

Northampton Policing Review Commission Public Hearing #2

MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, February 11, 2021

6:30pm

Remote Meeting

Join the Remote Meeting:

<https://zoom.us/j/98933259919?pwd=SUttUi9WbGxsZmh2bjloK2RyMkRuZz09>

Meeting ID: 989 3325 9919

Passcode: 555836

Or by telephone, call: +1 929 436 2866

1. Call to Order
 - Announcement of Zoom Recording
2. Announcement of structure of meeting
 - Public comment will be extended to 7 minutes. Commenters may opt to receive a response from the commission. This will be included in the 7 minute time.
 - Every hour the meeting will be paused for 5 minutes to allow people to address their needs.
3. Public comment
4. Adjourn

1. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order by Commissioner Cynthia Suopis at 6:06PM.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF ZOOM RECORDING

Commissioner Cynthia Suopis made an announcement that this meeting was being recorded for the public record and would be available on Northampton Open Media, as well as, the City of Northampton website.

Commissioner Elizabeth Barajas-Roman Present

Commissioner Booker Bush Present

Commissioner Dan Cannity (co-chair) Present

Commissioner Nick Fleisher Present

Commissioner David Hoose arrived at 6:25pm

Commissioner Alex Jarrett Present

Commissioner Javier Luengo-Garrido Present

Commissioner Nnamdi Pole not present

Commissioner Michael Quinlan Present

Commissioner Josey Rosales Present

Commissioner Cynthia Suopis Present

Commissioner Carol Owen Present

Commissioner Kris Banks Present

2. Public comment

Commissioner Cynthia Suopis made a comment, explaining each speaker has 7 minutes maximum in order to speak, and or offer questions to commissioners. She encouraged commissioner support.

Community member Patrick Waite said they have been following the commission since it started and was struck by a comment which states the police department's bias is a reflection of the community's bias. He said as a white middle class male living in Northampton, white men speak in a complex language full of microaggression that most of us perceived as more than benign.

Brendan O'connor said he wanted to mention collective bargaining unioning and how this affects the public, and wondered whether this deserves more attention. He wondered

Jose Adastra thanked the commission for the time they dedicated to the process. He said there has always been an open hatred for houseless folks in this community. He said he has personally witnessed Andrew Cole antagonizing local houseless folks, even with him present and pleading with him to leave the situation. The person who he was antagonizing has trauma in terms of incarceration as well as interactions with police. Repeatedly harassed, cited, arrested, and fined. He said this system puts black men in prison and keeps families separated.

Kate Arcand said she read the Gazette article this morning and wanted to express her experience in Northampton for the past 30 years. She said her own experience with the police in her community has been nothing but positive.

Sony Coranez Bolton said they live in northampton. They thanked the commissioners for offering public comment. They said they report the recommendations of Northampton Abolition to defund the NPD by 50% and reallocates to services and programs. They mentioned a program in Denver that focused on a Community health, non punitive, non carceral measures saw no arrests and no deaths during a six month pilot program. They suggested a more nuanced approach that gets at the underlying issues that cause people to commit crimes in the first place.

DR said police presence on the street is needed as it's a green light to criminals. He said he's experienced street crime and violence is worse than the police. He said it will make people feel less safe like elderly people, kids, and people who can't defend themselves.

Aimee Frances thanked the commission for their work on this very needed project. She said

as a white woman and property owner, she hasn't had much interaction with police but the world around her and in the Northampton community, the experiences that she listens to could not be more different than hers. She said for the most part what she hears from people outside of her racial and class identity, is how the established police both in the community and country, come into this system with a knowledge that the power that they have to wield can go practically unchecked and that if something happens that is an abuse of power, there is a lot of turmoil and stress, but from a professional point of view, most police officers don't lose their jobs and are able to find new appointments as police in other towns.

Kim Weeber said she saw the article in the Hampshire Gazette. She said she is a white person and has only had professional and helpful interactions with police. She wondered who to turn to when a pipe bursts in her basement and it's an emergency. She said she was charged by three dogs off leash while she was on her bike. She said she called the police afterward and talked to the owner about dogs being off leash. She said it's valuable to have someone to call after an issue such as this. She said her friend was manic and the police was kind and patient when she called them and that they did everything they could do listen to her and take her recommendations. She said it was respectful and nonviolent. She said others don't have this type of experience and that it is white privilege.

Rober Eastman (Ward 3) said as a white person it's been hard to hear comments from other white people on this meeting tonight. He said as white people we cannot understand what people of color experience and there's nothing we can do to feel what that trauma feels like. He said to come on the meeting and describe positive experiences with police is not appropriate and is disrespectful. He said he can only imagine how the black and brown community members and commissioners on the call that don't feel safe in this northampton for this very reason. He said it's not about individual police being helpful. He wondered at what expense is our safety executed for. He said when it comes to reform and union contracts as well as holding individuals accountable, he spoke in favor of a civilian review board in order to amplify the BLM movement but has repositioned.

Booker said you can never be woke. He said you have to keep waking up. He said things we thought a year ago would work, we now know is not good. He said having a police review commission seemed like a good idea. He said there isn't enough data about what works to replace what doesn't work which is a challenge and the committee is looking for alternatives to policing that have been shown to work. He said there needs to be more money being spent on housing and mental health, but instead since as a society, we haven't wanted to spend that money, we've asked the police to answer to those issues.

Ashwin Ravikumar said he has a ton of privilege and he still fears cops. He said sometimes his parents would call the cops on them which was what they had access to. He said he is dismayed knowing the history of policing starting as Slave patrols and strike breakers, that white people have shared their experiences feeling safe. He said strive for a system that keeps everyone safe at the expense of nobody. He said there are so many great alternatives out there. He said we don't have big data because it hasn't been tried.

Danielle Amodeo said she thinks the commission should get paid. They said they are another cis white lady, who is a survivor of domestic violence, sexual assault, and has encountered police that don't matter and are not germane to this call. She said she is in support for Northampton Abolition Now's demands cutting for 50% and said it's a reasonable ask.

Commissioner Javier Luengo-Garrido said it's important for everyone to come to the meetings because these conversations are happening. He said reinvesting is not new and happens all of the time. He said people who are having positive experiences with police is going to continue happening. He said we do know this hasn't worked over 100 years.

Jxhn Martin called for immediate reallocation to establish a new department of community care and to defund the police department by 50%. They said as a DEI practitioner in the valley, so much of that work is geared toward harm reduction and it's about small changes in behavior and language. They said crafting space for individuals to map their own learning has everything to do with which folks are not surrounded by families that support continued education and critical learning. They highlighted Ashwin's comment and suggested working with local organizations that have peer led responses.

Sean Donovan said he appreciates commissioners learning their experiences and learning processes, especially commissioners of color. He said he doesn't know if the city will give the attention and action that it deserves, but that he knows people in his community are imagining a different future and that that is really cool. He said he lives in Ward 3 and can barely afford it working full time. He said when thinking about a place for police in community, that this affects poor people, and people with disabilities. He said he worked for the RLC now called the Wildflower Alliance. He said he put a survey out to people residents and former residents who have had experiences with police.

Jane Doe said she is a survivor of domestic violence. Said the decision to report changed her life. She said she can say this now because she is alive and that's because of the Northampton Police department. She said they were respectful and validating and knew things they would never understand for years. She said they are trained in this area. She said ultimately the defendant would violate the order which required two additional officers to come and a permanent restraining order to be put into in effect. She said it's just a piece of paper and it's the difference between life and death and has to do with police response time. She said cutting the percent of the police budget adversely affects people like her everyday because it has to do with staffing. She said a 50% decrease is preposterous and would reduce the number of to 2 or 3. She said there is crime going on all the time. She said for her, blue lives matter and her life matters.

Tracy's Ipad said there is an officer who has gofundme people can donate to. She said bless the department that Northampton has. She said the money already cut should be sufficient. She said officers are leaving because they're not feeling valued.

Rye buckley said he appreciates the work the commission is doing and noted the mental strain on women and people of color on the commission. He said he wondered how commissioners are exploring some social services in the area that are connected to the police and support the police in their disproportionate policing of marginalized communities.

Ya Ping thanked the commission. She said she acknowledged earlier a caller shared something that felt like a threat that made her uncomfortable and afraid and didnt feel okay.

Ezekiel Baskin asked for 7minutes of reflection from commissioners.

Commissioner Carol Owen said she heard comments about growth experiences of folks on the commission. She said in growing consciousness it's important for us to support

wherever people are in their journey and being understanding and compassionate.

Commissioner Booker Bush said people are asking the commissioners to talk about what it feels like doing this work. He said he doesn't want to talk about it more.

Commissioner Josey Rosales said it has been a double edged sword in terms of rewarding doing work that is meaningful. They said it's exhausting to be confronted by commissioners who still want to appeal to white supremacist structures and to keep pushing for reform. They said it's hard to have a mission statement saying we want marginalized voices and feel like we're upholding the status quo. They said they're feeling like their voice is used to uphold structures they don't believe in. They said they keep pushing for reinvesting.

Commissioner Dan Cannity said the entire process has been a learning experience for him. He said there were both a macro level lens and their own experience at play. They said the takeaway has been that Northampton has a lot of dedicated police officers who are excited about servicing the community. He said at same time the results of their interactions are more people of color have use of force against them and are arrested. He said even at best of times, it isn't about the people it's about the institutions and practices that impact the outcomes no matter how good people are or how hard they're trying. He said he's interested in thinking about what the commission can do about institutional structures so that people still feel safe, so that there's someone responding, and that is funded by the city and produces the outcomes we expect.

Commissioner Michael Quinlan said this community is served by police who feel impassioned and who has a need to serve the community. He said there are people who have more training in mental health. He said when thinking about emergency response, it's about putting the right player into the right position.

Michaela Brangan (Ward 3) activist with democratic socialists of american local chapter said everyone here is of good will, and alternatives have existed and do exist.

10. Adjourn

Commissioner Dan Cannity moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:36pm. Commissioner Javier Luengo-Garrido seconded. The motion adjourn was passed unanimously.