complex and exists in many silos (e.g., Tapestry, Recovery Center, ServiceNet, CHD, Hampshire HOPE, Eliot Services). Pamela Schwartz of Western Mass Housing First has spoken with us and has offered recommendations for improvement of coordination among such agencies so that vulnerable individuals in need of housing do not fall between the cracks of the various agencies.

Ongoing community education and engagement about houselessness: Attitudinal change

The Mayor's Workgroup on Panhandling produced a report with many recommendations for community consideration and engagement, all aimed at supporting people rather than policing them. <https://www.northamptonma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/13414/Mayors-Work-Group-on-Panhandling-Study-Report---October-2019-PDF?bidId>

Understanding the plight of houseless people in our community may decrease the number of calls for policing, create energy to assist houseless people, and promote a community that supports each other.

Additionally we urge examination of peer organizations that may assist with the housing issue. We advocate that data on houselessness provide statistics on race, ethnicity, and gender.

Substance Use & Policing

We believe that any forward direction in policy and funding should include an expansion of "Harm Reduction" programs. This framework should apply not only to resources for houseless individuals but also those who struggle with substance issues. The range of harm reduction

approaches to providing needed resources shift the focus from punitive interventions to life-preserving interventions that provide individuals a better platform for their recovery efforts. Failure to attend to the desperation of community residents whose lives are dominated by their daily experience of having to “use” creates cascades of other problems related to housing, health care, mental health care, and food insufficiency. It is also well established in sociology and law enforcement literature that failure to attend to growth in addiction across a community often triggers an upward trend in crime statistics and in populations of houseless community residents.

Already established within the City are programs that follow harm reduction philosophies and practices to respond to risks associated with street drug use. We urge expansion of such programs.

Mental Health Calls and Policing:

Despite the evidence of de-escalation training completed by officers of the NPD we believe that police often do not have a useful role in responding to members of the community who are experiencing mental health symptoms. People re-experiencing symptoms of earlier trauma or having heightened mental states are often not comforted by the arrival of an armed police officer in uniform. Based on previous personal experience with police an emotionally dysregulated person with a mental health history may conclude that the arrival of an armed police officer signals the introduction of a total control strategy by an authority figure. When interviewed, people living with severe mental illness (both locally and nationwide) speak of the need for a non-criminalized approach whose goal is to help a person in distress to develop and implement a self-determined crisis management strategy.

Nationwide, one in five (20.6%) of all adults live with a mental health condition (<https://www.samhsa.gov/grants/grant-announcements/fg-19-003>). According to the same NIMH data, 5.2% of all U.S. adults suffer from severe mental health conditions, typically involving some psychosis. A 2015 report by the Treatment Advocacy Center states that “by all accounts – official and unofficial – a minimum of 1 in 4 fatal police encounters ends the life of an individual with severe mental illness. At this rate, the risk of being killed during a police incident is 16 times greater for individuals with untreated mental illness than for other civilians approached or stopped by officers”.

Treatment Advocacy Center (2015). *Overlooked in the Undercounted: The Role of Mental Illness in Fatal Law Enforcement Encounters*. Office of Research and Public Affairs.

Historically, people with severe mental health symptoms were sent to live in state hospitals such as the Northampton State Hospital. They were joined by other inmates who were deemed

difficult for other community members to accept or tolerate. Along with people exhibiting symptoms of mental illness, individuals considered “vagrants” and members of new immigrant populations who appeared non-compliant with dominant cultural norms were not infrequently referred to the state hospitals as well.

Well documented but sometimes forgotten is the history of Northampton as an epicenter of the de-institutionalization movement of the 1960s and 1970s. During the years that Northampton State Hospital and parallel institutions were being emptied in response to vigorous petitions by local human rights advocates, combined with disinvestment in mental health services by the Federal government, Northampton became one of the cities that former inmates of the state hospital adopted as their new home. Though the City has long been home to both disability law advocates and social services advocates, funding and supportive programming to assist ex-patients transitioning to community living has often fallen short. Numbers of community members who previously may have received more regular supportive services are now visible in the community, though distinctly “under the radar” of service organizations. These same individuals who are not connected with housing options, treatment for substance abuse/dependency, or access to primary and specialty health care often have the most frequent exposure to law enforcement.

The continued Federal and state disinvestment from earlier forms of secure funding to meet the needs of many vulnerable populations has created situations in which “under the radar” folks lacking basic resources have become more visible in the community. With this visibility comes discomfort for some who live in more economically privileged conditions. Police have been increasingly called upon to respond to a variety of situations whose resolution could be more sustainably achieved by engagement with housing advocates, peer-led recovery programs, and supportive services for drug and alcohol addiction/dependency, interpersonal violence, child abuse, or mental health conditions.

Our research in the area of policing of people with mental health issues whose presentation in the community precipitates 911 calls has included interviews with local leadership in both mental health and housing alternatives that serve this population. We have also studied model programs existing around the nation. Some have begun recently and some have experience extended back several decades. We call for city planning initiatives in the following areas:

- 1) ***Development of a peer responder model.*** As Sean Donovan of Western MA Recovery Learning Center (WMRLC) noted in his public comments to this Commission, “police are more equipped to deal with violence but are also often the cause of it.” When armed and uniformed police approach a distraught person in mental health crisis, an internalized trauma response may escalate in both the community resident and the police officer. Instead of the desired de-escalation, the community resident may become more emotionally dysregulated, even to the extent that at the police officer

may consider taking control of the situation by taking the resident into custody for transport to a medical facility, or worse arrest for non-criminal behavior.

There are innovative models of response and de-escalation involving the use of peers, who are individuals having lived experience whose wisdom and experience can be effective in helping and connecting with individuals in crisis. Peers can work independently or can work in collaboration with professionals. The Recovery Learning Community is a nationally recognized program of peer services.

- 2) ***Expansion of existing peer respite programming.*** Currently, Afiya in Northampton (affiliated with WMRLC) strives to provide a safe space in which each person can find the balance and support needed to turn what is so often referred to as a ‘crisis’ into a learning and growth opportunity. The Afiya house is located in a residential neighborhood and is central to a variety of community resources. It is available to anyone ages 18 and older who is experiencing distress and feels they would benefit from being in a short-term, 24-hour peer-supported environment with others who have ‘been there.’ Typical stays at Afiya range from one to seven days. The majority of staff and guests at Afiya identify as having lived experience that may include: extreme emotional or altered states, psychiatric diagnoses, trauma histories, living without a home, challenges in navigating the mental health and other public systems, or living with an addiction.

Another peer led and inspired resource is a program model called “The Living Room”. Similar to a peer respite, The Living Room programs offer daytime support to people needing emotional support and particularly those with housing challenges. The qualities of each program are specific to their own communities. There are Living Room Programs in Greenfield, Springfield and Framingham supported by the Department of Mental Health. We urge expansion of funding for peer respite programming as well as development of daytime supportive and non-stigmatizing indoor environments for people who are unhoused or feeling vulnerable on the streets.

- 3) ***Education for the public on the value of non-violent and de-escalating approaches such as emotional CPR.*** A number of community members who have commented verbally before this Commission or have submitted written comments emphasize the need to engage the wider community in the provision of public safety. Such comments have been made by individuals critical of armed policing responses to non-criminal calls and also from individuals who are unequivocally supportive of the NPD. WMRLC and National Empowerment Center are peer-led organizations that are equipped to offer training for anyone interested in increasing their skills in

assisting others through emotional crises. These trainings should be contracted for and offered to interested individuals in the Northampton community.

<https://emotional-cpr.org/downloads/eCPR-FactSheet-2.pdf>

4) *Harm reduction and housing programs to address the problem of people on the streets with active substance use issues and co-occurring mental health issues*

As elaborated above, harm reduction programming is founded on human rights principles. Specifically any housing, food, or addiction treatment is organized around the belief that all community residents should have access to housing, food, and treatment regardless of the current relationship with substances. Such programs do not require full abstinence or full sobriety. To reiterate here, we urge expansion of such programming in Northampton.

Data to support our recommendations for new responses to mental health crises

Members of the Commission have investigated model programs around the United States in which community volunteers, in tandem with nursing, social work, and emergency medical resources have developed non-police-guided responses to situations involving mental health crises, substance abuse, and housing needs.

Crisis Assistance Helping Out on the Streets (CAHOOTS) program founded in Eugene, Oregon thirty years ago is a mobile crisis intervention program staffed by White Bird Clinic personnel that uses City of Eugene vehicles. The budget is through the Eugene Police Department and the program is well embedded in the community. CAHOOTS is dispatched on EPD's service channel and calls are triaged through the Central Lane Communication Center. Each van is staffed with a medic (nurse or EMT) and an experienced crisis worker. Last year CAHOOTS responded to nearly 24,000 calls. Only 300 of these calls necessitated a call for police back-up. CAHOOTS diverts 5 – 8 % of calls from the Eugene Police Department.

<https://www.eugene-or.gov/4508/CAHOOTS>

Correct Crisis Intervention Today (CCIT-NYC) has established a community-based model adapted from the Cahoots model in Eugene, Oregon. CCIT is a broad-based coalition of civil rights and human service organizations, people with lived experience with mental health crises, family members, and other advocates, all of whom work together with a mission to reform the City's response to mental health crises using a trauma-informed lens.

<http://www.ccitnyc.org/>

Mental Health First-Sacramento (MH First – Sacramento, CA) founded in January 2020 by a psychiatric nurse who continues to work in emergency medicine is a response that functions out of an equipped van donated by the city’s Harm Reduction Program. According to the program’s website, MHF-Sacramento’s “purpose is to interrupt and eliminate the need for law enforcement in mental health crisis first response by providing mobile peer support, de-escalation assistance, and non-punitive and life-affirming interventions, therefore decriminalizing emotional and psychological crises and decreasing the stigma around mental health, substance use, and domestic violence, while also addressing their root causes: white supremacy, capitalism, and colonialism”. <https://www.antipoliceterrorproject.org/mh-first-sac>

Mental Health First - Oakland (MH First - Oakland), formed during August, 2020 and modelled after the MH-Sacramento program, this new non-police dispatch uses cutting edge interventions to de-escalate non-criminal community situations and to connect program recipients with appropriate follow-up services. The core team of approximately 12 volunteers is staffed with impacted community members, and medical and mental health professionals. In addition to the core team, there are ~ 20 additional back-up volunteers. The response teams work overnight every Friday and Saturday night, when most mental health crisis services are not immediately available. The goal of MH First is to respond to mental health crises including, but not limited to, psychiatric emergencies, substance use support, and domestic violence situations that require victim extraction. Though the program is relatively new, its staffing and its advisory board includes some luminaries, such as Patrisse Cullors, who have long and tirelessly been involved in “promoting law enforcement accountability across the world while focusing on addressing trauma and building on the resilience and health of the communities most affected” .

<https://www.antipoliceterrorproject.org/blog-entire/aupt-launches-mh-first-oakland>

Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

The movement to take domestic violence and sexual assault seriously, to not dismiss it as a personal and private matter, has made important steps forward in the rights of women and all people subjected to this violence.

The work of the many local organizations that provide counseling, support and shelter for those subject to abuse is essential. The Northampton Police Department’s work with these organizations through the [Domestic Violence Intervention Project](#) and its on-site civilian advocates provide an important resource that is helpful to some of those subjected to abuse. Removing the person who is using violence from a person’s life stops that violence while they are detained.

However, police involvement can also add to the trauma, and many do not feel safe reporting the violence at all. A national [survey from the ACLU in 2015](#) indicated that 88% of people

working in the field reported that police “sometimes” or “often” do not believe survivors or blamed survivors for the violence, and that 55% said that police bias in this area against particular groups of people was a problem in their community. More than half reported anti-Black, anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim, and anti-LGBTQ attitudes among responding officers.

This past June, 45 sexual assault and domestic violence state coalitions, including [Jane Doe Inc.](#) (the Massachusetts Coalition Against Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence), [issued a statement](#) recognizing the ways in which the movement has repeatedly failed Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) survivors, leaders, organizations, and movements, by choosing an increasing reliance on the criminal legal system as the primary approach to domestic violence rather than community-based solutions that support healing and liberation. State and federal policy has in many cases required these organizations to work with the criminal legal system in order to obtain funding.

There is little to no evidence that the criminalization deters intimate partner violence. Prison sentences subject those who use violence to more violence. The criminal system holds people accountable by shaming them. Shame and punishment does not deter violence, but instead can be a powerful stimulus of violence ([James Gilligan, Preventing Violence](#), 2001).

Even though they want the violence to stop, those subjected to it are very wary of involving the criminal legal system in their lives because of the negative impact that it has economically and the lack of control many feel once the criminal process starts. [Mandatory arrest policies and no-drop prosecutions can cause harm](#), as those subjected to violence can be forced to testify and are punished for not testifying or for inconsistent statements. More than half of victims of nonfatal abuse never report it to the police. People are less likely to seek assistance due to these policies, out of fear of losing their children, their job, or of conflicts with the immigration system, for example. What alternative crisis response services could be provided so that the half who do not report the violence they are subjected to can find a way to end that violence?

We envision an alternate path, where those subjected to violence can make decisions about how, and how much to involve the criminal legal system. We envision prioritizing economic support and employment resources, supporting restorative and community-based justice programs, and funding primary prevention to stop the harm before it occurs. For decades, policy has focused on heavy investment in the criminal legal system, and we can't know what is possible until we shift resources and funding to systems that are not part of that system.

The most effective examples of violence prevention have arisen in communities of color who have designed practices built on their cultural traditions, and developed a strong community process, rather than a professionalized or client model, with a clear separation from the carceral system. These are not one-size-fits-all approaches, and instead require engaging these many communities to develop their own approaches.

There are several proposed approaches to violence prevention.

An economic approach. At present, few policy dollars are allocated to programs and policy that reduce the risk of intimate partner violence.

Money and resources provided directly to those subjected to abuse will allow them to make decisions to remove themselves from abusive situations. Both conditional and unconditional payments have shown results. Massachusetts law provides employees who have been subjected to abuse up to 15 days of leave, but losing out on that income may mean people do not use this. Domestic abuse is one of the leading causes of homelessness for women. Securing stable housing can become difficult, due to an eviction history brought on by the abuse, or damage to one's credit by an abuser.

Male unemployment is strongly correlated with domestic abuse. Providing supportive training and employment resources could reduce violence. In addition to a preventative approach, minimizing intervening in such a way that the abuser is put at unnecessary risk of losing their job should be a policy in these cases. If a person is arrested and misses a shift at work when they are already in a shaky economic or work situation, this creates another experience of loss of responsible power over one's life. If financial penalties are then imposed in these situations the person is pushed further into economic instability.

Ultimately, we must provide resources to all who struggle economically, not just those subjected to abuse.

A public health approach. We suggest funding programs that reduce adverse childhood experiences (ACE), and work with people who have experienced them. Examine the reasons why people desire to have power & control over others. Those who use violence have often experienced trauma themselves, which undermines a person's sense of control. We need to understand the connection between intimate partner violence and the violence that is done to men and boys by the correctional system, racism, and by wealth inequality and poverty. See [Healing Together: Shifting Approaches to End Intimate Partner Violence](#).

Holding those who use violence accountable for their actions and creating supportive environments for them will do much more to stop violence than punishment. Some examples are [Circles of Support and Accountability \(CoSA\)](#), a successful program in Vermont. The [Strength at Home Men's Program \(SAH-M\)](#) works with current and ex-military members who have subjected a partner to intimate partner violence.

Support for community-based justice circles may look different than the traditional model of engaging non-profits to provide services to clients. Instead, providing spaces, food, childcare and transportation to create safe spaces for support may be the most effective.

Provide support for [Safe Passage's primary prevention education and training workshops](#) held in area schools.

A decriminalized approach. Serious, repeat offenders must be prevented from continuing to harm. A focused deterrence approach has been shown to be effective for these offenders,

along with non-police advocates working with people subjected to abuse to ensure that interventions would not jeopardize their safety and would serve their needs.

Restorative justice programs are often not allowed specifically for domestic violence, if state funded. A restorative justice program that is driven by and centered on those subjected to abuse, and where the person who used violence accepts responsibility for the harm as described by the victim, should be explored. In order for these programs to feel safe to those subjected to abuse, they must be able to decide the level of involvement by the criminal legal system. A clear separation must be made between these programs and the police. See [“Opportunities and Pitfalls: Facing the Restorative Justice Movement”](#).

Multiple levels of intervention are needed, starting with restorative dialogue and moving up to punitive approaches if necessary. If incarceration is needed, steps must be taken to reduce the trauma of incarceration.

Further work to discern alternatives to policing domestic violence

We have many more people to talk to in order to better understand the current system and the legal framework that the current organizations are working within. Organizations include [Safe Passage](#), the [Center for Women and Communities](#), [Womanshelter/Compañeras](#), the [New England Learning Center For Women In Transition \(NELCWIT\)](#) and the Northampton Police Department. The local [Men's Resource Center](#) (site not updated since 2006) was a partner in the Domestic Violence Intervention Project. We need to do more research on sexual assault, and on the factor that race play in this issue here in Northampton.

What alternative crisis response services would provide alternatives to a police response that more people would use? Domestic violence response is one of the most dangerous responses for the police. How do we reconcile that with alternative crisis responses? Is that because of the inherent escalation from a police response?

References & resources

- [“Preventing Violence”](#), by James Gilligan, 2001.
- [“Decriminalizing Domestic Violence: A Balanced Policy Approach to Intimate Partner Violence”](#), by Leigh Goodmark, 2018.
- [“A Reckoning Inside the Domestic-Violence Movement”](#), by Zoe Carpenter, The Nation, October 2020.
- [“There’s no one I can trust: The impact of mandatory reporting on the help-seeking and well-being of domestic violence survivors.”](#) A report of the National LGBTQ DV Capacity Building Learning Center. Seattle, WA, Lippy, C., Burk, C., & Hobart, M., 2016.
- [“Domestic Violence Law Enforcement Guidelines 2017”](#), The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety & Security, 2017.

- [“Massachusetts General Laws, Part 2, Title 3, Chapter 209A: Abuse Prevention”](#), retrieved 2020. Section 6 focuses on the powers and obligations of police.
- [“Northampton Police Department: Administration & Operations Manual, Policy: Domestic Violence”](#), amended 2018.
- [“Domestic Violence Intervention Project”](#), Northampton Police Department, retrieved 2020.
- [“Responses from the Field: Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, and Policing”](#), ACLU, 2015.
- [“Creative Interventions Toolkit: A Practical Guide to Stop Interpersonal Violence”](#), Creative Interventions, 2012.
- [“Survived and Punished”](#), a national coalition that includes survivors, organizers, victim advocates, legal advocates and attorneys, policy experts, scholars, and currently and formerly incarcerated people. S&P organizes to de-criminalize efforts to survive domestic and sexual violence, support and free criminalized survivors, and abolish gender violence, policing, prisons, and deportations.
- [“TransformHarm.org”](#), a resource hub about ending violence. The site offers an introduction to transformative justice.
- [“Interrupting Criminalization Factsheet”](#) contains references and statistics around the effectiveness of a police response to domestic violence.

Policies and Spending Subcommittee

Members: Elizabeth Barajas-Roman, Nick Fleisher, Nnamdi Pole, Cynthia Suopis

The PS& Subcommittee reviewed the existing Northampton Police Department policies and services. Our work is focused on specific services that currently seem to have significant police involvement but might benefit from non-armed alternative models and a reduction or elimination of such involvement to better meet the needs of vulnerable community groups.

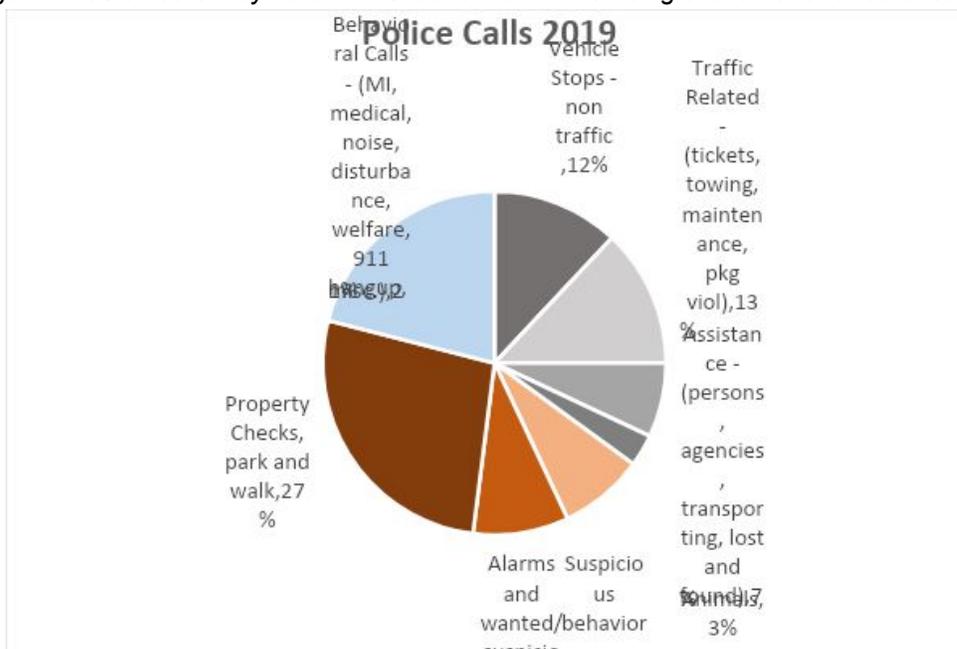
Activities To Date:

We reviewed the NPD website and Policy Manual and found both to provide a well written description of a relatively up to date police force with traditional policing characteristics emphasizing emergency preparedness, law enforcement, skills in addressing public disorder, and a proactive surveillance presence. Stated policies, however, do not always accurately define practice. Moreover, while aspiring to transparency, the website and the policies do not show a consciousness that an authoritarian model of public safety can be controversial and at times detrimental.

Our preliminary review has identified areas where the NPD's presence is perceived as counterproductive. So far, work has focused on: School Resource Officers (Nnamdi), Domestic Violence (Cynthia), Mental Health and Addictions (Nick), Interaction with Houseless Individuals (Nick), Rape and Assault (Elizabeth), Traffic Enforcement (David), and Drone Surveillance (Elizabeth). Historical efforts to improve police competence in these areas has not fully addressed concerns raised by marginalized groups.

Following is a breakdown of police calls from 2019 (taken from NPD report)

(numbers in this chart should take into account that a call may be categorized as one thing but become something else when officers arrive. Additionally, some activities may be different than categorized as officers may do administrative work while being available for another call.)



Traffic Enforcement Findings

Nationally, Traffic enforcement statistics that show that the number of persons of color being stopped is disproportionate to their numbers in the community. In addition, there is a disturbing number of fatalities that have resulted from these encounters, most of them involving people of color. Our subcommittee suggests that there are at least three ways to reduce armed police/citizen encounters in the traffic enforcement context and thereby reduce the footprint of the police.

The first one is by limiting when police may stop a motor vehicle. Stops after dark for equipment violations and/or minor traffic infractions may be often pretextual and fraught with increased unnecessary danger for both civilians and officers. They could be eliminated or at least greatly reduced. The second reduction could occur by enforcing minor traffic laws (e.g. speeding) by electronic detection of violations. The third way to reduce armed police/citizen contact in the realm of traffic, and the one that would require the most dramatic change is by establishing or expanding the use of civilian community safety officers (like those currently enforcing parking violations) to enforce minor traffic laws and to investigate minor accidents.

Mental Health and Addictions Findings

Calls for behaviorally based disturbances are in the 20% range. This includes mental health, addiction, medical crises, wellness checks, public disturbances, 911 hangups, and miscellaneous. Notable features of the current policy on Responding to Persons with Mental Illness include: (a) recognition that mental illness (MI) or MI behaviors alone do not permit or require a police response, (b) awareness that mentally ill persons are no more likely to be violent than other members of the public, (c) call for empathy and care when responding to mental health calls, and (d) asking police to make broad judgements about the presence of mental illness. Overall, the policies are informed and appropriate given the role and training of the police officer.

The NPD offers trainings in responding to persons with MI. In 2018 The NPD joined an initiative of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) committing to: establish a partnership with a mental health organization, develop a model policy to address officer interactions with those affected by mental illness, and ensure that all officers receive mental health awareness training with at least 20 percent of the department completing the more intensive 40 hour CIT training. The NPD has trained 50% of its officers in CIT.

The NPD has a Drug Addiction Recovery Team (DART). DART officers identify persons who overdosed on drugs, committed a crime due to drug addiction, or have been identified as having a drug addiction. DART officers provide these individuals information about resources and the availability of Naloxone. DART officers use Peer supports through the Hampshire Hope program.

The NPD policies show a basic understanding of mental illness as not dangerous and substance abuse as an illness. The model of intervention, however, does not address the inherent conflicts in having armed authority figures confronting individuals sensitized to police intervention by past trauma or by racial and ethnic experiences. By many accounts, police intervention in mental health matters is frequently inadequate and/or counterproductive. The current system makes minimal use of the professional and peer supports which exist widely in our community. Police officers are expected to have skills that are overly broad and position them to intervene in behavioral and social problems through projecting power and authority. Additionally, while the intent of the IACP One Mind Campaign is to partner with a mental health agency, the NPD remains largely on its own due to the “siloeing” of services. Consideration of alternative models of rapid non-armed response to behavioral problems is needed while also training officers and the Dispatch system on how to use other experts and specialists. Our subcommittee has begun discussions about the advantages of collaborative models (“ride along”) versus autonomous services with a separate organizational structure.

School Resource Officer Findings

State law currently requires the Chief of Police, in consultation with the school superintendent and subject to appropriation of necessary funds, to assign a SRO (unless the state grants an exception). The application for an exception requires consultation with the chief of police and provision of data showing why an SRO is neither necessary nor desirable. SROs are supposed to be selected for their appropriateness to work with children and adolescents. There should be a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the superintendent outlining roles and responsibilities. The SRO should not be used to enforce general school policies.

Joshua Wallace was assigned as SRO to Northampton public schools in 2015. There is evidence that Wallace had appropriate training and took steps to be approachable and engaged with the children that he served. We did not find any specific complaints about his performance and we found some specific praise for his helpfulness with some students. However, we also found numerous concerns about the general presence of an armed police officer in schools especially from children of color and/or their parents. Generally speaking, armed police officers in the schools do not make these community members feel safer, and to the contrary, leave many of them feeling at greater risk of being accidentally or intentionally victimized. In June 2020 after the 10% budget cut the Northampton police chief reassigned Josh Wallace from full time SRO to a patrol unit and indicated that there would be no SRO unless more funding was made available. The Northampton School Committee voted in July 2020 passed a nonbinding resolution to go without SROs for the foreseeable future (this echoes a similar resolution from the Amherst school district). This decision was widely supported by some parents but apparently 1,300 people signed a petition to reinstate Wallace to the position. Furthermore, the current law would suggest that when funding is available that there may be an obligation to have an SRO or apply for an exception. There is current legislation being considered by the Massachusetts Governor that, if signed, would make SROs optional throughout Massachusetts.

Our review thus far suggests that the specific most frequent positive benefit of the SRO in the Northampton Schools is providing emotional support to troubled students. This work seems to be the more natural domain of a trained mental health provider (e.g., guidance counselor, school psychologist) rather than an armed police officer. The subcommittee is mindful that SROs may have a legitimate role in responding to urgent threats like school shootings. We note the close geographical proximity between the Northampton Police Dept headquarters and most schools in Northampton. We wonder whether similar school shooting deterrence and response can be achieved without an officer in the schools. We question the added benefit of having an officer in the school given the daily uncomfortable climate for students of color and the relatively rare occurrence of school shootings.

Domestic Violence Findings

The NPD website lists a variety of community resources for individuals experiencing Domestic Violence (DV). Two civilian advocates from the Center for Women and Community are listed on the website as contacts. These individuals work in partnership with NPD from a grant. The subcommittee is currently reviewing the particulars of the grant and this relationship. There is also a partnership formed between the Northwestern District Attorney's office, Safe Passage and other police departments that is being explored by the subcommittee.

There is a 24 page document on Domestic Violence in the Policy and Procedures Manual of the NPD that outlines officer roles and procedures during a DV related event. Processes and procedures for obtaining a Restraining Order are clearly outlined on the website.

In 2019 the Department logged 18,311 hours of training of officers, recruits and administration. Domestic Violence training made up 159.50 of these hours. The subcommittee is requesting the content and curriculum of this training

The NPD website lists 'Calls for Service on Domestic Violence', 'Arrests' and 'Criminal Complaints' on this issue. Of the 34,455 police calls logged in 2019, the number Domestic Violence calls were 341, resulting in 139 arrests and 32 criminal complaints.

Key next steps for the subcommittee include those mentioned above as well as a better understanding of the community partnerships that are often referred to on the website, the scope of the issue in the community as well as community organization suggestions for additional resources that are needed to protect victims of Domestic Violence.

Rape and Sexual Assault Findings

The evidence is clear, rape is the easiest violent crime to get away with in the United States – and Northampton is no exception.

According to the Justice Department, it is estimated less than 23 percent of rape is reported to police. Only 20 percent of reported rape leads to an arrest, and less than 1 percent of those arrested are ultimately convicted. Further, minorities and immigrants are disproportionately represented as victims of adult rape and sexual assault, but research shows they are least likely to report to police. Yet, protection from, and response to, rape and sexual assault are often listed at the top of community safety lists and often used as justification for militarized police presence.

For the purposes of the report, we examined Northampton Police Department's policy and procedure to rape and sexual assault to contextualize their priorities, expertise, and value-add to this issue. The preliminary result is that minimal training, vague and confusing procedures listed on public websites, as well as the lack of transparency and guaranteed service and response indicate that NPD is not well suited to provide services related to rape and sexual assault.

Specifically, rape is treated in the criminal justice system as a crime of property. As such, it is often investigated with as much sensitivity as a stolen car. According to the NPD website, victims are told to ask for a specific officer who has training on sexual assault (because they do not all receive training) to discuss the incident. While this alone is an unacceptable barrier to reporting – the NPD website instructs victims who have been recently assaulted to visit a local hospital for a rape collection kit – collected by certified SANE (Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner). However, SANE-certified nurses are not available 24/7 locally. SANE certification costs about \$400, and nurses who want it, pay out of pocket and attend classes on their time off.

The burden of proof is on the victim. Police policy requires officers determine the validity of reports – subsequent interrogation of victims often leads to traumatization and complaint attrition. A private area to conduct an interview is not even guaranteed by NPD. According to the NPD website, “interviews are normally conducted in a private interview room at the police station.” Further, research reviewed revealed that deep bias against victims' claims. When surveyed, police said they believed the frequency of false complaints was about eight out of ten.

Rape crisis centers, law enforcement agencies, prosecutors' offices, and hospitals are the four organizations primarily involved with rape victims.

Alternatively, anti-rape education and awareness, peer outreach, restorative justice programs with trained support teams, and funding for hospital staff on rape kit collection and sensitivity should be examined as recommendations of better value for community safety regarding rape and sexual assault.

Drone and Surveillance Findings

Northampton currently has four drones: DJI Phantom 4 and a DJI Inspire 1 v.2 with a FLIR Zenmus XT camera (used for thermal imaging). The FLIR camera was paid for by Northampton Fire Rescue.

These drones were most recently used for “monitoring” Black Lives Matter protests.

Each drone costs upwards of \$1,200 - not including officer certification and training. There are currently more officers trained to operate drones than are trained to investigate rape.

According to the NPD website: All deployments of the sUAS must specifically be authorized by the OIC or sUAS Supervisor. The Northampton Police has adopted the use of sUAS to provide an aerial visual perspective in responding to emergency situation and exigent circumstances, and for the following objectives:

- **Situational Awareness:** *To assist Incident Command in understanding the nature, scale, and scope of an incident and/or for planning and coordinating an effective response.*
- **Search and Rescue:** *To assist missing person investigations, Amber alerts, and other search and rescue missions.*
- **Tactical Deployment:** *To support the tactical deployment of officers and equipment in emergency situations (e.g., Incident involving hostages and barricades, support for large tactical operations, and temporary perimeter security situations).*
- **Visual Perspective:** *To provide an aerial visual perspective to assist officers in providing direction for crowd control, traffic incident management, and temporary perimeter security.*
- **Scene Documentation:** *To document a crime scene, accident scene, or other major scene (e.g., disaster managing, incident response, large scale forensic investigation).*
- **Assist Northampton Fire Rescue** *with active fire suppression efforts through thermal imaging and aerial vantage points.*

While the City has banned face-recognition technology, the NPD policy and procedures on drone technology allows for broad use with little transparency. Further investigation into this NPD policies and recommendation for the final report to follow.

Housing Findings

There are no policies specific to houseless individuals. The NPD does have a designated Homeless Liaison Officer. The Alternatives committee is looking into this area more extensively.

Future Directions.

1. Continue to examine policies: We plan to continue to explore relevant services and policies. For example, we would like to know more about: property checks, animal calls, responses to disturbances, wellness checks, the 911 service, dispatch procedures, use of force, and proactive vs. reactive policing. We will also continue our research the Complaint Procedure (including potential for citizen oversight), qualified immunity, and the NPD Strategic Plan.
2. Meeting with the Chief of Police: We plan to invite the Chief of Police to answer questions that we will prepare and share in advance. For example, we are hoping that the Chief can help us to understand the complaint procedure and the department's strategic plan.
3. Propose areas and mechanisms for reduced "footprint" of police services: We hope that our close examination of existing NPD policies and services will clarify specific domains where duties can be shifted to non-police personnel. There is some controversy over whether alternate services should be shifted entirely away from the police department or whether services should be integrated with the police department. In our current thinking, there is strong agreement that most models would require a highly competent dispatch system capable of determining whether and when to assign services to police, other entities, or both.

Spending and Contracts Subcommittee

Members: Lois Ahrens, Daniel Cannity, Michael Quinlan, Josey Rosales

One of the ways in which a city expresses its values is through its budget. Where funding goes and how it is used is a statement about what the city thinks and believes to be central and important. The Spending and Contracts subcommittee of the Northampton Policing Review Commission is tasked with looking into, developing and understanding the financial obligations and expenditures of the Northampton Police Department. This includes how the NPD acts as a revenue source for the city and its costs in regard to operations, staffing and equipment. The function of this subcommittee is to support any recommendations for transferring NPD responsibilities and reallocating funding from the NPD to other departments, and knowing and finding avenues of community reinvestment to provide equity and safety to all of Northampton's residents.

Our current avenues of inquiry involve several areas. As we learn more we are developing a deeper understanding of new areas to pursue

Reallocation recommendations for the recent 10% funding

\$300,000 of the \$669,957 cut in June 2020 from the NPD budget has been allocated by the Mayor to the City's general fund. After more than seven months, the remaining funds remain unspent. We believe that this and future reallocations from the NPD budget must go toward investing in community resources, projects and services that serve residents who are most vulnerable, the most heavily policed, and those seeking safety from domestic and sexual violence. In the short term, we believe the remaining \$369,357 as well as the \$300,000 should be allocated to addressing the needs of people who are unhoused in Northampton. Additionally, \$212,645 for a total of \$882,602 reduced from the NPD should now go toward warming shelters, temporary shelters and lockers and meeting public sanitation needs for people who are unhoused and living in Northampton.

This kind of investment is what was called for by hundreds of people who testified this summer during City Council meetings and is what was intended by the Council when they voted to reduce the NPD budget by 10%. Further, we believe that these kinds of investments will lead to less criminalizing of people who are unhoused which will save the City and taxpayers money in policing, arrests, charges, plea bargains and possible incarceration. This kind of policing results in criminalization of people facing a mental health crisis, substance use and people who are unhoused making them less likely to find housing and employment and drives costly and harmful incarceration. For example the current budget of the Hampshire County House of Correction and jail is \$14 million and as of 10-28-20 there were 107 people incarcerated, 70 who were pretrial. Even if this number were to double, the cost of incarcerating a person at the Hampshire County jail would be approximately \$5,800 a month.

Opportunities for reallocation

In recognition that this initial reduction to the NPD budget is not enough to support funding long-term community-based solutions, we are exploring ways to allocate monies generated from policing toward the support of a new initiatives including a new city department whose purpose might include 1) the coordination of City and community-based programs/service providers such as Tapestry/Needle Exchange, Recovery Center, ServiceNet, CHD, Hampshire HOPE, Housing First, Safe Passage; 2) initiation, creation and oversight of alternatives to police functions such as "wellness checks", mental health responses, intimate partner/domestic violence and policing of people who are unhoused; 3) discerning where service and programs gaps exist and how best to fill those gaps. We are looking at multiple models of how such a department could be formed, including being composed of at least one staff person and having an oversight board composed primarily of people most impacted by policing.

Funds to support the staffing and programs of the department could come from yearly reductions in the NPD budget as policing moves to services and programs staffed by unarmed people working with community-based programs and projects. Additional funds could be generated from a percentage of revenues from policing details and from civil asset forfeitures. This department could also apply for grant funding using the Arts Council as a model.

In support of this, we have identified several revenue sources from within current policing practices, including, but not limited to:

- A percentage of the roughly \$1,000,000 of monies generated by the city from Detail Work in the city.
- Funds generated from civil asset forfeiture.
- Standardized yearly reductions to the NPD as safety responsibilities move to services and programs staffed by non-armed community-based service providers and responders. Examples include but are not limited to: reductions to traffic control and wellness checks responsibilities moved to non-armed staffing. Additional NPD staffing reductions could include fewer private property checks and fewer police initiated “suspicious persons” stops.
- Budget reduction as the position of School Resource Officer ends per the July 2020 resolution of Northampton School Committee.
- Evaluation and changes to the routine purchase new police cruisers every year.

Salaries, detail pay, and expenditures

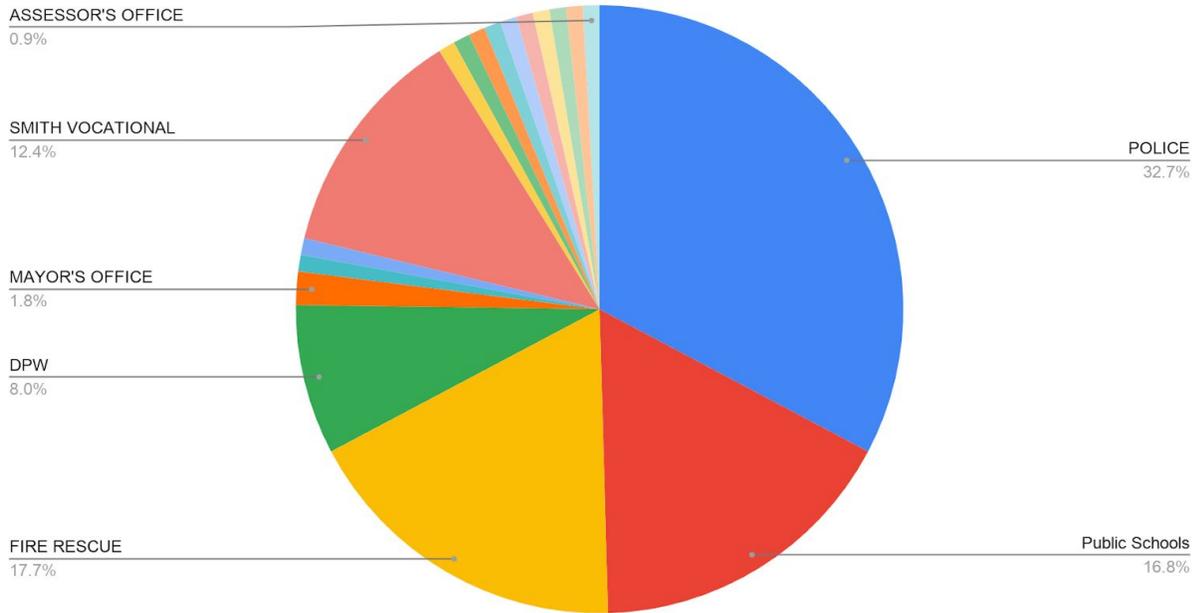
Police officers [represent the majority of the highest paid city employees](#), including many making more than the mayor. In addition to base salaries, the city has routinely paid approximately \$250,000 or more in overtime pay per year, and officers have received thousands of dollars, sometimes upwards of tens of thousands of dollars in pay per year from police detail work. This represents, in the most extreme, an individual working 5,277 hours a year, or over 100 hours per week. Put another way: The average salary is \$59,000 and ranged from \$49,317 to 151,278. The range of overtime is from about \$50 to almost \$13,000 a year. Police details from a low of about \$50 to as much as almost \$75,000.

The police department accounts for 33% (\$4, 200,468) of city employees with gross income over \$85,000, and account for 39% (\$1,280,935) of the top 20 highest paid employees within the city. Police department employees are 4 of the 5 highest paid employees, with the highest paid person in the city a police officer with a gross income of \$184,372. This is of concern when we look at trends across years, and consider the investments the city makes as a representation of its values and guiding principles.

For context, from [OpenPayrolls](#), records show the employment of an officer that worked for the city of Northampton, Massachusetts in 2019 had a reported pay of \$160,744.57 according to public records. This is 136.1 percent higher than the average pay for city employees and 160.8 percent higher than the national average for government employees.

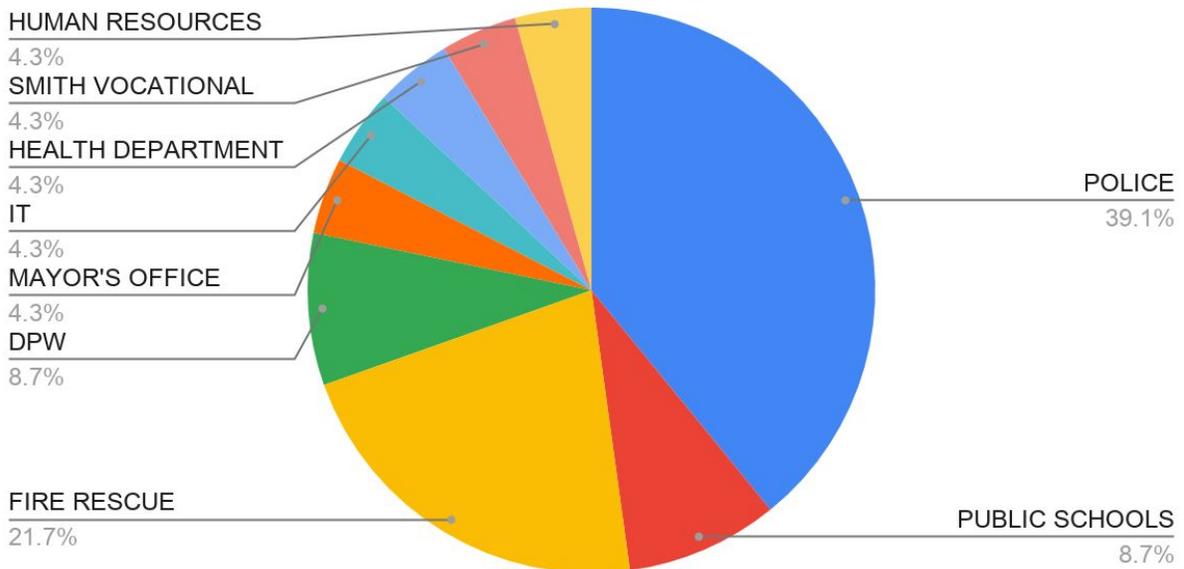
Northampton City Employees with Gross Income Over \$85,000 By Department

FY 20



20 Highest Paid City Employees (Gross Income) by Department

Based on FY20 Budget



We are concerned about officers overworking, which represents potential danger to the community in that they are driving at high speeds and carrying weapons. While we believe in a person's right to earn a decent living, we see trends which seem to show a significant difference between base salary and actual pay.

The cost for equipment is also important to understand. Vehicle costs, replacing vehicles every 5 years, as well as maintenance and gasoline expenditures result in hundreds of thousands of dollars each year. We believe as the police department is reduced, the number of police vehicles would also be reduced and some of these vehicles could be transferred for use by the proposed new department.

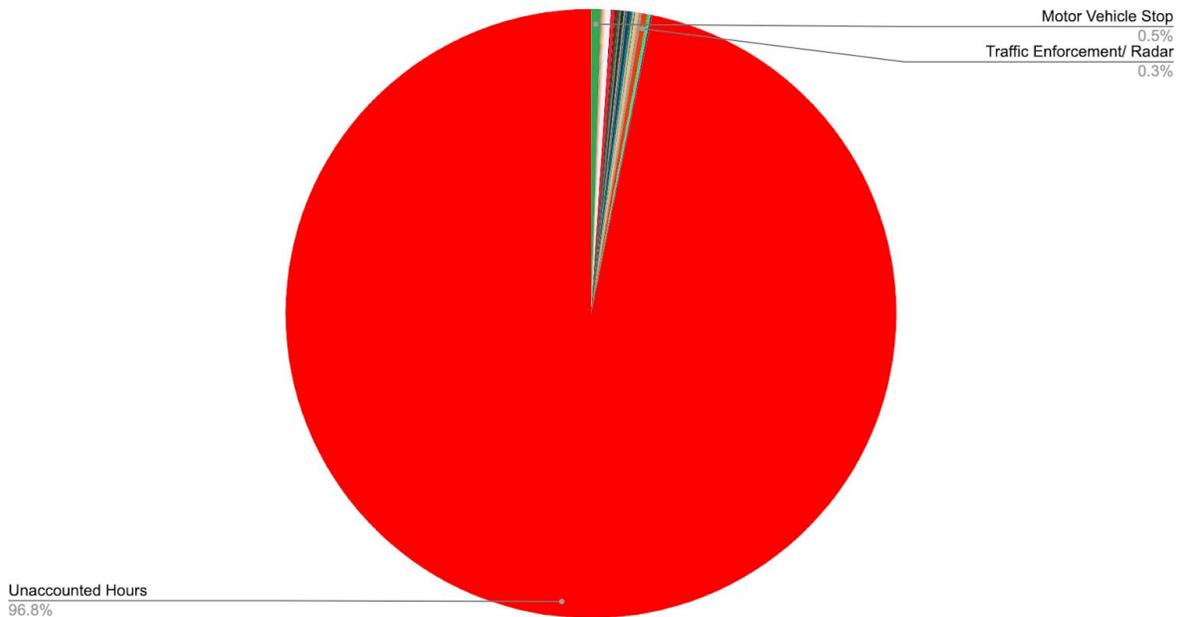
The Northampton Police Department budget has increased by 24% over the past 5 years, and 41% over the past 10 years. This, in dollar amounts, is an increase of \$1,847,123 in a decade which has actually seen crime rates decrease by more than 25%. We also note significant research shows that increased police budgets have not demonstrated a decrease in crime. While it is not certain what causes increases or decreases in crime, other factors such as employment availability, increased social wellness programs, investments in quality education and housing have been shown to decrease crime.

Costs of Police Activities

In order to make responsible recommendations as responsibilities are transitioned away from the NPD, we need to understand the associated cost breakdown of police activities, and their use of resources. We have requested both call logs and logged hours from the Northampton Police Department. With the data we have received back, we have been able to account for roughly 3% of the total personnel time of the 47 full-time officers in 2019 (see chart below). We have requested further information from the NPD and await that response. The missing information is, at least in part, due to the system used to log officer time which does not account for the full shifts of NPD offices. The chart below is reflective of this lack of data. We look forward to receiving more information in the coming months to be able to make recommendations that support community safety and the management of resources towards a more just community.

Total Hours of Patrol Office Time

97760 Hours From 47 Full Time Patrol Officers in 2019



The above chart is a rough estimate of the total hours available to the NPD for patrol officers in 2019. The 97,760 total hours available are based on having 47 full time (40 hour per week) patrol officers for the calendar year. This does not include the time of the clerks, sergeants, the chief and support personnel. This chart also does not account for time off, including vacation, personal, and sick time.

Our work will include producing insights as to how the NPD budget has increased and what the context of those increases are. Understanding the budgets and their contexts will allow us to make recommendations about increased budgetary transparency and accountability of the NPD, specific funding opportunities that the city can establish for alternatives that foster community inclusion and growth, and create equitable safety for residents and visitors to the city.

Our work, understanding the budget, largely only makes sense when it is taken into account holistically as part of understanding the current policies and practices, and the values and visions our community has for its ongoing safety and inclusion. Our work will continue to remain collaborative with the other subcommittees whose work gives context and meaning to the numbers. We also welcome any feedback from the community.