

Safety & Equity Task Force
Meeting minutes 10/21/2021 (draft)

Task Force: Clark Adams, Ben Cassavaugh, Margae Diamond, April Dunham, Gail Harbour, Marsh Hudson-Knapp, Lynn Mazza, Sarabeth Ward, Lauren Wilcox

In attendance: Brian Corr, Camme McElhiney, Stu Hurd, CAT TV

Tech Support: Jeannie Jenkins, Jeanne Connor

Notetaker: Lynn Mazza

1. Introductions

2. Minutes from Oct 7, 2021:

- ∞ Lynn made motion to change subtopic on agenda item 4, Purpose Review to include community outreach. Marsh seconded, all voted unanimously "Yes"
- ∞ Suggestion to add picking name to agenda
- ∞ April requested changing last minutes to show that Jeannie, Jeanne and Bruce were there not as participants, but there for logistical and technical support
- ∞ Marsh moved to approve the minutes with that change, Ben seconded, all voted unanimously "Yes"

3. NACOLE presentation (Brian Corr, Camme McElhiney)

- ∞ More than 200 civilian oversight entities, huge variety, no 2 are alike. Many are in response to a specific incident
- ∞ 3 general models for oversight: Review, Auditor/Monitor, Investigation and then hybrids
- ∞ Process of developing recommendations: first look at Purpose, Composition, Training, and Powers & Duties
- ∞ Brian suggested holding off on picking a name until the purpose is more clear.

4. Purpose Review (Clark, Sarabeth, Marsh, Ben)

- ∞ Read through and discussed the report from the Purpose Sub-Committee Brainstorming meeting 10/13/2021
- ∞ This is a lot of work we're asking them to do, is there funding for it? Not sure

- ∞ Is it state law that an internal investigation has to happen first within the BPD before it's passed onto another entity? Stu believes yes- except if it concerns the chief, then it is directed to the Criminal Justice Council. But Stu will confirm that.
- ∞ Concerns about the liability of board members? Boards and commissions appointed by the Select Board have coverage under the town's professional liability insurance
- ∞ There is much overlap between what the sub-committee generated and what is on the local Ordinance. Use Ordinance Purpose section as a draft?
- ∞ Would like to get public feedback about what the public, especially marginalized populations think the purpose should be and feedback around what the needs are
- ∞ Likes the mission and the vision in the beginning of the Ann Arbor model ordinance
- ∞ Discussion of how to reach out to marginalized populations, especially homeless
- ∞ Community survey? Good idea but it can be hard to get to those voices we most need to hear
- ∞ Camme: getting input from marginalized populations is a big challenge experienced across the country.
- ∞ "Community Cafes" where you interview people to get qualitative data. Many different ways to do this. Sometimes an outside group is brought in to alleviate the perception of bias. Camme/Brain have more ideas and resources around this
- ∞ Outreach Subcommittee forms (Gail, Lauren, Margae) to brainstorm a list of open-ended questions to ask community members and develop a list of places to do outreach people (homeless shelters, food pantries and Walloomsac Walk were suggested)
- ∞ Ben suggested that "Citizens' Police Academies" where citizens get a basic overview of how BPD works, open for Q&A about BPD, generated good conversations
- ∞ Adding to forms the federal check off for demographics and identity traits to gather data on how the people filing complaints self-identify

5. Composition of final oversight committee

- ∞ Is there a breakdown of Bennington demographics? WE don't keep that, but can come off Census records
- ∞ Suggested using local Ordinance as starting point for thinking about composition requirements because covers Membership, Initial Recruitment Process and Diversity of membership in Section IV
- ∞ Includes calling for youth membership, but needs to be more specific
- ∞ Who appoints oversight... the Board, the Task Force? Hasn't been decided yet
- ∞ Brain: Be sure not to make recommendations that set the Selectboard up for failure by giving them mandates they can't meet
- ∞ Look at other models to see how committees are appointed/selected

6. Next Steps:

- ∞ Purpose sub-committee will not meet until more input is gotten from community
- ∞ Anything agreed upon by the task force or documents generated should be submitted to Stu who will post on the websites. For "Community Cafes" Stu can help provide contacts, facilitate flow of info into/out of Task Force. Be sure to cc Brian, Camme and Stu on anything for the whole group
- ∞ Homework: look at composition- how other models handle membership to committee
- ∞ Outreach subcommittee: develop questions, brainstorm who
- ∞ Purpose subcommittee: brainstorm Powers & Duties
- ∞ Training on next agenda
- ∞ Stu will store hard copies of anything documents we generate for public view. Will also post on website: <https://benningtonvt.org/safety-equity-task-force/>
- ∞ We cannot use Google Docs or anything where we are editing and commenting on-line because it's a kind of deliberation or discussion and breaks Open Meeting Law

- ∞ Nov 1st, Purpose subcommittee will reconvene to brainstorm Powers & Duties
- ∞ When will data from town survey be available? Survey closes 11/12/21, with 1-2 weeks to process data, info should be ready for the Task Force meeting on 11/18

7. Public Comment: There was no one for public comment

Next meeting: Thursday, Nov 4, 4:30-6:30 in-person at River Street Firehouse

Margae made motion to adjourn, Marsh seconded, all voted unanimously "Yes"