



Takoma Park City Council Meeting – September 16, 2020 Agenda Item 2

Work Session

Reimagining Public Safety to Ensure Racial Justice

Recommended Council Action

Discuss creation of a task force to make recommendations on ways the City can reform public safety policies. Consider adoption of a resolution to create the task force on September 23.

Context with Key Issues

For the last three years, the City Council has worked to have standards for the Takoma Park Police Department that focus on a guardian rather than warrior approach to public safety. The goals and priorities of the Council were laid out in Resolution 2017-45 and a number of policy and practice improvements have been implemented in the Department since that time. With the deaths of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd and many other Black and brown people at the hands of police officers across the country, Mayor Stewart and Councilmembers Searcy and Seamens are proposing to have the Council review and further reform the City's approach to public safety to ensure racial justice. To do this, there is a proposal for a task force of 10-15 members to make recommendations on ways in which the City can reform public safety policies. The task force would be charged with preparation of a report with these recommendations to be considered by the City Council in June 2021.

As envisioned, the task force would make recommendations to address:

- How should the City revise its public safety policies and procedures to ensure safety, dignity, and equity?
- How should the City of Takoma Park engage and educate the community about its new approach to public safety?
- What alternative approaches should the City consider to improve mental health and other social service response calls?

Council Priority

Engaged, Responsive, and Service-Oriented Government building on Resolution 2017-45, which established the City Council's goals and priorities for the Takoma Park Police Department; and Resolution 2017-28, committing the City Council to systematically and deliberately apply a racial equity lens in decision-making.

Environmental Considerations

N/A

Fiscal Considerations

Expenses related to the task force would include the cost of a third party facilitator and, to assist with recruitment, the City may offer an honorarium in the form of access to a computer, wifi and stipend to participants. Expenses related to the recommendations that the task force may put forward should be part of the consideration of those recommendations.

Racial Equity Considerations

The population of Takoma Park is majority people of color. The history of racism in this country has led to many current day disparities in education and job attainment, housing, and healthcare, as well as disproportionate incarceration rates for people of color. Given the history of actions of police violence against Black and Brown people in the United States, special attention in this effort is to be given to review and reform the City's approach to public safety to ensure racial justice. The task force is envisioned to include Black and Brown residents or business owners and then representatives from several stakeholder groups.

The racial breakdown of the Takoma Park Police Department as a whole roughly approximates the City's population, but there is a larger proportion of white sworn officers than is representative of the City's population and there are no white employees in Dispatch. Dispatch has a higher percentage of staff who speak Spanish than residents who identify as Hispanic/Latinx, which helps reduce reliance on translation services.

	Asian	Black/African-American	Hispanic/Latinx	White	Other	Population
City* %	4.4	34.0	14.5	43.3	3.8	16,715
TPPD %	1.4	34.7	16.7	47.2	0.0	72
Officers	0.0	26.2	14.3	59.5	0.0	42
Dispatch	14.3	57.1	28.6	0.0	0.0	7
Others	0.0	43.5	17.4	39.1	0.0	23

*2010 Census numbers; TPPD numbers are as of September 8, 2020.

Attachments and Links

- Reimagining Public Safety in the City of Takoma Park to Ensure Racial Justice
- Draft Resolution

Reimagining Public Safety in the City of Takoma Park To Ensure Racial Justice

Purpose

The systematic racism that Black and Brown residents face has created inequities across the country including within the City of Takoma Park. Marginalized populations endure disparities in a number of areas such as the criminal justice system, health care, education, and employment. In 2017, the City of Takoma Park City Council passed [Resolution No. 2017-28](#) committing the City Council to systematically and deliberately apply a racial equity lens in decision-making. The purpose of this document is to outline the approach the City of Takoma Park will take to review and reform the City's approach to public safety to ensure racial justice.

[Resolution No. 2017-45](#) established the City Council's goals and priorities for the Takoma Park Police Department. In this effort, our goal is to build on this work by reviewing and renewing the City's vision for public safety with emphasis on building equity, health, and wellness for all residents. This vision includes reimagining the structure and role of policing in the City of Takoma Park. We will reach this goal using a three stage approach, **C.E.T**:

1. **Collaboration** - To identify a new approach to public safety in the City of Takoma Park, the City will work with the community particularly its Black and Brown residents, City of Takoma Park police, as well as experts in social justice, race equity, and police reform. The collaboration will occur in the form of a taskforce designed to facilitate engaged discussion on ways to reform public safety in the City.
2. **Engagement** - An important component of reimagining public safety is community education about the history of racism and policing. It will also be important to engage residents and businesses alike on the role everyone plays in ensuring an equitable public safety infrastructure. To do this, the City will need to identify and engage in community outreach and programming efforts.
3. **Transformation** - In this stage, the City Council will implement public safety policy changes. This may include a reallocation of resources to better meet the needs of the community. The City Council will also identify and support police reform actions at the County, State, and Federal levels that will further the City's public safety efforts.

The section below describes the key activities that will be performed during the Collaboration stage of CET.

Collaboration

The City will develop a taskforce designed to make recommendations on ways in which the City can reform public safety policies. The taskforce will be responsible for providing the City Council with recommendations to address the following questions:

- How should the City revise its public safety policies and procedures to ensure safety, dignity, and equity?
- How should the City of Takoma Park engage and educate the community about its new approach to public safety?

- What alternative approaches should the City consider to improve mental health and other social service response calls?

Specifically, the taskforce should explore the following topic areas:

City of Takoma Park Police Policies

There are a number of laws at the State, county, and local levels that perpetuate inequalities within the criminal justice system. The taskforce will review the City of Takoma Park Police Department's policies and provide recommendations. Areas that may be discussed might include the following:

- Police service areas (special teams, K-9, etc.)
- Use of force
- Basis for conducting searches
- Police investigations and internal controls
- Data transparency (reporting, body cams, etc.)
- Police force diversity
- Training

The taskforce will also provide recommendations on priority state and county policies/laws such as the Law Enforcement Officers Bill of Rights (LEOBR), that should be addressed or which hinder the City's efforts to implement changes in its police department.

Community oversight and engagement in public safety

Resident engagement in reforming the City's public safety efforts is important. However, Black and Brown residents are often not part of these discussions. It is important to get recommendations from Black and Brown residents in the community who have an intimate understanding of the impact that one's race plays on your experience with the police. This taskforce will be responsible for providing recommendations to the Council on novel approaches to engage residents, particularly marginalized groups, in policing oversight and community policing practices. This taskforce will also provide recommendations on ways that the City can improve its outreach and engagement among people of color to build trust between residents and police.

Alternative models of public safety to better address mental health and other social service related calls

Police are often responsible for addressing various community needs. However, there are instances where the police might not be the appropriate entity to address the need. For example, residents in mental health crisis might have the police called on them. Perhaps having a mental health provider or social worker respond to this call instead of the police might result in an improved outcome for the resident. Since many calls to police come from the family of the person in a crisis, they might welcome an alternative approach and may have recommendations on what is most helpful. Additionally, addressing social service needs in the community, such as youth engagement/ employment programs, can reduce crime and therefore the need for policing. The taskforce will make recommendations on ways the City can reimagine the response to mental health and other social service related calls. Recommendations may also include reforms to police structure, training, and the new City programs.

Taskforce Membership and Structure

The taskforce will consist of 10-15 Council approved members. To ensure that the taskforce consists of individuals of diverse backgrounds and perspectives, the Council will prioritize taskforce members from the following groups:

- Black and Brown residents or business owners that can share their experiences with racism and policing. We also want to encourage Black and Brown participants that vary by income, education, and sexual orientation and gender identification.
- Local experts in civil liberties, social justice, police reform.
- A member of the police command staff.
- A member from the Police Chief’s Advisory Board.
- Mental health professional(s).
- A member from each of the unions representing the City Police Department (Local 400 and AFSCME)
- Staff from the City of Takoma Park Recreation Department and/or Housing and Community Development.
- Representative from advocacy groups such as Casa De Maryland, NAACP, ACLU.

Given the pandemic, the taskforce can meet remotely. The taskforce will be facilitated by a third party facilitator. To assist with recruitment, the City may offer an honorarium in the form of access to a computer, wifi, and stipend to participants. Given the number of topics the taskforce will need to address, the taskforce could develop internal workgroups to address topics. The deliverables for this group will consists of an interim report(s), a final report, and presentation summarizing the taskforce's recommendations.

Timeline and Tentative Schedule

Task /Deliverable	Deadline
<p>Kickoff - Taskforce Orientation and Training</p> <p>During the orientation, the taskforce will receive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An overview of the City of Takoma Park Police Department including recent organizational changes and policies. • An overview of state laws regarding policing and ongoing legislative activities. • An overview of Montgomery County laws and police reform activities. 	<p>October 15, 2020</p>
<p>Interim Report: State Police Policy Recommendations</p> <p>In this report, the taskforce will provide recommendations to the City Council on state policing policies. The Council will use this information to inform its state lobbying activities at</p>	<p>December 3, 2020</p>

<p>the start of the Maryland State Legislative session beginning in January 2021.</p>	
<p>Interim Report: Things We Can Do Now -Short-Term Recommendations on the City’s Public Safety Policies</p> <p>We recognize that many of the changes needed to reform public safety in the City will require time to fully develop and implement. In this interim report, the taskforce should provide recommendations to the Council on priority changes to the City’s public safety policies that can be made and implemented within the next calendar.</p> <p>This report must be received by the established deadline to ensure that the Council has the taskforce’s short-term recommendations during FY21 budget discussions.</p>	<p>March 4, 2021</p>
<p>Final Report: Recommendations to Reimagine Public Safety to Ensure Racial Justice</p> <p>In the final report, the taskforce should provide recommendations to the Council on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revisions to the City’s Police Department policies • Methods to engage the community in policing oversight and community education • Alternative models of public safety to better address mental health and other social service related calls 	<p>June 4, 2021</p>
<p>Council Presentation</p> <p>During this presentation, the taskforce will present to the City Council their recommendations and lessons learned from the taskforce.</p>	<p>June 16, 2021</p>

Introduced by:

DRAFT - DRAFT

CITY OF TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND

RESOLUTION 2020-

**ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE ON
“REIMAGINING PUBLIC SAFETY TO ENSURE RACIAL JUSTICE”**

WHEREAS, the deaths of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd, along with many other Black and Brown people at the hands of the police, highlight the need for reform and a reimagining of public safety in our country; and

WHEREAS, the Takoma Park City Council embraces the great diversity in the City; and

WHEREAS, the City Council recognizes the history of racism in our country and how it has led to many current day disparities in education and job attainment, housing, and healthcare, as well as disproportionate incarceration rates for people of color; and

WHEREAS, the City of Takoma Park City Council passed [Resolution No. 2017-28](#) committing the City Council to systematically and deliberately apply a racial equity lens in decision-making; and

WHEREAS, [Resolution No. 2017-45](#) established the City Council’s goals and priorities for the Takoma Park Police Department including ensuring a culture of transparency, accountability, proactive communication, and responsiveness, both inside and outside of the City government; and

WHEREAS, the Takoma Park City Council wants to review and reform the City’s approach to public safety to ensure racial justice.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND THAT the City Council will establish a Task Force to advise and provide recommendations on ways the City can reform public safety polices to ensure racial justice; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT, the Task Force will:

- Review the City of Takoma Park Police Department’s policies,
- Identify approaches to engage residents, particularly groups who have been marginalized, in policing oversight and community policing practices; and
- Make recommendations on alternative models for public safety to better address mental health and other social service related calls; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT, the Task Force will not be a decision-making body; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT, the Task Force will consist of 10 to 15 Council approved members; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT, the Council will prioritize Task Force members from the following groups:

- Black and Brown residents or business owners that vary by income, education, sexual orientation and gender identification
- Local experts in civil liberties, social justice, police reform
- A member of the police command staff
- A member from the Police Chief's Advisory Board
- Mental health professional(s)
- A member from each of the unions representing the City's Police Department (Local 400 and AFSCME)
- Staff from the City of Takoma Park Recreation Department and/or Housing and Community Development
- Representative from advocacy groups such as Casa De Maryland, NAACP, ACLU; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT, the City will obtain an external facilitator to manage the Task Force; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT, the Task Force must submit to the City Council a final report with recommendations by June 4, 2021; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT, the Task Force may be dissolved after the Task Force's final recommendations have been presented to the Council by June 16, 2021.

Adopted by the Council of the City of Takoma Park, Maryland this ___ day of _____, 2020.