

**DRAFT**  
Northampton Policing Review  
Public Hearing #3

MEETING MINUTES  
Saturday, March 6, 2021  
11am  
Remote Meeting

**Join the Remote Meeting:**

<https://zoom.us/j/95348305621?pwd=UzJhUTc0eDBJN3FDMEYrd1RDUnFWdz09>

**Meeting ID:** 953 4830 5621

**Passcode:** 753450

**Or by telephone, call:** +1 929 436 2866

1. Call to Order
  - o Announcement of Zoom Recording
2. Announcement of structure of meeting
  - o 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.
  - o Every hour the meeting will be paused for 5 minutes to allow people to address their needs.
3. Public comment (3 hours)
4. Adjourn

**1. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:**

The meeting was called to order by Commissioner Dan Cannity at 11:05PM.

**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 Not Present  
Commissioner Booker Bush Present  
Commissioner Dan Cannity (co-chair) Present  
Commissioner Nick Fleisher Present  
Commissioner David Hoose Present  
Commissioner Alex Jarrett Present

Commissioner Javier Luengo-Garrido Present  
Commissioner Nnamdi Pole 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 Dan Cannity stated that the Northampton Policing Review Commission is a resident Commission created by the Mayor and City Council in the response to the killings of African Americans by police nationally, as well as a recognition of systemic and historic inequalities and racism in policing in our society at large. This Commission is part of a sweeping review of public policy by the Mayor and City Council and is charged with exploring the complex issues of public safety and making recommendations to transform how the city delivers safety services. While ensuring community safety equitably and justly. Commissioner Dan Cannity stated that the Commission is taking its charge as a chance to improve the overall response to safety and not as a punitive reaction to the police. Commissioner Cannity furthered that a guiding principle for this has been to ensure that the right people are responding for the right problems. Commissioner Cannity pointed out that the Commission is spending its time looking at the challenges and opportunities for increasing public safety across lines and ways to improve what services are offered and how they're offered. The Commission's recommendations are still being finalized, but they include the addition of a new department of community safety that would allow for a trained response to mental health and substance use cases; reallocation of funding for responsibilities to ensure safety needs are met and increased for all community members, including civilian floggers to detail work; policy changes to increase options for types of responders; and opportunities to increase oversight and civilian participation in matters of safety. There have been over 55 public meetings with hours of public comment given and two public hearings, which provides the Commission a chance to hear from the public and also respond to the questions that individuals from the public have.

Commissioner Dan Cannity explained the public comment format for the hearing.

Jane Doe stated she spoke to the Commission on February 11th and reported a crime to the Northampton Police Department and had a very positive, trauma-informed, and victim-centered experience. Ms. Doe stated that the officer made her feel very respected and safe, while addressing the crime. Me. Doe noted she has been reading minutes of past Commission meetings and stated that on November 9, Javier stated he did not believe that police should be involved with domestic violence or sexual assault. Dr. Bush advised Javier that they are the most violent calls and that this was followed up that day by Alex reporting on research that decriminalized domestic violence was emerging. None of this really addressed the real danger that exists for victims or the law, which includes the abuse prevention Act, which was passed in 1978. On the 10th of November Lois Ahrens made a reference to defunding the police saying that victims had bad experiences with the police. Ms. Doe stated there is a very limited group of the population that doesn't discuss the positive experiences they have.

Hildegard Freedman noted she is proud of the Commission and is impressed by the concern that the government had to establish the Commission.

David stated he has not had direct confrontation with the Northampton Police Department

but has had negative experiences with police in other cities. David continued that he was in downtown Northampton the other day and heard people yelling that the homeless people need to be kicked off of City Hall steps. A few police officers started to engage with these individuals saying they agree that it's awful the houseless folk are downtown but aren't allowed to remove people. David encouraged the NPRC to stand up to police who are using threats and intimidation to maintain the status quo. David would like to see more unarmed responses, a focus on housing first approaches, decriminalizing for survival on our streets, unarmed civilians responding to drug crises and domestic violence situations, funding redirected from NPD to education programs and medical services. David concluded by saying the NPD could shift the focus to truly violence crimes where an armed response is appropriate and hopes that the size, scope and power of the NPD is reduced.

Steve Jones spoke in support of changing practices of the NPD and for a community responder model. Steve noted he would endorse a community responder approach and should be considered for Northampton. Steve concluded by thanking the Commission for their hard work in tackling this complex issue.

Riley stated that questionnaires were distributed to obtain experiences that individuals have had with police. Riley noted that one responder noted they have had many difficult interactions with the police but also noted that officers who have CIT training are better but not ideal. Some respondents noted they would have appreciated it if police ask them what their needs are at that moment instead of showing force. Another responder noted that police locked them up when they were in an extreme state and put them in shackles and brought them into court. One of the questions asked what the police could do in those moments to help and respondents noted that they would have liked someone to talk to and someone to listen to them instead of showing power, someone who would show human compassion, and a peer discussion instead of an intervention. Another question asked what other options respondents would like to see and some of the responses included a more voluntary place where people aren't locked up and more individuals and places that value human connection over power.

Jenny Fleming-Ives, 15 Dryads Green, thanked the Commission for their hard work and noted that she will speak from her lived experience in her work and noted she is supportive of a community safety department. Jenny stressed that she is speaking personally and has spent most of her life working in downtown Northampton with folks from diverse backgrounds. Jenny noted there have been many instances where she has had to call the police and all of her calls were responded to with a rapid/immediate response from the police department. The rapid response was critical because there were some drastic situations that were dangerous. Jenny noted that if the NPRC makes drastic changes to policing she is worried that the rapid responses from the police department will be lost.

Sophie thanked the Commissioners for their time and started her statement as a survivor of sexual assault, clinical social worker, and a prior crisis clinician. Sophie emphasized the importance of investing in other services for the community and noted that Northampton can still be safe, even with a decrease in funding for the Northampton Police Department. Sophie concluded by encouraging the Commission to continue to push for peer-led programming and other services that will make for a safer community with less of a focus on police presence.

Jay Fleitman of Florence, spoke about his experience being a physician in town and having the opportunity to hear personal stories from some of his patients that were police officers for the NPD. Jay noted that some of the stories and the things they have seen are horrific and incredibly scary. Jay noted that the Commission needs to be cautious about minimizing these people, their families and their experiences. Jay pointed out that there is serious

crime in Northampton that the police deal with and they see things that the rest of us don't have to. Jay opined that he doesn't have a lot of faith in the process, thinks the selection of the committee was not transparent; believes the Commission is representative of the political left with no moderates or conservatives; doesn't like the lack of police input; and doesn't have a lot of faith in city councils deliberations.

Wendy Foxyman of Leeds thanked the Commission for its hard work and time and expressed her strong support for the proposal for the creation of a department of community safety. Wendy noted that she doesn't see the NPRC doing the research to recommend budget cuts in the police department because she believes that this requires further study. Wendy concluded by pointing out that she believes recommending that the city appropriate funds for the department of community safety is an excellent first step.

Jalyn said they believe there is a major problem with police. Jalyn stated that they suffer from complex post traumatic stress disorder from sexual abuse as a child, including a great deal of trauma from care providers and the police as an adult, non-epileptic seizures and traumatic brain injury from electroconvulsive therapy. Jalyn pointed out that his mental health gets portrayed to the police as he is faking it and has come to the police before for personal reasons and they laughed in his face. Jalyn noted there are a few good officers but there are also officers who are traumatizing and have dragged Jalyn out of Cooley Dickinson Hospital Emergency Room pointing out that an officer stated they didn't care about the mental health training and will do whatever they want to do. Jalyn also noted that an officer once held a gun pointed towards his chest in a psych unit which eventually resulted in officers being banned from bringing weapons in a locked psychiatric unit.

Marion Van Arsdell thanked the Commission and stated she supports new initiatives including the possibility of having peer advocates as part of a new response team for public safety.

LC said they want to start with the idea that, policing stops crime. They said it's very clear that it doesn't do so, in the research. They said the point that more research needs to be done is really frustrating because there's so much research that says policing isn't really that evidence based at all, and doesn't actually stop the things that says it's going to do. They said in the short term, we are asking for the unresearched incredible increase to the police budgets to be undone like there's been no research that says why we're militarizing police. They said there's no research and Northampton the budget has gone up by a million dollars over the last three years. They said there's a lot of room for cuts, because all those increases were not based on evidence.

Marsha Morri said that people's thoughts, feelings, and stories are being considered as a part of the decision making, which has to do with a sticky issue in our country because it's at a sort of crossroad of race. They said they wanted to recognize that just trying to tackle this is not going to be easy and they really think it speaks well of Northampton that you all are trying to dig into this work.

Kamala said they are trans identified and wanted to shout out the committee for the valuable work it's doing. They said they know the commission has had some startup problems with people resigning and open meeting law violations but that's besides the point. They said what they're doing is so valuable for the community. They said they also wanted to shout out the NPD police department for saving their life. They said they were in crisis a couple years back, and they didn't ridicule them or make fun of them. They said they are obviously trans and they said the officers were just wonderful and every way and they're doing much better now. They said they did show up to some of those

demonstrations with those trump people in downtown Northampton and thought, maybe these people were evil and they were so nice to them and they didn't judge them at all. They said there were so many police and they were so nice and respectful to everybody. Mark said some people may know he is very politically engaged, very involved in political stuff and really cares about what our city is doing about issues such as this criminal justice reform. He said he wanted to thank the Commissioners for all their work. He said he wanted to mention from his own personal experience, that he was a peacekeeper that helps with deescalation. He said he's hoping to provide unarmed safety services at protests.

Ray Saarinen said they did not grow up around here, but they do really love living in Northampton and agree with what a lot of people have said that it is a safe community. They said they feel safe, not because of the police department, but because on any given day walking downtown Northampton you'll see a group feeding other people or harm reduction posters on half of the businesses or people handing out masks and hand sanitizers and snacks and these resources are run by community members and nonprofit organizations, a lot of people who volunteer their own time, their own money, their own resources. They said they think if we do not institutionalize more community care that we could be in danger of losing it in the future. They said they really believe in reallocating NPD funding resources into more institutional community care.

YP said thank you all so much to the commissioners for all the time and research and work they've put in. They said the commission is doing such an amazing service for all of us and so many of us are so grateful for that. They said they wanted to read some historical quotes to put a lot of things that they think white people in the community think. They read an MLK quote from 1967. "Whites it must, frankly, be said, are not putting in a similar mass effort to reeducate themselves out of their racial ignorance. It is an aspect of their sense of superiority that the white people of America believe they have so little to learn. Each step forward accents an ever-present tendency to backlash. They continued further, "No institution received more scrutiny than the police that's been true of every one of these reports, since 1917." They said this is just to emphasize how long this has been going on. They said for over 100 years people have been calling to defund the police and reduce their size, scope and power and invest in things that really make people safe and that's what we're calling for today. They said it's not a new thing and it's not actually very radical, if you look at the historical context.

Harry Harrison said he has heard a lot of people talking about defunding the police and getting rid of them all together, or changing the whole model to sending social and medical help to people to a scene, rather than armed police. He wondered whether the commission has talked about this as to who would make the decision as to whether or not to send armed police to a situation. He said dispatch will send armed people to try to deal with it. He said if something happens or if the person that they're going to see becomes violent and grabs a knife or an illegal firearm and starts shooting, and the police aren't there to defend anybody, he wondered who will be the ones who made the decision to not to send the police and will it be agreed upon that they will be held culpable for any liability, damage or injuries that might occur because the police were not there. He said he does support the police himself and said he is all for keeping their strength up and everything, but if something happens who's who's going to take responsibility for it.

Commissioner Josey Rosales said he thinks that the issue of liability is something that the commission definitely should be looking at, especially when it's discussing the creation of the new department that would also have some sort of dispatch ability in order to triage the potential for peer responders. They said they think that the commission can hold these future endeavors accountable.

**10. Adjourn**

**Commissioner Nnamdi Pole moved to adjourn the meeting at 2:53pm.  
Commissioner Javier Luengo-Garrido seconded. The motion to adjourn passed  
unanimously.**