

Northampton Policing Review Commission
Policies and Services Subcommittee
Meeting Minutes
Monday, February 22, 2021
4:30PM-6:00PM
Remote Meeting

Join the Remote Meeting:

<https://zoom.us/j/92772302218?pwd=TkFYd2luZ2xiQXNkZGdYQSt5aTIzd09>

Meeting ID: 927 7230 2218 **Passcode:** 876916

Or by telephone, call: +1 929 436 2866 US

1. Call to Order by meeting chair, Nick Fleisher
 - a. Announcement of Zoom Recording
 - b. Roll Call
 - c. Approval of Minutes
2. 15 minutes open to public comment.
3. Review of List of Services – rating necessity, capacity/competence, and rationale for alternative.
4. Process of moving forward with list and report
5. New Business
6. Agenda for next meeting
7. Adjourn

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order by Commissioner Nick Fleisher at 4:32 PM.

ROLL CALL:

Nick Fleisher present

David Hoose present

Elizabeth Barajas-Roman not present Nnamdi Pole present

Cynthia Suopis present

ANNOUNCEMENT OF ZOOM RECORDING

Commissioner Nick Fleisher made an announcement that this meeting was being recorded

for the public record. The recording will be available on Northampton Open Media, as well as, the City of Northampton website.

Approval of Meeting Minutes from February 8th and December 15th

Commissioner Nnamdi Pole moved to approve the meeting minutes from February 8th and December 15th. Commissioner David Hoose seconded the motion. Commissioner Cynthia Suopis obtained as she did not read them.

Public Comment

Community member Jane Doe said she is a victim of sexual assault. She asked for clarification about why Commissioner Cynthia Suopis suggested limiting the comment to three minutes.

Commissioner Nick Fleisher said when Jane Doe called last, the public hearing guidelines structure are different and interactional. He said the purpose of the public hearing is to welcome comment and interact with comment where it's requested. He said the only reason public comment is limited during meetings is to get to the business part of the meeting for subcommittee. He said it's important to balance both and he hopes that explains the difference.

Community member Jane Doe clarified why she strongly suggested that.

Commissioner Cynthia Suopis said that all of the meetings are subject to open meeting law in the city, which allows us to set limits on time for various topics. She said the agenda was set the limit to 15 minutes for general comment. She said she reminded Nick about the limitation because sometimes callers call in and don't know what the limits are. She said she wanted to remind him to have the limit but he was going to do it anyway without her interrupting and that it's really important to limit so the agenda can also get done. She encourages her to check out the survey for folks who can write their entire story and lived experience on the survey which will be publicized. She offered this another way to give her complete story interrupted.

Nnamdi Pole said it feels arbitrary to set the minute and made a motion to allow thousand safe seven minutes for the two people who arrived.

Commissioner Nick Fleisher asked for seconding the motion.

Commissioner David Hoose seconded the motion.

Commissioner Nick Fleisher set the timer for five minutes and offered her five minutes.

Commissioner Jane Doe mentioned calling in the first time. She said Commissioner Nnamdi Pole is validating and said she feels safe with him. She said because of his professional background, as well as how he talks about how the police department helps. She said the police does protect Smithies which are a huge stakeholder group. She said he wants reliable data and he's really thinking. She said there needs to be a pivot on this commission as

there is violence on campuses. She said she doesn't feel like Commissioner Nnamdi Pole is being heard. She said in the preliminary report there's a lot of abuser and offender friendly language that talked about protecting and supporting abusers and criminals. She said when you're a rapist you have to go to jail. She said the commissioner's haven researched what happens to survivors. She said the police's gun is the only thing that stops domestic violence because the abuser will continue to do it. She said you cannot send a social worker and if you take a way more money from the police department, then there's less police to keep people safe. She said every officer that is left, is less response time for survivors like her.

Commissioner Nick Fleisher thanked Jane Doe for giving a very particular perspective and asked if she had a closing sentence.

Jane Doe thanked Nick for telling her she can put it in writing. She said it's important to protect domestic violence survivors.

Wendy Foxmyn said all the stakeholders in this community are not participating or being heard. She said she has been following the commission and many of the subcommittees as well, and that it is not clear whether that survey will be widely spread. She thanked the commission and Noa for their work under pressure. She said she encourages the committee to stick to 3 minutes for public comment.

3. Review of List of Services – rating necessity, capacity/competence, and rationale for alternative.

Commissioner Nick Fleisher shared his screen and showcased a list of services created by Commissioner David Hoose. He explained, he color-coded the document based upon services and whether the police should be involved.

Categories from the document:

GREEN = alternative department of community safety

YELLOW = co-response of police and community safety

BLUE = armed police

LIGHT BLUE = unarmed police detective (*this would involve recommendations to current policies and practices*)

PINK – alternative location of service to be determined

Commissioner Cynthia Suopis said she said she's uncomfortable with armed and unarmed categories and feels more comfortable thinking about what could be moved into the department of community safety.

Commissioner Nick Hoose said police officers will always be armed. He said serving warrants can be dangerous and in some cities there are fugitive apprehension units which local departments can call in for an inner-state issues. He said he also read an article that said the vast majority of warrants are for low level misdemeanors and nonviolent things. He said there should be a requirement to have more than one effort to be made before contact with police is made. He said otherwise he doesn't have a lot of comment in regards to how things were sorted.

Commissioner Nick Fleisher said the militaristic authority heavy presence of police is a very counterproductive presentation in many situations. He said he is talking about someone who isn't coming with military vests as opposed to a police investigator who is coming looking like a resident who is doing business that's not so emphasizing the military presentation. He wondered if this is realistic and whether this would matter to people. He said in the light blue categories, requires specialized expertise, for instance sexual assault, child pornography, prostitution, as well as responding to events.

Commissioner Nnamdi Pole said he agreed separating armed versus unarmed categories. He said this list mirrors the conversation at Smith around whether the police should be armed. He said it feels connected to putting energy into this new community agency. He said it's important to clearly signal to the public that a gun is one tool the police has to assert power. He said he's sure the police would cite their own safety in terms of being asked to be unarmed. He said he thinks having different roles clearly marked by different colors; one group being armed and using force while another is not licensed to use force but can notify the public when they are in violation of certain things.

Commissioner Nick Hoose said it's either a police matter or not a police matter. He said someone calls and says they are being raped, we expect an armed police response. He said in terms of child pornography, most people are not arrested. He said troopers knock on the door with a search warrant, they seize the computers, and they're not arrested. He said they're summoned later after there has been an assessment. He said in terms of statutory rape (sex with someone under the age of 16), most of the cases he's been involved in, it's not a situation where someone calls the police, it's something that is divulged over time and there needs to be accountability, but we're hearing from the community, we don't need a police response, but rather need a highly trained person to do the initial contact.

Commissioner Nick Fleisher said he's convinced this is not a useful category as it's a small percentage of the work and half of it is being done in different ways. He suggested moving on.

Commissioner Nnamdi Pole said he doesn't feel comfortable asking the police to show up unarmed.

Commissioner Nick Fleisher suggested shifting community events to the yellow category and shifting the other light blue to dark blue.

Commissioner David Hoose said he doesn't agree that the examples he just gave require armed police presence. He said it depends on the nature of the call. He said two officers were just killed by a child pornographer which is the first he's heard of it.

Commissioner Nick Fleisher said clearly a judgement needs to be made on every call. He suggested walking through the document and seeing where there is consensus on the categories.

Commissioner Cynthia Suopis asked whether the committee members are qualified to have an option on that. She asked where the data is on this new categorization.

Commissioner Nick Fleisher said his understanding of the work is to look at current practices of police work and seeing if there are any outstanding problems or whether its conducive to having an alternative approach

Commissioner Nnamdi Pole said you want armed police on the worst day of your life. He said once we dismantle the NPD we're going to create some cracks. Want to be able to anticipate some of those cracks. He said he's not sure what data is necessary to proceed as Nick is suggesting and that the committee should be clear about what we would like to see stay in the NPD.

Commissioner Nick Hoose agreed. He said the committee should short what we need police for and what we feel could be better done by another entity. He said the commission will not get down to a granular level on the report.

Commissioner Cynthia Suopis said she feels disturbed by the color categorization. She said the overall vision of work of the commission, for her, is that there are different perceptions of what safety is, and that she is wanting to hold those two different perceptions. She said she's focusing on how to make this community she lives in feel safe for everyone knowing full well 911 will be available and that the people who feel safe calling 911 will continue to do that. She said she hopes this conversation is not dismantling as much as trying to reimagine the police department and that she hopes she has the qualifications to say a peer can handle that. She said the alternatives committee is working hard on a granular detail. She noted safe passage will to come talk about their role with Domestic violence, which requires police response by law.

Commissioner Nick Fleisher said he's unsure about Cynthia's apprehension. Commissioner Cynthia Suopis agreed to move on.

Commissioner Nick Fleisher went down the list and asked for discussion.

Commissioner Namdi Pole said anytime there's violence against another person, there might need to be some kind of advanced triage.

Commissioner Nick Fleisher asked the committee whether these need to be given some categorization. He said as soon as we begin to categorize, there will always be an exception.

He asked the commissioners to scroll through the list and ask if there are any ones that are light blue and find a different category for them.

Commissioner Nnamdi Pole noted Commissioner Elizabeth's past contributions and

suggested moving rape and sexual assault to green.

Commissioner Cynthia Suopis clarified that police are required to respond to domestic violence calls and so there might need to be more clarity. She said the Rape/ Indecent Assault and Battery category can also contain domestic violence.

Commissioner Nnamdi Pole said to mandate the presence of police officer in every instance in this category goes against all of the research Commissioner Elizabeth did.

Commissioner Cynthia Suopis said it's important to ask what the citizen wants at that point when they make the call.

Commissioner Nnamdi Pole said the decision on how to proceed should be in the hands of the survivor.

Commissioner Nick Fleisher said this is a judgement call and dispatch issue, not a core police function. He said the victim can ask for police. He asked whether the "non emergent" language should be removed.

Commissioner Cynthia Suopis said she likes the point about empowering the survivor to make a choice

The commissioners discussed further categories on the list.

Commissioner Nick Fleisher said the committee will have to start deciding what kind of recommendation we want to contribute to the final report. He asked what people feel is the best use of time.

Commissioner Nnamdi Pole suggested leaning into and categorizing what needs to still be covered by a police department. He said only this subcommittee will include information about what the NPD can do.

The committee agreed with this framing.

Commissioner Nick Fleisher suggested sending to Noa, the items commissioners would like to recommend to change. He noted the committee has gotten rid of the light blue category, and didn't talk about the pink category.

Admin Assistant Noa asked for the unedited version of the document to use in the minutes.

Commissioner Nick Fleisher asked Commissioner Cynthia about reaching out to Elizabeth Barajas-Roman . Commissioner Nick Fleisher said he plans to. **8.**

Adjourn

Commissioner David Hoose moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:14pm. Commissioner Nnamdi Pole seconded the motion. The motion adjourn is passed unanimously.