



**City of Takoma Park, MD**  
**Reimagining Public Safety Task Force**  
**Meeting Summary**  
**July 6, 2021**

**Welcome, Review Charge, Introductions, Timeline, and Work Plan**

Jevin Hodge (co-facilitator) welcomed Task Force members, attendees, Councilmember Talisha Searcy, Mayor Kate Stewart, Chief Antonio DeVaul, and Acting City Manager Jessica Clarke. Jevin reviewed the charge to the Task Force; the timeline-noting where we are in the process; the additional Task Force meeting that has been added for Thursday, July 8; and the workplan through the work session with the City Council on July 13.

Jamal Holtz (co-facilitator) reviewed the additional resources requested by Task Force members, which have been provided, and which are pending. He covered the following, which were provided to the Task Force members via email:

**REQUEST #1: 911 call flow chart**

*ANSWER (Chief DeVaul): Please find attached the flow chart for 911 calls coming into the Montgomery County, Prince George's County, and DC 911 centers. We primarily receive calls from Montgomery County 911 and are on the same Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) with them. However, due to our close proximity to PG and DC we received calls from them as well. We also receive emergency and non-emergency calls on our 24/7 non-emergency line (301.270.1100). This line goes directly to the dispatcher in Takoma Park. We receive everything from emergency calls to requests for other resources; trees down, icy road conditions, need information on drug/mental health counseling, requests on how to dispose of old furniture, housing assistance, missing animals etc. Our dispatchers are trained to filter non police related calls to the appropriate agency.*

**REQUEST #2: Domestic violence stats from dispatch calls (how many/what percentage of calls made to dispatch were related to issues of domestic violence)**

*ANSWER (Chief DeVaul): This is involved as not all calls that come into dispatch may start as DV. Also calls are coded by the highest level of offense. So if the incident is domestic violence related but the victim is also sexually assaulted, the call/incident would be coded as a sex offense, not DV.*

*Regarding domestic violence related calls, staff was able to gather the following numbers (see below). Please note that the numbers represent calls coded specifically as DV calls, but do not encompass all incidents that are determined to be domestic related (ex: vandalism with nexus to an intimate partner - only recorded as a property crime).*



*Extended research and time would be needed to obtain the full view of domestic related incidents. I would be happy to connect the task force with a PD SME to discuss this issue in detail.*

Year	Domestic Calls	Dispatched Calls	Self-Initiated Calls	Total Calls
2018	332	7,437	6,047	13,484
2019	285	6,824	4,863	11,687
2020	258	7,445	4,636	12,081
Year	Domestic Calls	% Dispatched Calls	% All Calls	
2018	332	4.46%	2.46%	
2019	285	4.18%	2.44%	
2020	258	3.47%	2.14%	

**REQUEST #3: Officer pension for same-sex marriage information**

*ANSWER: The withdrawal from the Maryland State Retirement System (MSRS) and establishment of the police pension plan was in July 2001. Prior to that, Takoma Park police officers participated in MSRS along with civilian employees. At the time more than 90% of officers elected to transfer to the new plan and the terms of the plan were negotiated with Local 400; subsequent amendments have also been negotiated with Local 400. According to the City's former legal counsel who assisted with the withdrawal/negotiations, there were several discussions over the years about transferring to the Law Enforcement Officers' Pension System (LEOPS) which is part of MSRS. He indicated that each time the City determined that such a transfer would be cost-prohibitive. We can reach out to MSRS to get new cost estimates for joining LEOPS but it will take some time.*

**REQUEST #4: Citation # at the state level for guiding regulations related to search warrants (item #14)**

*ANSWER: SB178 (It is also in the packet of bills that was provided last week)*

**REQUEST #5: Information regarding housing violations from the state (item #15). If this information is publicly available, please provide the link so we can share it with the Task Force**

*ANSWER: City staff are getting this information.*

**REQUEST #6: Information on the \$800k in the budget for a new dispatch center**

*ANSWER (Chief DeVaul): In addition to dispatch, we are adding better service windows, interview rooms, community mediation room, and office space. I would highly suggest all task force members visit our dispatch center/station prior to making any decision on this topic. It*

would be good for them to speak to our dispatch staff as well. Making a recommendation without doing so would be extremely uninformed. We can arrange a tour for anyone interested.

[Note: Three task force members did tour the center this week. Additional information was shared at tonight's meeting that the proposed renovations include:

- Expanded dispatch facility and installation of updated hardware;
- Expanded and upgraded community access including reception area and confidential meeting area;
- Expanded office space;
- Upgraded restrooms (3) to ADA compliance.]

**REQUEST #7: Any policy or guidance around what level of traffic stops are enforced (item #15)**

**ANSWER (Chief DeVaul):** we do not have a policy specifically restricting certain offenses. However, we encourage focusing on offenses that impact public safety. Our evaluation and reward system rewards this approach. I would refer them to my overview of our approach to traffic enforcement (narrative below) and traffic stats. The overview provides our direction to staff. This is the same for criminal enforcement. The direction and focus are reflected in the data presented; reduction of the number of traffic stops and citations and the decrease in citations/warnings issued for lesser offenses/increase in citations/warnings issued for serious offenses.

**Purpose of traffic enforcement:**

The City's Police Department views the purpose of traffic enforcement as to promote public safety by stopping a violation, reducing crashes, and enhancing public safety and enjoyment. At the same time, it deters other drivers from committing an infraction and historically changes behavior of the ticketed driver and onlookers. Education and behavior change are the key components.

**From PowerPoint presented to the Task Force:**

1. **Refocus on traffic enforcement-** in 2018 the department moved away from random traffic enforcement to targeted enforcement. Utilizing traffic collision data and resident complaints, we focused on departmental traffic enforcement in problem areas in the city. This led to quality traffic stops that helped address problem areas in the city. While the number of overall stops were reduced the quality and impact of the stops improved. Collision data over the three years, 2018-2020, shows a reduction in overall collisions in the city compared to 2015-2017.

2. **Revamping of the Evaluation and Reward System-** in 2018 we changed our evaluation system to focus on community engagement and problem solving over traffic and criminal enforcement. This led to officers not feeling pressured to make non-impactful traffic stops and arrests. This was consistent with promoting quality targeted enforcement, not quantity enforcement.

**REQUEST #8 An update on the numbers of participants at the various engagement sessions and opportunities throughout this process.**

**ANSWER:** see below.

**REQUEST #9 - An update on the Dixon incident for the Task Force**

**Answer:** (Chief DeVaul): We expected to be able to have our internal review completed prior to the task force ending and be able to discuss our findings (what legally could be shared)/recommendations with the group. However, our review was delayed due the Pentagon Police conducting another internal investigation into the May 2020 incident, as well as a review of how their agency handled the original internal investigation into the incident. This investigation involved interviewing several of our employees. We wanted to wait until all of our staff were interviewed before making final recommendations. Now that all of our employees have been interviewed, we are finalizing our review and recommendations. We plan on having our inquiry and recommendations reviewed by an outside police agency. Once that is completed, we will share the info we can share legally and recommendations with the public.

**Community Engagement Opportunities Throughout the Task Force’s Work.**

In response to a request from a Task Force member, Jamal reviewed in detail the engagement activities that have taken place and have contributed to the work of the Task Force:

- Stakeholder interviews consisted of 14 individuals and included one-on-one interviews and focus groups. Interviewees included school principals, educators, residential managers, tenants in multi-family units, clergy, and community residents.
- A Business Walk at Takoma/Langley Crossroads engaged approximately 8 businesses including owners and staff. Businesses included professional offices and retail establishments.
- A Focus Group of 14 members of the Takoma Park Police Department from a diverse set of backgrounds and experiences, and representing different functions within the department participated in two focus groups. Participants had been members of the department for periods ranging from approximately one year to 36 years, as well as retirees from the department.



- A Focus Group of 7 Ambassadors comprised of Takoma Park residents who had applied to participate in the Task Force but were not named to the Task Force. They continued to be engaged and followed the work of the Task Force. These ambassadors, racially and ethnically diverse and ranging in age from 36 to 72 years of age, participated in the focus group.

- Community Listening Sessions were held throughout the work of the Task Force. Attendee demographics were not collected. Session dates and attendance were:

- April 29, 2021 – 50 registrants
- May 25, 2021 – 16 registrants
- June 28, 2021 – 9 registrants

- As of July 2021, there will be a total of 17 Task Force meetings that were streamed and recorded. These meetings were between 1 ½ - 2 hours in length and averaged approximately 25 attendees between Task Force Members, Steering Committee Members, and an average of approximately 2-5 members of the public watching in real-time. Attendee demographics were not collected.

- Task Force meetings and Community Listening Sessions have all been recorded and posted for viewing post-meetings; there have been a total of 402 views across all recordings.

- Public Comments comprised of 41 individual submissions from the community via the Takoma Park city website and email, and 40 feedback comments made via the Chat function during meetings.

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### **Facilitated Discussion to Clarify, Edit, and Consolidate Recommendations**

Michael Akin (co-facilitator) screen shared a discussion draft of the recommendations developed and annotated by the Task Force. Multiple rounds of Task Force member input were received and incorporated in the draft under review at this meeting.

The Task Force worked line by line through an extensive facilitated discussion to clarify, edit, and consolidate the draft recommendations and their appropriate contexts. Additional Task Force member input was acknowledged and contributed to the discussion.

Councilmember Searcy, Mayor Stewart, Chief DeVaul and Acting City Manager Clarke responded to questions and provided input as requests for clarification and information were posed.



This was a dynamic and lengthy discussion, and it can be viewed in its entirety at this link: <https://reingoldlink.egnyte.com/dl/ueR21Agxw2>

In response to the question above about funding for a new dispatch center Chief DeVaul provided an update on the \$800K budgeted for renovation of the Dispatch Area:

- Expanded dispatch facility and installation of updated hardware;
- Expanded and upgraded community access including reception area and confidential meeting area;
- Expanded office space;
- Upgraded restrooms (3) to ADA compliance.

### **Next Steps**

All edits will be incorporated in an updated draft and Task Force members are encouraged to continue to provide input which will be added as received. This draft will be circulated to the Task Force in advance of the July 8 meeting along with an updated draft of the report outline.

The meeting ended at 9:00 P.M.