

**City of Takoma Park  
Reimagining Public Safety Task Force  
5.4.2021 Meeting Summary**

## **Agenda**

### **Welcome, Review Charge, Subcommittees, Timeline,**

Jevin Hodge welcomed Task Force members, city officials, and attendees and outlined the structure of the meeting.

Jevin briefly reviewed the 4.27 subcommittee meeting and observed that the subcommittees had thorough discussions with Takoma Park City officials:

Mayor Kate Stewart  
Councilwoman Talisha Searcy  
City Manager Suzanne Ludlow  
Deputy City Manager Jessica Clarke  
Grayce Wiggins of Housing and Community Development  
Captain Dan Frishkorn of Takoma Park Police Department

Jevin noted that the full subcommittee meeting summary report can be accessed via the Reimagine Public Safety Website: <https://takomaparkmd.gov/initiatives/project-directory/reimagining-public-safety/>

### **Recap of the 4.29 Community Listening Session**

- Cedric Boatman thought it was valuable; he would have liked to have it before starting work and done a few of them.
- Jumana Musa echoed Cedric's comments.
- Michael Rubin said it would have been nice to see peoples' faces and suggested that be possible for the 5.24 listening session.
- Jumana Musa expressed concern about providing access and opportunity for people without internet access to contribute.
- Michael Akin reported that LINK did a subsequent phone call an attendee who had trouble coming off mute and/or maintaining connection, to be sure her thoughts were captured. In addition, Michael explained that people who applied to participate in the Task Force but were not selected are being offered the opportunity to attend a focus group to garner their input.

- Jumana Musa asked what does the focus group look like? Jumana urged that community groups and tenant associations be included as a way of obtaining input and spanning language divides.
- Michael Akin outlined focus group questions and confirmed that the focus groups are conducted via Zoom.
- Jevin Hodge reiterated that facilitators have spoken with individuals from the listening session who had tech challenges. Jevin asked Task Force members to provide the names of people they feel should be heard from so the facilitators can meet people where they are.
- Jamal Holtz pointed out that facilitators spoke with people by phone as well in stakeholder interviews and that some residents made it clear that they did not want to give their names out.
- Adam Braskich built off what Jamal had said and expressed the concern that when we do these listening sessions, he wonders about how deep the participation is that we get from community; there are the very interested and engaged residents, and then a range from those who are disinterested to those who are entirely disaffected.
- Michael Akin noted there are 22 pages of feedback from the public comment form, email and the chat so far and asked that Task Force members share any other groups or places outreach should be done as the goal is to ensure all voices are heard.
- CM Searcy told the Task Force that many multi-family buildings have gotten very good at meeting virtually and that she can help coordinate outreach. A lot of work goes into getting attendees to tenant meetings and the Task Force can reach out to tenant associations and coordinate to schedule joint meetings. CM Searcy will follow up with Grayce Wiggins regarding upcoming meetings and adding Task Force members to them.
- Ajmel Quereshi thanked all the Task Force members for their work. Ajmel noted how super-informed the public is and that their input should shape what the Task Force works on, getting into the substance of what they care about.
- Kiminori Nakamura expressed thanks for the link to the stakeholder audit report.
- Jamal Holtz noted there will be another report following the next focus group.
- Michael Akin offered the opportunity for Task Force members to sit in on upcoming focus group if they wish.

### **Chief Antonio DeVaul, Police Data Presentation**

Chief Antonio DeVaul presented the arrest data 2015-2020 which had been requested by the Task Force. Dan Powers demonstrated the interactive webpage which allows users to access and review detailed information about arrests across multiple dimensions. Task Force members received copies of the Chief's PowerPoint presentation.

### **Discussion & Q&A**

Q: By looking at someone's data wouldn't necessarily provide demographic data.

A: You can see that data when you click on it. We want to protect officers' privacy.

Q: How do you evaluate officers and communicate what constitutes “quality” over “quantity”? Is the increase in serious crimes indicative of where crime is moving, or just the issue of where people were focusing?

A: Officers used to be evaluated by number of citations and arrests made. Now we’ve changed the evaluation process to discourage people from just going out and making arrests to increase numbers. We work robustly with crime analysts to put officers where the high levels of crime are concentrated, to address specific problems. It is about using technology to analyze our data, not necessarily an increase in crime, but a shift in focus to where to allocate officers time and interest.

Q: As you’re gathering the data, how are officers marking race or how are they instructed to mark race?

A: Normally people self-identify on a driver’s license or ID. If they do not self-identify, we normally have an ID, but if not, we ask them. If we do not have something that clearly states what it is, the officers will have to ask. Sometimes they refuse, and if they do, we have to guess. Officers are not encouraged to guess for themselves

Q: Was any analysis done looking for implicit bias based on comparison of officer demographic data vs citizen demographics?

A: We’ve only had the data for a week or two, but we will look into any patterns of data. It’s hard to look at the raw data and say that there are issues of implicit bias. The data can be skewed because officers are assigned to different posts and areas that may contribute to why things present themselves that way

Q: Are the arrests mainly taking place in the commercial district?

A: Ward 6 has some of the highest reported crimes. A lot of our crime is centered around the commercial district. Right now, we just have ward information. I definitely think there’s a lot of crime focused on that area. In those situations, we want to take this information and re-evaluate where we place our focus and officers, so we’re trying to use that.

Q: Budget includes shift from operations positions to investigative positions. What changes if any are being made and why it’s justified?

A: That switch was not explained the way it should have been. We had a number of vacancies. Our undercover positions not filled and those positions shifted to patrol. We’re now moving them back to where they belong. It’s nothing to do with philosophy, just mechanical.

Q: Is it correct that 80% of criminal arrests and 90% of traffic arrests are not Takoma Park residents?

A: Low numbers are Takoma park residents, that’s correct.

## **City Manager Suzanne Ludlow, City Budget Overview**

City Manager Ludlow gave an overview of the FY22 budget and highlighted funding sources, allocations and constraints. Details were provided to the Task Force in Ms. Ludlow's [PowerPoint presentation](#).

### **Discussion & Q&A**

Q: Has anyone done projections on health services aspect? What would the potential cost be for mental health?

A: We're hoping to get support from the county or partnerships. Federal funds include a lot of designation for mental health services which could be good for pilot projects.

Q: The discussion of the K-9 unit is important to listen to because it raised other issues regarding the use of K-9 in the city. It would be helpful to hear everyone's insights, and policy implications.

A: The budget amount is less than 11,000 dollars to omit. It's more about policy than anything else. It seems easy to knock something off the budget list, but there are many considerations. Sometimes having these specialty units is an attraction and retention piece for potential officers.

ARPA, the American Rescue Plan Act, has a lot of designation for mental health resources. There are rules about how the funds can be spent, but it's \$14.8 million coming in two tranches of \$7.4 million each.

### **Timeline Review**

The meeting ended with Michael Akin leading a discussion on the overall project timeline. Michael outlined that:

- There are three Task Force and two Subcommittee meetings remaining before June.
- Options could include adding a second weekly meeting and/or extending the timeline if needed.
- The challenge is to be focused and deliberate while continuing to gather input.
- There are a lot of subject matter experts to be slotted in, some for specific subcommittees, some for the Task Force as a whole.
- The steering committee is open to the extension of the timeline, but also mentioned it would be great to have some form of recommendations in July to inform potential budget for ARPA funds, including things like mental health services.
- It is helpful to have a deadline for the Task Force to offer recommendations; this will not be the only time recommendations can be made.

## **Discussion**

- Given that the budget is already getting passed, and we're just starting to get some information, it feels like we should be pushing to extend the timeline if task members are willing to do that. We want to make real substantive change.
- We need to work through the data.
- I would like to have Zoom meetings with community impact leaders, and talk to people in the community.
- It might help to understand why the due date is set for a specific time, and then work back to implement stages of the process that make sense. A larger understanding of the end date will allow us to prioritize.
- It would be logical to have subcommittees meet first and talk about recommendations before presenting to the larger Steering Committee

## **End Meeting**

The meeting ended at 7 PM.