

# Northampton Policing Review Full Commission

MEETING AGENDA  
Tuesday, February 16, 2021  
6:00pm  
Remote Meeting

## **Join the Remote Meeting:**

<https://zoom.us/j/95719932813?pwd=UjhkckZQK0VOS1NNQm5mMm1ZY2tDUT09>

**Meeting ID:** 957 1993 2813 **Passcode:** 424407

**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 (15 minutes)
3. Presentation: Northampton Abolition Now (10 minute presentation, 10 minute Q&A)
4. Announcement of speakers (5 minutes)
5. Discussion topic: Public hearing and meetings with the chief debrief (30 minutes)
6. Discussion topic: Consensus model for recommendations and points of agreement (50 minutes)
7. Adjourn

## **1. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:**

The meeting was called to order by Commissioner Cynthia Suopis at 6:09PM.

## **ANNOUNCEMENT OF ZOOM RECORDING**

Commissioner Cynthia Suopis 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 Booker Bush 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 not present  
Commissioner Josey Rosales Present  
Commissioner Cynthia Suopis Present  
Commissioner Carol Owen Present  
Commissioner Kris Banks Present  
Commissioner Elizabeth Barajas-Roman Not Present

## **Meeting Minutes**

The meeting minutes were tabled until the next meeting.

### **2. Public comment**

**Robert Eastman asked if they could take their three minutes and add it to Northampton Abolition Now.**

### **3. Presentation: Northampton Abolition Now (10 minute presentation, 10 minute Q&A)**

Ashwin Ravihumar played an Andrea Richie interview on Beyond Prisons Podcast who spoke about how eviction and unemployment, and food insecurity has increased, on top of the pandemic that is killing communities. He said there's a pressure cooker going on in terms of economic conditions that amps up violence because stress produces stressful responses. He said if you alleviate the stress and make it possible for people to earn money in ways that are safe, violence rates go down. He said all the ways we address that violence reinforces the structures.

Abolition Now shared these resources and played excerpts from these clips:

[Abolition is Liberation: Marbre Stahly-Butts & Rachel Herzing in Conversation with Cory Lira](#)

Recorded in November of 2019. Marbre Stahly-Butts is with Law 4 Black Lives, and Rachel Herzing is a co-founder of Critical Resistance. It's worth noting that because this was recorded before the uprising this past summer, their conversation about policing specifically starting at about 39:00 minutes in sounds very different than it would sound if they re-recorded the conversation post uprising (they describe policing abolition as unpopular compared to prison abolition.)

The clip between 33:00 - 39:00 talks about winning campaigns, organizing, and touches on abolition vs. reform

The clip between 39:00 - 54:00 touches specifically on policing.

**\*\* The clip between 50:00 - 54:00 addresses exactly what David and Alex you both touched on in terms of communities of color wanting to**

**call the police.**

[Beyond Prisons Podcast: Interrupting Criminalization feat. Andrea Ritchie](#)

31:57 - 41:31 - discussion about the ask from policy makers to provide evidence based alternatives, and the need to fund grassroots programs which have never been able to scale up because of funding

[Ruth Wilson Gilmore in Conversation with Mariame Kaba](#)

26:11 - 27:07 - Ruth Wilson Gilmore answers the question "what are you going to do instead" - and her answer centers "political will"

Ya Ping Douglass said Seattle passed a solidarity budget as a package, and with Austin they had a reimagining safety fund set to assist with cost which included transfers that were decided ahead of time and were set aside for violence prevention programs. She said other cities have been successful in getting the relocations upfront and Northampton is an anomaly.

Commissioner David Hoose mentioned he worked with black and brown low income clients. He said there were moments he will never forget including a story about a Jamaican american guy sitting in his office sobbing and saying he can't walk 50 yards from his street without being harassed by police. David said he lived in a predominantly black neighborhood for 8 years and was on the executive board of the NAACP. He said he had a lot of interaction with Black community in Springfield. He said he would also hear community members sharing concern about drugs and gangs, and asking for the police, who, in their opinion, were not being responsive. He said he knows if we invested in our communities we wouldn't have problems with gangs. He said if it was up to him he would legalize drugs tomorrow. He said he's curious what Abolition Now's response is to the mothers in black communities who don't feel safe.

Rye Buckley mentioned Mariam Kaaba and said policing is working exactly as it's supposed to. He said this means policing will not save black and brown families, and that's how policing has been designed.

Ashwin Ravikumar responded and rhetorically asked, what are these mothers asking for. He said they are probably asking for their communities to feel safe. He said we know policing doesn't solve these problems or keep black people safe. He said it is time to allow these alternatives to flourish and receive attention so that people can be cared for.

Commissioner Alex Jarrett said he appreciates the group's work. He said there are Black and brown people in Northampton who also have that perspective. He said there will be simultaneous safety response and if the commission enacts a 50% budget cut immediately, it might not have an alternative safety response in place beginning at the new fiscal year. He said he would have a hard time explaining to his constituents as a city councillor, that if this happened in July, that this would be a safer, better Northampton. He said the commission has to justify that. He said he would appreciate hearing thoughts and to express a phased approach he feels more confident in recommending.

Ashwin Ravikumar said it's important to center constituents. He said 4% of NPD work

involves violent crime and that could easily be covered with 50% of the budget. He said cutting the budget by this much is a desirable short term outcome and not a stepping stone. He said these edge cases would not be impacted materially by a 50% cut and that that money is needed in order to fund the alternatives. He said they won't work without serious investment. He also noted there isn't a lot of revenue to be raised in town and to reduce the police footprint that causes bad testimonials and by funding alternatives to roll out, it will expand to support the community. He said this would offer a good mix that would keep people concerned about public safety, safe too.

Ya Ping Douglass said what she heard is that money wouldn't be getting cut, it would be transferring money to different people who can respond more appropriately. She said if the political will is there those transfers can be made. She said there is a demand and call for bigger changes at a faster pace than bureaucracy might be used to. She said when it comes to a pipe bursting or dogs on the dog path this plan would ensure those functions will be fulfilled by someone other than police.

Commissioner Josey Rosales said the commission has received push back and have heard the narrative that cutting the budget of the police department would lead to less services and safety. He asked if the group could speak to why abolition doesn't necessarily lead to those outcomes.

Commissioner Alex Jarrett said he needs further data and that maybe the commission can talk about gathering more data.

Ashwin Ravikumar said nothing that people need is going to be deleted, it would include shifting functions instead. He said the bottomline is, there is excess spending that doesn't do what it says it does.

Commissioner Javier Luengo Garrido said he wants everyone to be careful as to not to fall into a monolithic way of seeing Black and brown people. He said he grew up poor and would never call the police and that there was no other alternative. He said this system has worked against folks.

Commissioner Nick Fleisher recognized the groups' work. He asked if the group endorses or lean towards a particular alternative model because he's seeing different models across the country, and each city has its specific character and needs.

Ya-ping Douglass said the group is for the people who are being served being in leadership positions, and called for a peer-led model. She noted Rachel Bromberg laid out ways of staffing and building a culture of an organization that is peer led. She said the group is for a model as long as principles are there of non-coercion and community-based models that respect people's autonomy and wellbeing and asks what works for them, as the guiding principle.

Ashwin Ravikumar said the recommendation can be a moral one and can be up to the mayor and council to figure out the details, and trust that that can come later.

Rye Buckley said the last thing the community needs is another white man designing these systems. He said he is doing his best to ask and listen to the communities most impacted, but at the end of day he doesn't want to answer that question and would love the commission to find answers from the most impacted community.

Commissioner Dan Cannity invited public comment.

Hildegard Freedman said she has lived in housing where there are no locks on the outside doors. She said people and drug distributors could come through the building. She said she reported someone who drowned who had a plate in his leg the day after because there was someone knocking on his door for a couple of days. She said there was a woman was standing on top of car in a bathing suit without much clothing on and she thought this was sex trafficking and she reported it to a detective. She said she never found out what happened but she has been through two complexes with lots of drugs and lots of deaths in her perception.

### **3. Announcement of speakers (5 minutes)**

Commissioner Dan Cannity said his committee is working to get HRH 413 as well as Hampshire Hope to give short presentations and respond to questions. He said he is working to schedule these speakers in the next couple of weeks.

Commissioner Javier Luengo- Garrido said tomorrow's Alternatives meeting is set for 7-830 and that they will be inviting two directors of NEII Quit.

### **4. Discussion topic: Public hearing and meetings with the chief debrief (30 minutes)**

Commissioner Dan Cannity said there recently has been more concern from people in meetings and emails about who is going to keep them safe. He said those concerns have been about a lot of things like plumbing, dogs on the loose, maintaining relationships with school admins, which are not necessarily related to police but are related to community safety. He said he's unsure how to communicate that effectively to folks. He said there is a difference between safety and police and there is feeling uncomfortable versus unsafe. He said he's not sure he's effectively figured out how to put it.

Commissioner Cynthia Suopis asked for reactions to the hearings or the chief of police presence at two of the commission meetings.

Commissioner Josey Rosales said a lot of people who called in who spoke positively about the police gave the commission these instances of community safety that could have been done by someone who didn't have a firearm on hand. They said they are happy they've had positive experiences and know those instances of safety and being heard and having the social programs necessary would not only shift the responsibility to another structure that does not have the same stigma.

Commissioner Nnamdi Pole said when thinking about the conversation with the chief and listening to the presentation today, he is reminded of the importance of offering a roadmap of how to deal with services people currently expect police to handle. He said maybe the commission thinking about the details isn't important but thinking about what to do on Day 1 after the budget cut will be important. He said understanding where people should go for services is important, as well as everyone wrestling with a different notion of what safety means to them. He said he wants to find a way to listen to everyone's sense of what helps them feel safe.

Commissioner Carol Owen said safety means a lot of things and it is a code word for a lot of different needs and feelings. She said this thinking about police has come over decades and that people have gotten accustomed to calling the police as a first response to a situation. She noted the comforting feeling of having a dog officer come out when someone is feeling threatened on the bike path. She said she thinks the commission needs to talk about how communities have gotten hooked into calling the police first instead of another resource. She also said it is not going to endanger people to get used to calling other resources for certain situations that don't involve criminal activity or violent action. She said she got the sense that the chief was willing to listen to offloading these types of dispatches to other entities. She said she felt discouraged by her professed needs to have a gun when in uniform and felt the chief was quite confused. She said it seemed as though the Chief wanted to have a response to concern about the necessity of guns and didn't have any meaningful response on why it would be okay to have some of the calls without a gun.

Commissioner Javier Luengo-Garrido said he appreciated the last public comment, getting a more diverse pool of people. He said sadly the commission has been getting more people that the system has worked for. He said he wants to push back on the notion that both positive and negative feedback are equal. He said the system is set up for white people to have good experience and for people of color to have horrible experiences. He said often people are afraid of changing anything when the system has worked for you, even though it is a challenge for us. He said, the answer is if you call and you need a cop, you're going to get a cop if dispatch says. He said he is not ignoring the experience of those who the system works for, but it is a false equivalency to compare these experiences with experiences with people of color. He noted people seem unaware of the commission's thought process. He wondered how the commission can bring that thought process to the people who are misunderstanding.

Commissioner Dan Cannity said the system can work for some people for some of the times. He said the commission just wants to match service levels with its values and with what people actually need. He said this is not about individual officers, but rather about structures that allow police to have different intervention points which leads to different outcomes

## **5. Discussion topic: Consensus model for recommendations and points of agreement (50 minutes)**

Commissioner Cynthia Suopis asked for comments on: Individual diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-bias training cannot overcome the institutional history and systemic inequalities that exist in the NPD and institutions of policing.

Commissioner Alex Jarret said he was a yellow light on this one. He said he thinks yes but while we continue to have policing its worth considering who does policing. He said women and people color and have different outcomes sometimes as officers and that it might be worthwhile to consider what the best training is, while trainings are continuing to happen.

Commissioner Nnamdi Pole said he has concern in naming the NPD in this section. He said he doesn't know if there is data that would show what's claimed. He said if this section could talk more broadly, he would be more in favor. He said he is not claiming it has never worked and can never work but that the commission needs to envision an NPD close to the one they have now in the beginning of the process. He said this language could have a perverse impact of stopping current training or not seeking to do training better.

Commissioner Josey Rosales said outside the realm of NPD, to say any one institution has

overcome racism is an outlandish claim. They said to think any training will cure them of all racism is a ludicrous thing to say because it takes a lifetime of work. They said training can mitigate racism but never overcome it.

Commissioner Booker Bush said the data is anti-bias training hasn't worked. He said he has gone to anti-biasness stuff it's been efficacious. He said the chief didn't make him feel that the training they receive has been that efficacious. He said he went to a green light on this. He said six months ago, he might not have been at yellow light but the more he's read and thought, he's chosen. He said there is a lot of data that shows this training doesn't work.

Commissioner Dan Cannity said he was a green light. He said this work takes time and commitment to do and that individual trainings aren't a lifetime commitment. He said training doesn't change the process or the institution itself. He said you can have a department of committed people but if the policies and structures they have to inhabit don't allow them to be what they practice, it doesn't overcome the history. He said there's no superman that swoops in and solves the problem. He said maybe it can be phrased in a better way but that's what he was trying to get at.

Commissioner Carol Owen said it's an important statement to keep in some form. She said she agreed with the statements made about this taking a lifetime.

Commissioner Nick Fleisher said he was a yellow. He said his problem with it is that it's an all or nothing statement. He said he's taken training that made a difference for him and that there could be even better training. He said he doesn't want this to be misunderstood and that training still needs to be explored.

Commissioner Javier Luengo-Garrido said he was green on this one. He said he read it as recognition that the NPD exists within the larger historical context. He said he thinks the commission agrees with this statement.

Commissioner Dan Cannity said the wording can be adjusted. He said he didn't mean, don't try any training, but rather that this can't be the salvation of the solution. He said for him, he'd like to be shown that these trainings work. He said with training he doesn't expect there to be a 100% turn around and it might not be where the commission necessarily wants to put their energy. He asked whether \$100,000 a year on training correlates to meaningful changes. He said his sense is no. He said he needs to see anything that says yes they do work and here's how they work.

Commissioner Josey noted the Chief's comments about how her staff wasn't in a learning mood. They said it costs tax dollars and they won't even participate. They said if they're not in a learning mood, they're not sure why the city would continue to fund training.

Commissioner Nnamdi Pole said they would feel fine with the statement if the NPD was omitted from it. He said the Policies and Services subcommittee has been criticized for their work, but that he did not come away with the notion that the NPD has a unique problem with race.

Commissioner Cynthia Suopis said she and Dan can rework the statement based on the commissioners' feedback.

Commissioner Cynthia Suopis asked for comments on: Any transition of responsibilities and/or duties from one department to another should be accompanied by an equivalent

transfer of funds from the department that held those responsibilities to the new one.

Commissioner Nick Fleisher said he was red on this one. He said this statement brought up questions of funding and where may be other funding sources. He said he news to look at this one more. He noted there was a 10% cut already and that he would need to hear more.

Commissioner Cynthia Suopis said the things the intention is that people want the 880k to be accounted for and perhaps moved to a new department, but there might be some other items that might be moved from the NPD.

Commissioner Nick Fleisher said he is willing to move to yellow.

Commissioner Josey Rosales said in terms of the initial 10% cut, if money were to go to a warming center or some way to house people, we would see drop off from the police interacting with those individuals. They said 1:1 is a good model. They said the NPD has increased their budget by 40% and the commission doesn't know what warranted that change. They said it would be realistic to cut the budget by 40% and bring it back to 2010 levels and see the community be just as safe. They said there wasn't a spike in crime to that degree in 10 years.

Commissioner Dan Cannity said 880k sounds like a lot but in a lot of ways it's not. He said a one time budget cut for 880k isn't enough to fund a department for multiple years. He asked rhetorically, is the police budget always going to be cut by that same amount over the years? He said some move of funds transfer should occur if particular calls are being shifted. He said it's important not to set up these programs for failure.

Commissioner Alex Jarrett said he was yellow on this one. He said more flexibility might be needed here because the costs of the departments vary. He said generally every budget will increase and in many cases you may see the cost of living increase. He said the NPD had greater cost than the school. He said it might be useful to compare the 40% increase with that of other departments and compare whether the city is increasing the NPD more than other budgets. He said he thinks that might be the case.

Commissioner Booker Bush said he agrees with Alex. He said there will need to be more flexibility about this. He said it's important to clarify; why that amount. He said by the time this structure is pushed, the 880k will be gone. He wondered how the commission will make certain the money that it cut in the future goes to what the commission says it will go to.

Commissioner Josey Rosales asked whether the commission could earmark funds for transferability so that as the infrastructures are developed and as people are hired, the funds can be transferred. They said the commission should consider curing the budget by 50% within five years so the city can get things going, while funding the NPD in the meantime

Commissioner Javier Luengo-Garrido said the commission doesn't need to start making these things complicated by thinking this granular. He said he hopes to shoot for simple and say, if service is not happening in the NPD anymore, the funding goes with it and the budget should be updated.

Commissioner Cynthia Suopis said she can work with Dan on these items and dive deeper into yellows. She said the consensus building gives the commission a good platform for discussion.



## **10. Adjourn**

**Commissioner Dan Cannity moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:00pm. Commissioner Nnamdi Pole seconded. The motion to adjourn was passed unanimously.**