

Safety & Equity Task Force
Meeting minutes 1/6/2022 (draft2)

Task Force: Margae Diamond, April Dunham, Gail Harbour, Marsh Hudson-Knapp, Lynn Mazza, Jim Vires, Lauren Wilcox
In attendance: Brian Corr (NACOLE), Stu Hurd, Jonah Spivak, CAT TV, 1 observer
Notetaker: Lynn Mazza

1. Introductions

2. Recap of last meeting:

- Motion to add Brian to the agenda made by Jim, seconded by Marsh
- Motion to accept minutes with correction to date

3. Brian's responses to questions:

- In other towns we see there are few formal complaints because people just aren't complaining.
- Even if people are making complaints informally, that is still valuable information to have
- What kind of response do complainants receive in other towns? There is a sense in Bennington that there is often no response
- Data is lost since informal complaints are not recorded
- It's up to BPD leadership to make sure that follow up is done
- This is currently not an acceptable plan given the community mistrust shown in the IACP report.
- Need to be clear with the process is- how does the PBD track calls that come in or informal conversations?
- How to use survey to track community satisfaction with police interactions
- ID a person outside the BPD who a person can contact if they don't feel comfortable calling the PBD directly.
- Can people have people from local organizations act as advocates or simple how town staff member trained to listen: sometimes it's not so much about making the complaint, but getting a need met and the complaint would

be dropped if the person could simply get what they need. So it might be more about providing a contact for listening and problem solving than a formal complaint process

- Town can have general ombudsman to act as interface with any town organizations or services, including but not limited to police interactions. Place to hear concerns and channel them to the correct department. Bennington is small enough to do this. This is role Town manager often performs
- Loosing the nuance between addressing actually needs of the person and losing data about how and why the need was not met to begin with
- Concerns about amount of time spent on the complaint process: How much do you detail do you want to hand off to newly formed committee?
- Stu: The BPD and staff are working on MOUs with all social service agencies so all agencies know who to contact, and so police have contacts within those agencies/organizations

4. Scope/Powers and Duties:

- Narrative vs bullets?
- How specific do we want to be in this document?
- Brain: try to refer to other documents because a change in one means making changes throughout all the others to make sure references match
- Suggest making subcommittee to pull all parts together. How to do that within Open Meeting law
- Timeline for Jan 30 meeting? Pull parts together, brainstorm name
- Discussion of training expectation
- This body will receive all formal complaints and issue findings about agreement with or recommendations for BPD
- Marsh moves to accept Scope as final draft, April seconds, unanimous vote

5. Complaint process:

- Jim moves to table Complaint Process to next meeting, Marsh seconds

- Do we need to have a detailed Complaint Process section? Charge from Select Board to Task Force suggests we do. Do we need that much detail?
- Everyone to review complaint process with this in mind
- Start next meeting with Complaint Process
- Brainstorm possible names for newly formed committee
- Subcommittee to bring parts together” Margae, Lynn, Marsh
- Outstanding question: Are Task Force members allowed to be on eventual oversight board?
- Brian: On one hand, might make sense to have someone from Task Force for continuity and who can explain Task Force’s intentions and because if it’s all newbies, it might be quite overwhelming. On the other hand, there can be the perception that certain person/people had undue influence on the process. Maybe one person? Maybe mandate people new to the process get first dibs, then fill in with Task Force members if need be
- Jonah will go through and change instances where it says “sexual preference” to “sexual orientation”

6. Public comment: none

Next meeting: Jan 20, 2022 will in-person at the firehouse

Jim made motion to adjourn, Marsh seconded, all voted unanimously “Yes”