

APPROVED on 1/6/22
Safety and Equity Task Force

Scope and Practice of the Safety & Equity Board:

The Equity and Safety Committee serves as an independent board that works in collaboration with the Town of Bennington, Bennington Select Board, Bennington Police Department, community partners and the public. The task is to ensure that appropriate training, complaint processes, policies and procedures, data and community relations effectively promote the safety and security of our community.

The Equity and Safety committee will ensure the safety and security of our community by issuing the following recommendations:

1. Training

- a. Research what training is wanted, needed, and available to the Bennington Police Department (BPD) and to the Oversight Board
- b. Provide monitoring of compliance with Rule 13 and to review specifically, the areas of de-escalation; fair and impartial policing; communication skills
- c. Assess and support the challenges of the BPD for time and money to assure this education can be completed in a timely manner
- d. Review police training reports and outcomes and make recommendations about trainings based on community and police needs and feedback, and/or research
- e. Make budget recommendations to the Select Board concerning the Oversight Board's expenses for training
- f. Assist in collaboration for local agencies and groups to provide trainings
- g. Provide resources like an Inherent Bias Test to broaden self-awareness and stress management tools for self-care; identify availability and use by officers of professional support persons or other kinds of supports in the community

2. Complaints

- a. Refer persons requesting assistance in filing complaints as needed
- b. Assure a way for all citizens to have a method of lodging a complaint other than directly through the BPD
- c. Collaborate with the Police to develop reporting expectations and timelines for complaint reviews
- d. Provide public education related to filing a complaint, including the difference between, and the expectations for, lodging an informal and a formal complaint
- e. Address multiple learning styles; for example, 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

- f. Review process and outcome of complaints, including looking at records, BWC footage, interviewing witnesses or other actions required to get a full understanding of what happened and other actions required for a conclusion
- g. Recommendations by committee after reviewing complaint, investigation, and findings
- h. Gathering and reporting data on number and nature of complaints (while maintaining confidentiality)

3. Policies and Procedures

- a. Develop and monitor review/revision process of BPD policies and procedures, developing timeline for revision process
- b. Act as liaison to public about policies/procedures review process
- c. Assess and make recommendations on such topics as recruitment and hiring and areas of community focus
- d. Issue report summarizing review/revision process
- e. Provide input to the Town Manager for the Police Chief's annual review and to the Select Board for the Town Manager's annual review

4. Data

- a. 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
- b. Monitor the BPD's data gathering
- c. Review, request, and/or gather relevant data by the committee as needed
- d. Issue annual reports on data and special reports as circumstances require
- e. Make recommendations based on trends seen in the data

5. Community Relations

- a. Community Agency education: supporting the BPD 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, vicarious trauma reduction, providing written resources to use as hand-outs
- b. Facilitate communication between community organizations and the police
- c. Encourage community input and engagement for example by hosting listening sessions, discussion circles, forums or educational sessions with community groups and with the community at large, with or without police participation, based on situation and needs of stakeholders
- d. Form sub-committees made of 1-2 Board members, police officers and organization representatives to work on specifically identified issues
- e. Act as resource for community organizations or citizens concerning police relations
- f. Assess and make recommendations on such topics as: outreach and public education, handling of mental health crisis, domestic violence, substance abuse and trauma
- g. Make budget recommendations to the board concerning resources needed by the BPD and other community organizations