

## **Bennington Task and Equity Task Force**

### **Subcommittee on Community Interviews conducted by the membership with 49 responses during November, 2021**

**Individual interview responses were separated into categories. The subcommittee discussed trends and aligned them with information from the IACP consultation report from an assessment conducted in 2020, a Bennington Town Survey conducted in 2021, and input from various agencies that represent our marginalized citizens.**

**In addition to informing our recommendations to the Bennington Select Board related to the structure and function of a Community Safety and Equity Board, (CSEB), the Safety and Equity Taskforce, offer the following specific recommendations for prioritization of activities by the newly appointed Community Board.**

**These recommendations are written with acknowledgement and appreciation for the work done by the Town of Bennington and the Bennington Police Department in the past year and a half. They are offered in the spirit of community police collaboration and continuous quality improvement.**

Assure that the Community Board functions independently of the Select Board and the Bennington Police Department (Will be Included in the Purpose/Scope/Structure recommendation)

Police Education:

Rule 13 2021

We would like to commend the BPD for the work they have done in implementing Rule 13 2021 related to annual in-service requirements and policies. We urge the new committee:

to provide monitoring of compliance with this policy

to assess and support the challenges of the BPD for time and money to assure this education can be completed in a timely manner

to review specifically, the areas of de-escalation; fair and impartial policing

to provide tools like an Inherent Bias Test to broaden self-awareness

Other identified needs

Communication skills: active listening, validation of the concern expressed, recognition of non-verbal communication such as early signs of escalation, deep distress, need for physical space

Stress management tools for self-care; identify availability and use by officers of professional support persons in the community; what else is available to support our officers in their stressful career choice?

Community Service/Organization/Agency Collaboration

The BPD has made many efforts to provide programs at a number of formal group events, informal conversations with some marginalized persons on the street, and presentations to groups when invited by agencies. Based on what we heard, we recommend continued brainstorming, acknowledging the practical limitations of staff, on how to extend these outreach programs, including examining the possibilities of providing more visibility on the streets.

Community Agency education: support the BDP in how they might get efficient education about every town agency/organization, regardless of their size, specific to their services. The organizations believe this will provide them with relevant referral information that is not specifically a policing issue. Introductions of new officers and members of the department has been suggested. Consider how the agencies may support the BPD, ex. In education, stress reduction, providing written resources to use as hand-outs.

#### Policies/Procedures

We recommend a careful review of the citizen/police complaint policy to include:

Assuring a way for all citizens to have a method of lodging a complaint other than directly through the BPD: consider availability of a confidential email address to the Community Board members; paper copies available at agencies who may be of assistance in filing and submitting a paper complaint; a locked public drop box that could be accessed weekly or biweekly by a Community Board member

Assuring there is a checklist of expectations to be completed by the BPD to fairly complete an investigation, including reporting back to the complainant throughout, and/or at least, at the conclusion of the investigation; the policy should include a time table for completing the investigation with clear expectations related to a response/resolution.

To provide oversight of the process, assure that the CSEB is made aware of every complaint at the time it is made and has access to all information related to the complaint; monitors the timeliness of completing the investigation and reviews that all steps were followed fairly for every formal complaint; reviews demographic information and monitors for trends and reasonable outcomes.

Provide public education related to filing a complaint, including the difference between, and the expectations for, lodging an informal and a formal complaint

Address multiple learning styles...ex. on the town website, on the BPD website, in the town offices, in local organizations who may assist citizens with filing a complaint; education should include information about the complaint review by Community Board to help instill trust about transparency of the complaint process.

Assure that all persons responsible for receiving a complaint have been appropriately educated, including but not limited to: using a respectful approach in explaining the difference between formal and informal complaints and what should and should not be expected for each; assisting the complainant in completing the report

Offer the opportunity to complete a section on demographics—explaining its use in monitoring fair and equal treatment for all

## Data collection

To provide support and provide accountability to the BPD in trending “fair and impartial policing”, policies should include the collection of data (real and/or perceived) related to gender, race, ethnicity, religion, economical, educational, mental or physical status. Consider data collected during traffic stops, arrests, documenting formal complaints.

12/1/21