



**City of Takoma Park, MD**  
**Reimagining Public Safety Task Force**  
**Meeting Summary**  
**June 15, 2021**

**Welcome, Timeline, Work Plan, Public Feedback Form, Community Listening Session 6.28**

Jevin Hodge (co-facilitator) welcomed attendees, advised all of the extended 2-hour meeting time, and reviewed the Timeline, Work Plan for the final report, Public Feedback Form, and Community Listening Session on June 28, where recommendations will be outlined for public feedback.

**Review Charge to the Task Force**

Jevin introduced Mayor Stewart who reviewed the charge to the Task Force and expressed appreciation for the work of the Task Force and the participation of the public in the process. The report of the Task Force will not be the end of this process but the beginning of the next stage in work that will continue. Mayor Stewart expressed the hope that all participants will continue to engage with the City Council and continue to be ambassadors for the recommendations that are presented.

Jevin introduced Councilmember Searcy who thanked the members of the Task Force for taking on a difficult and important task. Councilmember Searcy noted that the City Council is looking to the Task Force to make recommendations that help the Council target its priorities, identify gaps and explore solutions. She said that the Council will work through the specific budget details and implementation steps and encouraged the Task Force to not feel constrained by those details. The “what” (issues we are trying to solve) is just as important as the “how” (recommendations). Some specific examples could be improving mental health services and improving communications access. The Council is looking forward to receiving the Task Force’s recommendations and Councilmember Searcy thanked the members of the Task Force again for their deep and serious work.

**Subject Matter Experts**

*Summary of remarks; full recording is available at  
<https://reingoldlink.egnyte.com/dl/AKT0mkMkTY>*



Jamal Holtz (co-facilitator) introduced the Subject Matter Experts. Each one offered remarks and participated in a facilitated Q&A following introductions.

**Christy E. Lopez, Georgetown Law Professor from Practice; previously Deputy Chief in DOJ Civil Rights Division, Co-chair of the D.C. Police Reform Commission.**

Professor Lopez stated we, as society, should always be questioning: how can we have a less punitive, less carceral response? She shared that we have placed an over reliance on the police in the past and now we need to find creative ways to build community – it takes a lot of tedious work. While many cities are doing what they can, many issues are at the state level. There may be seemingly intractable obstacles. Don't accept the wall of the funding stream. Continue to advocate to make the community the best it can be for everyone.

**Fernando Moreno, School Counselor, Montgomery County Public Schools**

Mr. Moreno encouraged attendees to think about the culture of what public safety is for everyone, including our youngest community members. He asked, what does public safety look like for a kindergarten child and their family. How about for a newly-arrived family? Often families may only see police officers in moments of trauma. How we respond is crucial and determines how those families perceive public safety going forward. Restorative justice can help to build trust and repair harm, but that begins with establishing non-punitive relationships with the police and developing civic education.

**Dr. Judith L. Mounty, Clinical Social Worker, Private Practice**

Dr. Mounty noted that she hasn't worked specifically with the police but was willing to share her perspectives a member of the deaf community. The broader community needs to have better general knowledge about being deaf, as there are a lot of misconceptions about being deaf. For example, Dr. Mounty will not hear cars coming up behind her, or bikers, or other people. The first response is for people to get angry; if Dr. Mounty uses her voice, that makes people even more angry. Every deaf person has had challenging experiences with the police, which can be augmented with additional factors of race and length of residence. Basic awareness of the deaf and hard of hearing experience can combat the microaggressions that these individuals experience.

**Robert Weinstock, Director, Public and Media Relations · Gallaudet University**



Mr. Weinstock thanked the Task Force for inviting him to join the meeting. He noted that he was only recently invited which did not allow a lot of time to prepare and presented some issues of accessibility for the panel. For Mr. Weinstock personally, he tries to connect with the police, be cordial, let them know he appreciates their work but they appear not to respond and that creates an uncomfortable situation for him. Mr. Weinstock reported that he has tried to engage with the police via the police text line, however has not received responses. He wants to feel that his concerns are heard, that he has access on an equal footing, but he needs to feel confident that there will be a response from the police.

**Dr. Patrick Boudreault, Manager, Knowledge Translation Center, Gallaudet University**

Dr. Boudreault noted that he and his daughter are deaf. They are lucky to live in this city where it is not perfect, but they are able to communicate. There are fears of the police that are prevalent with most deaf Americans because of the communications issue. Police can assume deaf individuals are drinking or have other issues going on. The police notice different behaviors but for a deaf individual this can put deaf individuals at risk and can cause misunderstanding. Dr. Boudreault went to police academy to take the opportunity to learn more about policing and gained a respect for their work. Deaf people want to be accepted in the community. His recommendation would be to have a database with information in the system about the deaf community members available to police for emergency purposes. Dr. Boudreault is hopeful for the best and always looking for small possibilities that can grow into larger opportunities.

**Laura O'Connor Barclay, Executive Director, Old Takoma Business Association** was unable to attend but provided written comments which were read into the record. Business owners and their employees desire a non-police contact so that if business owners need assistance, they do not need to call the police. They want a police presence and similar to the regular rounds of past years.

**Roy Austin, Deputy Assistant Attorney General (DAAG) in the Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division from 2010 to 2014; Deputy Assistant to the President for the Office of Urban Affairs, Justice and Opportunity** was unable to attend but provided remarks offered by Michael Akin (co-facilitator) and a link to work Mr. Austin had done on policing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Mr. Austin will continue to be a resource to the Task Force and the community.  
<https://policing.counciloncj.org/2021/05/19/task-force-calls-for-overhaul-of-u-s-police-training-national-standards-to-reduce-use-of-force-2/>

**Q&A**



Jevin (co-facilitator) facilitated a Q&A which explored issues including:

- Best practices for community awareness and education/training when encountering the deaf or hard of hearing
- Jurisdictions with effective models for civilian oversight of police
- Effective ways of building relationships in a multicultural community
- The role of an auditor in investigating concerns regarding police misconduct.

The full Q&A can be heard at <https://reingoldlink.egnyte.com/dl/AKT0mkMkTY>.

## **Topics and Themes**

Michael Akin (co-facilitator) noted that there are a variety of key topics and themes that have emerged during the Task Force and subcommittee meetings. Background resources provided to the Task Force to formulate these themes included:

- City of Takoma Park structure and governance documents
- Reports of Task Forces on Reimagining Public Safety from other jurisdictions
- Subject matter experts from city government, the police department, advocacy organizations, resident groups, and the business community
- Reports from stakeholder interviews, resident and police department focus groups, community listening sessions, and public comment
- Summaries of the work done during the Task Force meetings from March to the present

## **Subcommittees Report**

Michael introduced the subcommittees to report on their activities.

### **Community Quality of Life – Reported by Sawa Kamara**

- *This subcommittee has considered the intersection of public safety and quality of life issues, including housing, mental health, and more, as well as the implications for Takoma Park programs, policies, and budget.*

**Facilitator: Jevin D. Hodge**

**Committee Members:**

- § **Sawa Kamara\***
- § **Duane Scott**



- § Ajmel Quereshi
- § Emil Parker
- § Christina Morado

The subcommittee reflected on what they wanted to accomplish in the areas of community coordination, public safety, mental health support, housing, and people-centered programs. They shared out on their initial thoughts related to considerations of the following themes:

### **Coordination of Community Resources**

- City staff resource coordinator to help coordinate all community activities, groups, and neighborhoods
- Civic group for people/organizations serving the community
- Resource Guide of mental health resources and community partners serving the Takoma Park community
- Promotion of after school and job training programs

### **Public Safety**

- Neighborhood Services responsible for parking violations, speed camera monitoring, and other code enforcement
- Community Safety Team of unarmed police, mental health service providers, and outreach specialists

### **Housing Safety**

- Tenants Association
- Annual review and publication of apartments with code violations in last 5 years posted to the Takoma Park city website
- Takoma Park Public Safety Task force reviews apartment inspection guidelines

### **Alternative Methods and Responses – reported by Cedric Boatman**

- *This subcommittee has assessed Takoma Park’s current policing practices for emergency and non-emergency calls, including calls related to mental health. Also, this subcommittee will compare and contrast new potential approaches and best practices that may apply to Takoma Park.*

**Facilitator: Cordell Carter II**

**Committee Members:**

- § Michael Rubin



- § **Jide Atoyebi**
- § **Sadie Cheston-Harris**
- § **Cedric Boatman**

The subcommittee considered the ways in which the community could work to dispel stereotypes and work together in a culturally sensitive way. There is an emphasis on education and the longer-term oversight of implementation of Task Force recommendations. They shared out on their initial thoughts related to considerations of the following themes:

### **Policing**

- Coordination of police response across multiple jurisdictions
- Cross-jurisdictional use of force training and coordination protocols for incidents
- Community/police relationships and partnerships - Community-oriented policing services (COPS)
- Dispatch/Multiple Agency Coordination
  - Emergency Call Center/311 operator resources response directed to non-law enforcement
- Data Transparency
  - Make Police Arrest/Stop and Dispatch data publicly available at regular intervals

### **Education**

- Interrupt the school-prison pipeline
  - Advocate to Montgomery County that school administrators and teachers receive training regarding discipline of students of color

### **Implementation of Task Force Recommendations**

- Standing committee reporting to the City Council on progress

### **Community Engagement and Transparency – Reported by Kiminori Nakamura**

- *This subcommittee has evaluated practices and policies related to sharing data and budget information among the public as well as efforts to engage community partners in public safety efforts. Additionally, this subcommittee has reviewed existing efforts and consider new approaches to recruiting and retaining public safety professionals.*

**Facilitator: Jamal Holtz**

**Committee Members:**



- § **Lauren Van Tol\***
- § **Adam Braskich**
- § **Jumana Musa**
- § **Kiminori Nakamura**

The subcommittee identified accessibility, comprehensiveness, clarity, timeliness, relevance, and cultural appropriateness of communication across city agencies as dominant themes. Emphasis is on communication between the community and the police department, reflecting the ongoing challenges of interactions between these community members. They shared out on their initial thoughts related to considerations of the following themes:

### **Effective Communication Access**

- Digital and non-digital communications channels
- Language access including English, Spanish, Amharic, ASL
- User-friendly city agency websites
- City agency public statement language review policy
- Public feedback/input process

### **Policing**

#### **Civilian Oversight of Police**

- Improve the role of Chief's Advisory Board and it's composition
- Community-police communication – overview of process on what's shared, why, and how.
- Complaints handling, results, actions taken and reporting out
- Trainings subjects, providers, frequency
- Data sharing timing and completeness
- User-friendly, comprehensive, and timely website

#### **Police Enforcement Capabilities**

- Prioritization/de-prioritization of responses
- Reassigning of non-policing activities

#### **Body Worn Camera Policies**

- Reporting and involved officer access
- Recording retention and disposal

## **Facilitated Discussion on Alignment of Topics and Themes with Task Force Charge and Goals**

Michael facilitated the discussion on moving from subcommittee reports on topics and themes to the creation of the full Task Force report.

- Ideas and recommendations will likely fall into specific categories:
  - Subcommittee and/or individual Task Force member ideas/recommendations
  - Full Task Force recommendations
  - Items that may be important, but time has not allowed formulation of a specific idea and should be considered for future work.
- Format: Goal first, then Recommendations
  - Ensure that the *why* behind each recommendation is clear, so that in the event a specific Recommendation is not implementable, Council can still work towards achieving the goal.
  - Example:
    - Goal:
      - Mental Health needs to be a priority
    - Recommendations:
      - Non-police response for certain issues
      - Fund new positions
- The process by which we'll get from these Subcommittee reports to a full Task Force report:
  - Subcommittees working through detailed lists of ideas now.
  - Next Tuesday, Subcommittee meeting will be a full 2 hours of working through the ideas, with committee leads rotating as SME's to other groups.

LINK will assist with compiling information for the report, but the specific content and recommendations will come directly from the Task Force. Other information in the report will include: recruiting and convening of the Task Force; meeting calendars and summaries; data and resources provided to the Task Force; etc. The Task Force will receive the draft for review and comment.

Subcommittees have made significant progress. We must make sure the report captures the process and resources, and deal with contradictions. As members edit and track changes, LINK will update accordingly. LINK will also support alignment of repeat recommendations. The steering committee will be part of the process to make sure all of the data included is correct.





The Task Force will share out initial recommendation next week to inform the Community Listening Session on June 28. The Task Force then meets on June 29 to refine the recommendations.

**The meeting ended at 7:30.**