



Roll Call

*CITY COUNCIL MEETING
CONDUCTED AS AN ON-LINE ZOOM MEETING
Northampton, MA*

A special joint meeting of the Mayor and City Council was called to order by Council President Gina-Louise Sciarra at 6:03 p.m. On a roll call, the following City Councilors were present:

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| At-Large Councilor Gina-Louise Sciarra | At-Large Councilor William H. Dwight |
| Ward 1 Councilor Michael J. Quinlan, Jr. | Ward 5 Councilor Alex Jarrett |
| Ward 2 Councilor Karen Foster | Ward 6 Councilor Marianne LaBarge |
| Ward 3 Councilor James B. Nash | Ward 7 Councilor Rachel Maiore |
| Ward 4 Councilor John Thorpe | |

Also present were Northampton Policing Review Commission (NPRC) Members: Elizabeth Barajas-Roman, Booker Bush, Daniel Cannity, Nick Fleisher, David Hoose, Alex Jarrett, Javier Luengo-Garrido, Carol Owen, Nnamdi Pole, Michael Quinlan, Josey Rosales and Cynthia Suopis and Mayor David J. Narkewicz.

Announcement of Audio/Video Recording

Councilor Sciarra announced that the meeting was being audio/video recorded.

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION of Northampton Policing Review Commission Final Report: Reimagining Safety

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION of the Northampton Policing Review Commission's Final Report: Reimagining Safety

Councilor Sciarra welcomed and opened the floor to NPRC members. NPRC Co-Chair Daniel Cannity opened the presentation by recognizing NPRC Co-Chair Cynthia Suopis.

Co-Chair Suopis thanked the Mayor and City Council for inviting them. The charge they gave them was to rethink the city's approach to policing, she reiterated. Members appreciate the opportunity to be part of that discussion and see their work as a starting point for action going forward. The commission conducted a review of the Northampton Police Department (NPD), including asking questions and requesting information from the NPD and reviewing police reform proposals and projects being conducted throughout the nation. They asked for and heard community input about individual experiences with policing and interviewed and contacted several community resources.

Commissioners organized themselves into four subcommittees to allow for more focused review: Policies and Procedures, Alternatives Approaches to Carceral Responses, Spending and Contracts and Outreach to Marginalized Populations who were not able to appear because of technological and logistical restrictions.

She is not going to tell them that, as a commission, they agreed on every point but she can say that they represented many diverse points of view. Their research led them to the common ground and consensus that everyone in their community wants to feel safe. The City Council heard that many people in their community do not feel safe. They also learned that the social safety nets in place to protect the vulnerable are in need of repair. Police are trying to fill the gaps in the social safety network. This led them to the exploration of how to reimagine safety. Why do some members of the community feel safe and some do not? Where are the gaps in the community and social services that hinder this feeling of being safe in Northampton? Can equating safety with health help by using public health models of prevention, intervention, assessment and policies to help fill these gaps?

These questions led them to think about ways to explore opportunities to reinvest in community resources in such a way that police presence could be reduced without impacting the safety of residents, business owners and visitors, as well as those suffering from addiction, homelessness, poverty, mental illness, domestic violence and racism.

They explored prevention and intervention models that led them to conversations about how the community can reinvest its talent, resources and funding toward a community-led initiative that can keep the community safe for all. She referred to examples of rethinking policing studied in

Brattleboro, VT, Austin, TX and Ithaca, NY.

In Northampton, there has never been an example of an extra-judicial killing and, of course, they want to maintain that record. But after the summer of 2020, dozens of cities and towns and states are reviewing their approaches to policing.

Co-Chair Suopis briefly reviewed details and models of reform efforts in the three communities cited, as well as state initiatives and legislation intended to reform policing. After reviewing the premises of the report, she turned the presentation back to Co-Chair Cannity to present the NPRC's recommendations.

Overview of NPRC Recommendations

One of the things really important to them was looking at this from the question of what is safety to begin with, what makes people safe and how to get that, rather than from the perspective of improving what they have, Commissioner Cannity presented. The emphasis was on how to make people safe and looking at research, evidence and best practices that have been established.

Members categorized the recommendations into immediate changes and things that can be expanded upon as next steps.

The NPRC's priority recommendation is creation of a Department of Community Care (DCC) housed within the city that exists independent of the police department and includes peer responders. As they looked at what makes people safe and different safety options and opportunities, it became clear that they needed some kind of city infrastructure to house them and a point person to connect services provided by the city, nonprofits, etc. There's no connection and communication, and this would house the nexus for that. The response would also be unarmed - one of the bigger points - not introducing the risk of extra-judicial killings for people in extreme emotional states. They wanted to focus on de-escalation.

Additional recommendations are as follows:

- A resiliency hub as a place for people to get help, stay warm, etc. A key finding is a lack of services and support for people experiencing houselessness.
- Establishing safe staffing policies/procedures for emergency responders.
- Conducting a city-wide needs assessment to understand where gaps are, to include reaching out to organizations currently involved in non-armed, non-violent responses
- Bringing in more voices to hear specifically what makes people feel safe and what people need
- Looking at what the police do with their time and asking the question of what police are providing. They tried to do that a little bit and can see that violent crime is on the decline. Certain types of crimes are at about half the level they were 10 years ago. Serious crime makes up about six percent (6%) of responses, so 94% of responses could maybe be done by somebody else. He really recommends the needs assessment and some of those time audits. He mentioned AH Datalytics as a consultant that has done this work for other cities, including Ithaca, NY and San Diego and Oakland, CA.
- Evaluating the success of this initiative by setting up and establishing milestones for any of these projects

As they scale up, he suggested they might want to do expand the department to

- oversee a civilian flagger or traffic detail program. Massachusetts opened up a civilian flagger program 10 years ago.
- Handle medical emergencies, public disturbances, general police presence and patrol, animal control, minor traffic accidents and enforcement and restorative justice.

The biggest thing is establishing a department outside of the police department created from the ground up with accountability to people served, he stressed. The department should have people who have experienced houselessness and/or substance abuse as co-designers, in leadership positions, as staff, etc. Such a department will provide noncarceral options for response, open up collaborations with new departments and reduce the stigma associated with police involvement. When the police show up, people make assumptions.

A benefit of it being a city department is that it would not be limited by grant cycles like a lot of programs in Northampton. This status guarantees funding and staffing and gives the organization

access to city infrastructure.

At the start, the department might provide staffing during high call volume times, he suggested. Introducing it this way would allow the people creating, staffing and leading the department to establish it in such a way that it could grow appropriately. It would respond to wellness checks, substance use calls and calls for service around houseless individuals and focus on non-coercive and non-violent models of intervention and prevention.

A study came out yesterday that said that if somebody is not arrested on their first interaction with police, they are less likely to reoffend.

Mobile Crisis Response Team

The department would house a mobile crisis response team, Cannity continued. Public safety communications/dispatch in Northampton is extraordinarily well-trained and has a process for triaging calls. This would give them another tool and another place for calls to go other than the default options of police, ambulance or fire.

The team would include peer responders, people with all the required training and certifications necessary but also lived experience.

"This can grow," he pointed out. When the people most affected are intentionally included, it will help to shape it in a way that is helpful and meaningful. It can also actually be moved across municipalities. If there is enough interest, a coalition of cities could fund it. Instead of having to build something new, other communities could contribute in, thus allowing for another source of funding.

The department can take on other responsibilities as well, he added. He opened the floor to questions.

Councilor Sciarra and Mayor Narkewicz extended effusive thanks to commissioners for their service, both noting that they initially underestimated the amount of work and level of commitment involved.

Discussion

Councilor Dwight echoed the deep appreciation expressed by Mayor Narkewicz and Councilor Sciarra. He asked about the necessary certification and training for either peer counselors or other counselors. Is there a certification program or agency in the Commonwealth that provides such training? He is not sure what is meant by certification or what certification would do under Mass. General Law.

Commissioner Owen said she knows such agencies exist but she can't name them.

In the mental health field, there is a state-contracted certifying organization called the Transformation Center, Commissioner Fleisher volunteered. Training lasts about three weeks plus a number of weekends and is pretty intensive. It is funded by the state and leads to state certification. Intentional Peer Support (IPS) is another well-known program that is not sanctioned by the state but may be even better in some ways. These two are particularly focused on the mental health field, but there may be other programs for post-incarceration or substance use issues. He has seen incredible growth in individuals who went through those trainings.

Councilor Nash thanked commissioners in particular for holding a community conversation that urgently needed to happen, noting that their work has laid a foundation for them to be able to move forward. He said he particularly appreciated the focus on the houseless community, the tone and manner of that conversation and discussion of that issue in a compassionate way. In the past, residents have sometimes come to loggerheads around issues of panhandling, camping, etc.

He said he was curious as to how they came to a consensus on the recommendations with the diversity of opinion in the group.

That was a challenge, Co-Chair Suopis acknowledged. She and Commissioner Cannity came up with five or six consensus points and possible troublesome points. Commissioner Cannity came up with a 'red light/green light/yellow light' system. Members were asked to identify the red light

that they absolutely cannot live with, the green light that is good and the yellow light, meaning they could go either way but wanted more information. In reading their personal statements, the range of opinion is evident, she agreed.

The first half of their time as commissioners was really spent figuring out what they were as a group but also where they were as individuals, Co-Chair Cannity commented. When he last looked, they had 73 officials meetings, 74 if you count approval of the minutes. They spent a lot of time listening. For the actual report, they did the same red light/green light exercise to identify where there was something somebody couldn't agree with.

One of the other things that brought them together was their reflections on what they heard from the public over time, Carol Owens reported. Some really pervasive themes emerged from the testimony. There was a diversity of opinion based on people's experience with Northampton police but also a drumbeat of commentary about the need to reevaluate the various functions police have taken on in the last 30 years since disinvestment in mental health, deinstitutionalization without matched dollars for community-based services and defunding of social services. Folks who testified persuaded a lot of them that they needed to look at this major recommendation, creation of a program with some permanency to meet a lot of unaddressed social needs. Regardless of where people came down on how much reform was needed or whether the revolution was coming, they came together around the intent to give city officials recommendations with some impact that represented what they heard from the public over time.

Separation of Powers

As commissioners likely became more aware during this process, Northampton has a separation of powers and division of government embedded in its charter, Councilor Dwight related. There are charges that fall under the City Council in that it generates laws and has control over the budget while the executive branch creates and generates policies and manages departments.

He scoured the report on his third read for initiatives that might fall under the purview of the council and couldn't really identify anything all that clearly. He expressed his understanding that, basically, the report's recommendations require the council's support for budgetary approval once a proposal comes from the mayor. He asked if any of them discussed what it is that the council should be considering as it goes forward to support it, enforce it or expand on it.

In addition to the separations, they all know that in Northampton a lot of the power resides in the mayor, Commissioner Cannity confirmed. In places they have looked, the best outcomes are in places where there is a marriage between the two branches and where they are not being adversarial but collaborative and cooperative. That's what they hope to see here.

A lot of things require the mayor to make changes to the administrative code and to make budget proposals. Because this power resides in the executive branch, that's where those things need to happen. Legislative options exist, such as decriminalizing things and changes to ordinances to make them friendlier to unhoused people but those changes don't always produce an immediate impact. Because they were focused on the maximum impact for the least amount of effort a lot of the recommendations ended up being suggestions that were more executive heavy, he noted.

In a similar vein, the report stated that restrictive state laws presented a limitation on the commission's ability to act on certain matters and that those need further study and expert analysis, Councilor Sciarra said. She asked him to share what those laws are, since they were not listed or cited.

Especially around restorative justice, programs receiving state money and grant funding can't touch domestic violence, Commissioner Cannity advised. If a restorative justice program has state funding, by state law, it can't handle domestic violence cases. Other laws dictate what type of calls require a police response. There are limitations at the state level to how far they can go. The beginnings of transformative and restorative programs are trying to navigate that space.

Qualified immunity came up many times as something regulated under state law and outside of the city's purview, Commissioner Pole added.

They weren't sure if it was a legislative or executive responsibility, but his subcommittee highlighted a need to take a look at the police complaint process, Commissioner Pole continued.

Their concern is that all complaints presently are adjudicated within the police department in a three-tiered system with complaints classified as either a violation of rules, a violation of laws or not meritorious. It struck them that there was a need to revise that and have the whole process operate outside of the police department, but they didn't come up with a way that should be done. He imagines City Council could think that through and come up with its own recommendation for handling citizen complaints in an independent way outside of the department.

In nearly three more hours of discussion, numerous topics were introduced and discussed, including the CAHOOTS (Crisis Assistance Helping Out on the Streets) program of Eugene, OR, restorative justice, the report's recommendation that the issue of domestic violence be referred for further study and the proposal that the Department of Community Care be part of city government. Highlights of the discussion are as follows:

Commissioner Bush said he is glad to see funding for a restorative justice program in Northampton but is personally disappointed that it is being run through the police. His view of restorative justice is that, "you never involve the legal system in the decision-making of obtaining justice."

To him, as soon as police are involved with restorative justice, it's no longer restorative justice, it is something else, which is why he is disappointed present funding comes through this channel. Their state representative is seeking funding for a number of alternative programs from the state that specifically ask that the police department *not* be involved with the funding. He voiced the opinion that this will be an ongoing issue for the City Council and the mayor.

Councilor Foster invited commissioners to talk about any gaps they saw in their work with the benefit of 20/20 hindsight. Commissioner Pole said he thinks the process might have benefited from inviting more input from the police department from the beginning, while not being bound to follow its direction or give them equal voice. He thinks they went in the other direction and were unnecessarily hostile to department members giving their point of view. He also regretted not going after people who identified themselves as victims of violent crime who were helped by the police, such as survivors of domestic violence. He thinks those voices were not sought out as strongly. The commission tried hard to privilege the voices of those who do not feel well-served but he thinks they did not do as good a job of amplifying the voices of those who *did* feel well-served.

However, Commissioner Rosales respectfully disagreed as to how much input from police they should have solicited. Police are members of this community just as any other members who attended. They had as many opportunities as anybody else to bring their perspectives to the table and time and time again chose not to. "There's a willingness there to not participate with our commission in an open forum," he suggested.

Councilor LaBarge thanked commissioners and affirmed her support for the creation of a new department. She presented details of House Bill 3807, legislation sponsored by Rep. Lindsay Sabadosa, to create alternatives to community emergency services (ACES). The bill says the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) "shall establish and provide administrative oversight to the alternatives to community emergency services (ACES) grant to increase the availability of non-law enforcement, unarmed community-based response options for calls to 911." As city councilors, this is what they've been hearing; the idea of having two different departments and different types of calls coming in. "I agree with that 100%, working in the field of mental health for many years myself."

She also stressed the need to form an advisory committee made up of professionals and people with lived experience with problems such as homelessness and substance abuse.

Commissioner Fleisher said his message to councilors is, "This is the time, and the wind is at our back.' There is energy and hopefully funding to support projects the city embarks on, he affirmed.

Councilor Maiore said highlights of the report to her were its recommendations for data-driven police staffing, establishing a Department of Community Care, conducting a needs assessment, its focus on housing first as a philosophy and its emphasis on peer-led models.

Domestic Violence

Councilor Maiore expressed concern about the section on domestic violence, saying she feels its

recommendation for further study could be stronger. The report identified some of the practical limitations on exploring alternatives, but, as someone who managed survivor services for many years, these issues need to be looked at, she stressed. The relationship between the Department of Families and Children (DFC) and the police is complicated. It can act as a deterrent to those seeking help and the paltry lack of services for abusers is noteworthy. She was glad to see the further explanation in the appendix, still, she thinks it is imperative to make this a priority in terms of doing a deeper dive and not waiting a few years to do so. She thinks they can do better than saying sometimes survivors and families feel supported by police around domestic violence and sometimes it furthers their trauma and harm. The police receive a significant number of domestic violence calls, and she hopes to make this a priority. "Just because it's complex doesn't mean it doesn't need to be addressed," she observed.

Commissioner Bush said he also feels terrible about saying the response to domestic violence was a setback priority. It is a high priority, he confirmed. The problem is they didn't know what to recommend. He spoke of the dual barriers of service providers being uncomfortable talking to them because they are partially funded by the police and survivors themselves not feeling safe accessing domestic violence services. He is aware that one of the most dangerous situations someone can walk in on is an active domestic violence situation, he added.

Commissioner Luengo confirmed that NPRC tried really hard to bring organizations working on domestic violence in, but it was complicated because their funding comes with strings attached to the district attorney or the police department. He fully agrees with Councilor Maiore that it has to be a priority and that further evaluation should happen sooner rather than later.

Domestic violence strikes him as an example of a subject where the perspective of the police might well converge with those in favor of alternative services, Commissioner Pole commented. As a psychology professor and clinical psychologist/licensed therapist specializing in psychological trauma, he has worked with police. He went into this work with a strong bias against police because of his lived experience as a black man, but as a result of working with officers going through traumatic events in Detroit and in the Bay area in San Francisco, an emerging theme is that domestic violence situations are a kind of nightmare for police. They are trained to think of them as being fraught with danger. This is an area cops would like to get out of, so if they can think of alternatives that don't involve them, he thinks that will be good news.

Wearing his therapists' hat, he is concerned for people who feel under threat from their partner and need an armed response to protect them, he continued. In some situations force may be needed for the protection of the person being violated. His subcommittee talked about the importance of choice and the person being threatened having a choice about who they want to help them. If they can give people more options and more choice, it would be a good step forward. He thinks they would find cooperation from the police department in gracefully exiting from situations they find quite dangerous for themselves, he concluded.

Commissioner Barajas-Roman thanked Councilor Maiore for her comment around still prioritizing domestic violence. By no means does the fact that they weren't able to reach a conclusion mean that it needs another two years of study or that it is somehow less important, she emphasized. To underscore its complexity does not mean it's a pass. More data is not necessarily going to illuminate the problem because what it really needs is bold, visionary leadership, she suggested.

Municipal Department

Councilors and the mayor focused questions on the NPRC's decision to make the community care department part of municipal government. CAHOOTS is not a municipal agency in Eugene, OR, but is a separate nonprofit, Councilor Dwight noted. While relying on municipal funds, it does not take orders from the municipality. Municipal employees have to conform to certain laws that apply to people who work for the government, such as the Conflict of Interest (COI) law. They are somewhat limiting the department's autonomy by enlisting municipal government, he pointed out.

Councilor Sciarra asked if they were able to find a model for this type of program and if they saw a clear advantage to having it be a city department as opposed to an independent contractor.

As they talked to people who run programs (Pamela Schwartz was a great example), a common theme was that the city needs a paid staff person to do these things and to be a connection point between all these services, Commissioner Cannity advised. Coordinating someone's access to

services is necessary because services can be difficult to navigate. The city needs a nexus and somewhere to house that nexus.

In addition, peer responders are generally not funded; they are often volunteer or funded by grants. That produces some instability, which is something they don't want when talking about public safety. Also, they want to make sure it is equivalent to the NPD, fire rescue and EMS in terms of its status as an agency; not that it exists outside but that there is budgetary and oversight commitment to it on the part of the city. Being part of the city also gives it access to city infrastructure such as dispatch.

In terms of models, there are not a lot, partly because there is a reliance on nonprofits. Nonprofits generally take money from the state and that funding is subject to failing.

Cities have done pilot programs, Commissioner Cannity related. He cited Dallas's Right Care program as an example, which was based in the police department and featured a team response by a clinician, paramedic and police officer. It reduced arrests and hospitalizations by 30%, but it was through the police department, and when the pilot ended the city didn't continue it. It really is about saying there's a commitment to making these things happen.

This was a yellow light issue for him personally, Commissioner Fleisher shared. He is not in total agreement. The majority of the commission did feel that having this housed within the city made the most sense. His administrative experience and experience running programs suggest to him that other alternatives could be considered. He appreciates and understands that some of the existing agencies in the city have histories and structural issues that may not make them ideal for this kind of department, but he thinks an entity could be brought in that has the right skills and expertise. "There wasn't unanimity on this issue," he noted.

Mayor Narkewicz said he has heard a lot about CAHOOTS and knows they have a proven track record. Eugene is funding CAHOOTS out of its municipal budget. It's a municipal line item in the budget. It is a priority and has been increased slowly over time. It's essentially a contract with the CAHOOTS program and a parent agency.

The city currently doesn't have the bandwidth to run an agency like this within city government, he pointed out. Given the complexities of trying to create such a department in a municipal environment, he is curious if it could be a program created by professionals and people with peer training and co-responder training. If he said tomorrow that he called CAHOOTS and has worked out a deal with them to pack up and move to Northampton, would they still say that they shouldn't use the same model and it must be stand-alone department? It wouldn't be relying on grant funding, it would be relying on municipal funding, he stressed.

One of the things that might be considered instead of creation of a new city department is some kind of partnership such as those mentioned in the bill sponsored by Rep. Sabadosa, Commissioner Owens suggested. As stated, the bill is intended to fund alternatives to community emergency services other than police. Grant guidelines say the applicants can be a unit of government, a covered community-based agency, a partnership, a nonprofit, a public institution of higher learning, a community health center or a behavioral health organization. However, Commissioner Luengo's point that the bill has not yet made it through both houses let alone to the governor's desk is well-taken, she noted.

In the NPRC's process, there was so much concern about the limitations of existing contracted agencies (behavioral health agencies, etc.) that the idea of a partnership between the city and some other nonprofits or service organizations sort of went out the window, she explained. They wanted to put forward a recommendation, and they ended up with a department within the city because they wanted a platform that could be built on and expanded based on more knowledge of the community and they didn't want it to go away after one fiscal year. That's her view of how they ended up with the Department of Community Care within the city. Reading Rep. Sabadosa's proposed bill, there are some ideas for partnerships that they could consider.

One of the things Tim Black stated is that CAHOOTS is not by any mean a cookie-cutter style of program that can just be dropped into any community, Commissioner Luengo advised. A lot of it is context-based to Eugene, OR.

Commissioner Luengo cited the *Department of Community Response (DCR)* in Sacramento, CA, the *Community Safety Department* in Albuquerque, NM, the *Crisis Intervention Services Office* in Rochester, NY and the *Office of Community Resilience* in Chattanooga, TN as examples of programs based in municipal government. "We are so far from reinventing the wheel with this report that I just wanted to recenter that," he noted.

He thinks having the department part of the municipality is the way to go. It came from residents' testimony about their experience of being over-policed. Commissioners thought creation of the department within the city was essential because the city budget should reflect Northampton's values and because they want the department to last. Being under the purview of a grant cycle makes it uncertain. The problem is systemic so the solution is systemic.

Commissioner Barajas-Roman and Booker Bush added their voices to the chorus of support for the department being housed within the city.

Councilor Jarrett cited pay and stability of employment for responders and accountability as benefits of the department being part of city government. With a contracted service, the contract would go to the lowest bidder who provides the service and that doesn't provide stability to the people hired. Why don't they contract out police, fire or emergency medical services? He asked rhetorically. Fire not too long ago became Fire Rescue and that made EMS a union-represented career option with higher wages. Housing it within the city provides continuity, security and professionalism.

As far as accountability, a contracted agency is certainly accountable to the city but accountable within the terms of the contract. A department would be more flexibly accountable. The report talked about how the department could be accountable to its users and the community in a way that other city operations haven't been. Some ways considered were by having an advisory board and a consistent and permanent relationship with the city.

Mayor Narkewicz asked about the timing and sequencing of other recommendations, such as conducting the needs assessment and creating a strategic plan for the police department. Commissioners Luengo and Cannity both noted that these things can happen simultaneously. The most impactful recommendation is establishment of the department, Commissioner Luengo stressed.

Discussion continued for another hour, with councilors and the mayor asking questions to flesh out the commission's recommendations. Several commissioners expressed their belief in the appropriateness of locating the new department under the Board of Health, since racism - which has been identified as a systemic problem with policing - has been recognized as a public health problem and the intervention models recommended by the NPRC are health-related. Councilor Dwight noted that the local Board of Health enjoys unique status under state law in that it can make rules and pass laws without being accountable to the public.

Commissioner Luengo spoke passionately about the need to re-center the conversation on the urgency of swift action on behalf of those who testified about being over-policed every day. Councilors and commissioners need to recognize their own level of privilege and the fact that they don't have the same lived experience as those individuals. He expressed confidence that City Hall is full of incredibly smart, talented people who will be able to figure out the sequencing and logistics of forming the department. The report makes really clear there is urgency to this.

Councilor Dwight said he thinks Commissioner Luengo would find consensus on the point of the urgency and even on the desire for implementation. He doesn't see anyone shrinking from that charge; rather, he sees them rushing to embrace it.

Commissioner Luengo said he knows some members do feel the urgency. "I hope that procedural objections won't override the moral imperatives."

Councilor Foster agreed there is an urgency to creating a system that allows people who don't currently feel safe the opportunity to feel safe. "I would hope to see a budget that includes a city department for all of the reasons we've heard here," she stated. She advocated for embedding that department in the city with all its resources since contracting with an outside service provider does not offer the same level of accountability. Also, a contracted vendor is incentivized to bid

low, not an ideal inducement for a department expected to make the difference the community is calling for, she pointed out.

In the final 45 minutes, elected officials touched on some of the less weighty aspects of the report, such as the recommendation to move the animal control function out of the police department and the recommendation to hire civilian flaggers. Mayor Narkewicz also referred to some inaccuracies in the report, such as the assertion that, between regular shifts and outside details, some officers work up to 100 hours per week.

With regard to inaccuracies, Commissioner Pole said he thinks it is good practice for them to say there may be some mistakes in how the data was crunched. If they made unintentional errors, he apologized and said they would want such errors to be corrected. While they stand by the philosophy of the report and general values it represents, specific figures may be incorrect, he acknowledged.

There is no controversy in some areas, Commissioner Bush was quick to add. The police, the NPRC and public comment all agree that police should not be involved in mental health calls and calls related to homelessness or substance abuse. They purposely did not use words like "abolish the police" because they recognize that police are needed. They are just trying to have them in the places where they are most needed and not where they are not needed.

From individual conversations with police officers, he came to the conclusion that many take pride in the reputation the NPD has in the community and see themselves as progressive in comparison with other communities, Commissioner Pole related. Some objective indications support this, such as an observation from Clinical Support Options' (CSO) staff that Northampton police are good about ceding authority to mental health workers.

If it's true that certain officers gravitate to Northampton because it has a reputation for community policing, he expressed concern that changing that role so that the NPD is more involved in armed responses might change the character of the department, leading to fewer community-minded officers and more militarized police.

Mayor Narkewicz agreed that is a concern, referring to a military-style vs. guardian mentality in the field of law enforcement. This has been an ongoing discussion point and something Northampton has worked on over time by getting out of civil service and, more recently, reforming the types of degrees accepted.

In closing thoughts, Commissioner Pole said he is struck by the immense amount of pain some still feel toward police and doesn't think this is fully addressed by the NPRC's recommendations. He suggested rebuilding that trust as a homework assignment for the department as the NPRC hands over the ball. He doesn't think the report's recommendations quite heal that fractured relationship.

There being no further comments, Council President Sciarra and Mayor Narkewicz reiterated their sincere thanks for the intense and difficult work of the commission.

Motion to Adjourn

Upon motion made by Councilor Dwight and seconded by Councilor Maiore, the meeting was adjourned at 9:45 p.m. The motion carried unanimously 9:0 by roll call vote.

Attest: _____ Administrative Assistant to the City Council