



Community Safety Working Group Agenda
Wednesday, April 28, 2021
5:30 pm via Zoom

<https://amherstma.zoom.us/j/85850484338?pwd=Y1dacmlsYXR0eUc4VmRyeTFJcVpsQT09>

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| 1. <u>Call To Order: (5 minutes)</u> | Chair |
| Approval of 02/24/2021 Meeting Minutes | |
| 2. <u>Reports and Comments: (15 minutes)</u> | All |
| Public Comment | |
| CSWG Members Report | |
| 3. <u>Action and Discussion Items: (85 minutes)</u> | All |
| a. Acknowledgment of resignation from Chair Paul Wiley | |
| b. 7Gen Consultant Report | |
| c. Final Report Subcommittee | |
| d. Prep for 5/17/2021 Town Council Meeting | |
| e. Election of Officers | |
| 4. <u>Upcoming Events: (5 minutes)</u> | All |
| 5. <u>Next Meeting Date: (5 minutes)</u> | All |
| TBD | |
| 6. <u>Other Topics: (5 minutes)</u> | Chair |
| Other topics the Chair did not reasonably anticipate 48 hours in advance of the meeting | |
| 7. <u>Adjourn:</u> | Chair |

**Community Safety Working Group
February 24, 2021 Meeting Minutes**

Present: Paul Wiley, Chair; Brianna Owen Vice Chair; Tashina Bowman; Debora Ferreira; Ms. Pat Ononibaku; Russ Vernon-Jones; Elisha Walker

Absent: None

Others Present: Paul Bockelman, Town Manager; Anthony Delaney, Procurement Officer; Jennifer Moyston, Staff Liaison

Meeting began at 5:31 pm

1. **Call to Order**

Motion to Approve Draft Meeting Minutes of 02/03/2021

Move to Approve Draft Meeting Minutes of 2/03/2021 by Russ Vernon-Jones

Move to Approve Draft Meeting Minutes of 2/03/2021 seconded by Debora Ferreira
Minutes approved unanimously

2. **Reports and Comments:**

Public Comment: Vince O'Connor: Gives 3 recommendations for CSWG Police reform
1. To look at the history of policing and not just its legal history. This would help you understand why so many people have concerns with its current structure. 2. Review any and all materials in regards to training. If you train people in a certain way then you get a certain result. 3. A thorough review three to five years of Amherst actual Police interactions with the Public and compare to comparable communities another community for instance Eugene Oregon even though they are larger they seem to have a good model of how you can police a community respond to the issues in the community effectively without having each interaction involving an armed police officer.

Lauren Mills: Has questions to how the CSWG will be funded and continue to be funded and if the funds will be coming out of the Police Budget. The issue of policing is important to her and why she chooses to stay involved because she recognizes and understands the connection between the education system and the Policing system and children are profiled in the schools and tracked.

Also wanted to share experience of officers being able accurate record incident with just a pad of paper and a pen. She thanked the CSWG for their work.

CSWG Members Report: None

3. **Action and Discussion Items:**

- a. Ms. Pat and Tashina updated us on the reference checks for the lowest BID received. Boston Mantra. Reference check was done by conference call with Ms. Pat, Ms. Bowman, Mr. Delaney and Ms. Moyston. Ms. Pat and Tashina

determined after the reference checks that Boston Mantra skill set does not match what the CSWG is looking for. His concentration is in Health care and does have lived experience. Ms. Bowman agreed.

- Mr. Delaney explained current options after having received the BIDS. We received three BIDS. 1. Boston Mantra which was the lowest BID and has been determined by the CSWG as not qualified and we are not interested in awarding them the next step would be to evaluate our second lowest Bidder 7Generations. He would want to check references tomorrow if possible. 7 Gens BID is considerable higher than Boston Mantra. Although he does not think that their BID exceeds the work or is outside of the scope of work being asked. They came in at \$30,749 for Part A; \$27,597 for part B; and \$11,352.49 for Part C. The third Bidder Canopy Equity bid \$59,000 for part A and did not bid on sections B and C. Next steps will be evaluate and check references for 7Gen. We have only talked in general about what we are looking to spend. Will we award all three or just part A and if we award 7Gen then we need to get contract in place soon. He is just looking for direction.

- Mr. Bockelman explained the process of awarding the BID. Town Manager signs contract, but he will rely on feedback from the CSWG. Award the lowest Bidder and if not qualified then got the 2nd lowest Bidder and the third in this instance is too high. The Question is do we award the second Bidder or parts of A,B, and C or do not choose to award.

-Ms. Bowman suggested that we relook at the contract and figure out what can we can do without the help of consultant as there are things we can do without Consultant. This work can be rushed. We could push some parts off until we have additional funds or we could push off until more funds and to allow more time for the Consultant. Which it seems that we may have had more Bidders.

-Ms. Pat Mr. Delaney explained that some potential Bidders did not Bid because of the time frame. I am considering awarding 7Gen has they are black ran and multi-cultural.

-Ms. Ferreira let's move forward and check references for 7Gen if they pan out then we can award them if not then we should not feel pressure to join just anyone.

-Ms. Walker agrees with MS. Ferreira except has questions in regards to awarding the BID. Do we have to award the entire BID? Can we award parts b, but not a etc.

-Mr. Delaney explained that you can award all of the contract or choose A and B or just C.

-Mr. Vernon-Jones thanked those who checked references and hopes that the CSWG can will decide this evening which parts to decide to Award. Suggest that we cancel section C.

-Mr. Wiley suggest that keeping section A for the skills and credentials that fit into the needs of the CSWG.

-Ms. Pat asked if people are hesitant because of the cost for B and C or hesitant because they feel it will not benefit our group. Concerned if people feel that the 2 and 3rd part are no longer important. IF it is because of money then we should discuss. We need to do this correctly.

- Ms. Owen asked what would our time line look like if awarded part A and rebid for C. How would the recommendations affect the FY21 Budget?

-Mr. Bockelman the initial charge is about alternative forms of policing and the time frame is very short and will be included in FY23 Budget. He is also looking for what are next steps. Guidance to how much funding will be needed from FY22

-Ms. Ferreira feels that we need to have a conversation on Part B and C.

-Mr. Vernon-Jones are we able to negotiate the possibility that people are asked right from the beginning what they'd like to see? What might the town look like? What changes would we make if we were going to be a more anti-racist town overall?

-Mr. Delaney explained that that would be more of a direction as it is inside the scope of work being asked to do.

-Mr. Vernon-Jones feels there is no need for Part C and part B should be discussed.

-If 7Gen reference checks are good he would immediately, draw up a contract and send to them. Then the turnaround time is up to them. They could sign right away or have a lawyer review it. Once it comes back to us we sign within one working day so the earliest Mr. Delaney can foresee is mid next week.

-Ms. Walker wants to know more about our budget before making a decision

-Mr. Bockelman there is \$80,000 designated for this project for FY21. Your stipends use about \$10,000 and the CSWG has talked about incentives and honorariums for people participating in some of the outreach efforts that the working Group wants to do. There is also a Reparations for Amherst that has asked for funds.

Mr. Wiley If we award Parts A and B 7Gen comes in at about \$58,000 that leaves \$22,000.

Mr. Vernon-Jones If we award Part A and B then we will not be able to go out to BID for Part 2 of the BID and we will have to wait till July for Part 2.

-Ms. Ferreira agrees with Mr. Vernon-Jones if we award A and B then we do not have funds for Part 2 of our BID which is the second part of our charge.

-Ms. Pat wanted to remind everyone that we did not have enough money to fund Part 2 and that it has been suggested that the funds from Part 2 are taken from the frozen positions at the PD.

-Ms. Walker agrees the funds should come from the frozen PD positions as this work is directly connected to the PD.

-Ms. Owen would like to go forward with awarding 7Gen with Part A and Part B

-Mr. Cage agrees move forward with A and B and get Community involved.

-Mr. Bockelman cleared up that the SCWG would not be onboarding authority the Town Manager is.

-Mr. Wiley Move this recommendation to the Town Manager.

-Ms. Pat Seconded

-Mr. Wiley restated the motion

-Mr Wiley The motion is to recommend to the Town Manager Paul Bockelman to pursue awarding this contract Parts A and B to 7Gen with the understanding that they would have to fulfill the requirements of the reference checks and this will be done in a manner as timely as possible to get information back to the Community Safety Working Group.

-Mr. Bockelman: You are recommending parts A and B be awarded to the vendor who's currently being discussed right subject to I assume it will be Ms. Pat and --- Ms. Bowman checking references, just like we did with the first one. If that pans out we can proceed with contracting no need for it to come back to the group.

-Ms. Pat seconded the motion

All those in favor

Motion passed by unanimously vote 7 yes and 1 abstain

-Mr. Vernon-Jones I'd like to move that we asked the town manager to seek to access additional funding to make it possible for us to go forward with a phase 2 process of procuring consultant services.

-Mr. Wiley Seconded the motion

-Mr. Vernon-Jones with permission of the second year I'd like to rephrase it and specifically asked that it be to seek funds that were previously earmarked for the police department perhaps, including the positions currently held in reserve.

-Mr. Wiley Seconded the motion

Motion passed by unanimous 8 yes

Discussion of Charge and Preliminary Recommendations:

CSWG members all have similar recommendations It is recommended by all to have a Safety Responder Program.

-Ms. Ferreira feels that any funding used for Community Safety should come from the PD.

Youth Center is another.

-Ms. Bowman we will need to talk to the youth to see what will get them to show up to the youth center.

Next meeting date is 3/3/2021 at 5:30 pm

Meeting Adjourn 7:44 pm

DRAFT

INTRODUCTION

The 7 Generations Movement Collective (7GenMC) submits this report to the Town of Amherst Community Safety Working Group (henceforth CSWG) to assist in its exploration of the impact of public safety services on traditionally marginalized community members, including people who identify as Black Indigenous People of Color and Asian American Pacific Islander. (In this report we will use the term BIPOC to encompass all groups who make up the global majority.)

The research featured herein was conducted at a time when simultaneous diseases were infecting our nation. At the time of writing, Covid19 has killed more than 3 million people globally, and explicit acts of white supremacy shake the nation. CSWG hosted community forums just days after the United States Capitol was attacked by a mob of white Trump supporters who attempted to overturn his election defeat through violence and acts of terror as Congress gathered to count electoral votes. Community Ambassadors were participating in workshops via Zoom as jury selection was taking place in Minneapolis for Derrick Chauvin's trial for the murder and manslaughter of George Floyd. As we write this report, Daunte Wright's death, (a young Black man who was killed by the police) "by accident" fuels ongoing protests nationwide. Within hours of the jury's verdict that Chauvin was guilty, 16 year-old Ma'Khia Bryant became the most recent victim of police brutality, killed in Columbus Ohio. She follows Rayshard Brooks, Daniel Prude, Breonna Taylor, Atatiana Jefferson, Stephon Clark, Botham Jean and so many other BIPOC who have passed before him.

The BIPOC population, in particular Black Americans, are 2.5 times more likely than whites to be killed by police (statistica.com). In 2019, 24% of all police killings were of Black Americans, who make up only 13% of the U.S. population. Data show that in addition to experiencing violence or death by police, BIPOC are more likely to be pulled over by police while driving. Baumgartner, Epp, and Shoub (2018) examined the trends in traffic stops in North Carolina. Their examination of over 20 million traffic stops shows that Blacks are 63% more likely to be stopped by police, despite driving 16% less than whites. Additionally, Blacks are 115% more likely to be searched in a traffic stop, although contraband was more frequently found in the cars of whites. Co-author Kelsey Shoub notes, " 'driving while Black' is very much a thing; it's everywhere and it's not just a North Carolina or a Southern problem but across the United States." As will be discussed in this report, Amherst BIPOC participants expressed

similar experience over surveillance- on the streets, in their neighborhoods, even in their homes. Drawing on participatory action research, the 7GenMC conducted an inquiry designed by BIPOC representatives for the BIPOC community. This report will detail the collaborative approach, the research design, and the findings that inform the recommendations presented to the Community Safety Working Group.

METHODS

“In thinking about building trust... I think there needs to be an acknowledgement about the harm that has been caused to folks of color in Amherst for generations, and that’s where you start, and then it’s really about listening, responding and taking action and co-designing and building with the communities of people who are most impacted, and that’s really where change starts.” -- Statement from community member, CWSG community forum, January 13, 2021

As the population most impacted by policing, it is essential that the BIPOC community be at the center of this research -- not just as participants, but included in all phases of the research. For this reason, this research draws on participatory action research (PAR). In PAR stakeholders are positioned as the experts, the knowledge of stakeholders is based on experiences related to context and location and therefore they are vital to each step of the research process. Because of this, PAR ensures inclusivity of participants in all stages of the research process -- the design, data collection, data analysis processes, and the dissemination of the findings.

Participatory action research (PAR) was born in Central and South America as a tool for action against social injustice. In present day research, PAR is both an epistemology and a methodological approach that serves to explore social injustice, and acts to address it. PAR “engages research design, methods, analyses, and products through a lens of democratic participation and collective action” (Torre, 2014, p. X). Researchers set out to uncover the reasons behind injustice, all the while maintaining change as a fundamental outcome of the research. PAR research spans the globe and looks at issues including labor and educational policies, incarceration, threats to youth human rights, immigration violations, inequality in education, police brutality and over-surveillance, and LGBTQ discrimination.

PAR is the most appropriate method to implement in order to develop recommendations for the CSWG. This methodology is grounded in its mission to address the social injustices it explores. As Michelle Fine said, drawing on Appadurai, “at its heart, PAR insists that those

persons who have been both structurally disenfranchised have, what Arjun Appadurai (2006) calls ‘a right to research’ the conditions of their oppression and their resistance” (Lazdowski, 2015, p. 106).

Participatory action research positions stakeholders as influential by prioritizing research participants throughout the research process. A PAR approach to inquiry acknowledges that equally important to the research topic is *how* the research is conducted, and *who* is involved. These are important considerations given the potential research has to inform policies that impact the lives of the stakeholders most affected by certain policies.

PARTICIPANTS

To recruit community ambassadors, 7GenMC created announcements in English and Spanish (appendix 1). The announcement was posted on the CSWG’s website, as well as on social media. Interested community members completed an application form (appendix 2) and by March 21, 2021, a week after posting, 7GenMC selected six community ambassadors (CAs) who represent diverse age groups, races and ethnicities, socioeconomic statuses, and who collectively speak four languages in addition to English. All CAs- four women and two men- identify as BIPOC or AAPI.

Workshops

Community members attended four different workshops with 7GenMC consultants Dr. Sonji Johnson-Anderson and Dr. Katie A. Lazdowski. The objective of the four workshops were to present the components and values of participatory action research (workshop 1), discuss the limitations of the research (workshop 2) which helped to inform the research design (workshop 3) and to analyze the data (workshop 4). For a clear outline of each session length and objectives, please see Appendix 3. In addition to meeting the objectives of each session, the workshops provided community ambassadors the opportunity to ask questions, consult one another, and provide insight about the process.

DATA COLLECTION AND SOURCES

“I want to acknowledge that you are probably not going to hear from the most vulnerable communities who need to be heard, because there are so many issues involved. It takes a lot of courage to speak about the police, and even more courage to speak against the police.” Statement from community member, CWSG community forum, January 13, 2021

Research Design

As stated in the quote above, CAs determined as a group that to collect data about the impact of policing on the BIPOC community, the best approach to implement would be interviews. The limitations of this research- the expedited time frame, social distance requirements due to Covid 19, the sensitivity of the topic and the risk of re-traumatizing participants, and the privacy required by some, informed the CAs decision that it is best to meet one-on-one with participants, rather than in focus groups. On the rare occasion, focus groups were held with no more than three participants when all parties agreed to sharing their experiences in each others' company.

During the interviews, after presenting and discussing the informed consent/assent form (see appendix 4 for sample), each community ambassador asked nine questions (appendix 5) which they had developed together in one of the workshops. Interviews ranged in length from 12 to 85 minutes. The majority of the interviews were conducted virtually using Zoom. On occasion CAs met in the presence of the research participant and recorded the interview using the Zoom app on their phone. Each CA was provided a Zoom account which was used to record and provide a transcription of the interview. The transcriptions were available to 7GenMC members only, in effort to uphold research ethics and maintain confidentiality and anonymity.

Throughout the duration of this project, community ambassadors put participants' needs first. They did extensive outreach to recruit participants and forced no one to unwillingly participate. The CA's were well aware of the risk of retraumatizing participants when asking questions, and discussed this as a possible outcome, while also encouraging the participants to seek out the BIPOC therapist 7GenMC contracted for this purpose.

Community member participants

The six community ambassadors interviewed a total of 32 participants, 20 who identify as men, and 12 who identify as women. Among the group were seven teens, six in their 20s, six in their 30s, five in their 40s, three in their 50s, and three who identify as "seniors" or "elders". Community participants identified as Asian, Cape Verdean, Afro Latinx, Pacific Islander, Black/African American, Black & Native American. One person identified as Northern European, and specified "poverty" and "learning disabled" as other identities. Important to note is that community members were not screened in advance of being invited to participate. All participants who were willing to participate regardless of whether their experiences with the Amherst Police Department were positive or negative, limited or extensive, were interviewed.

Illustrative of the arbitrary nature of the selection pool is the image below, that captures the words participants use to describe the police, some (albeit only a few) use a neutral term, such as “alright”, and even a positive word- “understanding”.

Data Sources

In addition to the interview/focus group transcriptions collected from Zoom (and translated into English when necessary), 7GenMC also draws on public comments made at CSWG meetings, and the recordings of the public forums held by the CSWG in January 2021. Data also include emails sent to CSWG members, or any additional sources that reveal BIPOC experiences with the Amherst Police Department.

Limitations

This research was conducted within the contracted timeframe set forth by the Town of Amherst. The contract, signed by 7GenMC on March 16, 2021 outlines that the community outreach portion of the work would be completed by April 6, 2021. Within this extremely short time frame, 7GenMC recruited six community ambassadors and conducted workshops to prepare them to recruit and interview BIPOC-identifying Amherst residents.

The short timeframe was made more challenging given the sensitivity of this topic. Recruiting community members proved to be difficult, as 7GenMC consultants shared with CSWG members at their April 7, 2021 meeting. The difficulty experienced by CAs to identify community participants willing to be interviewed demonstrates the overriding theme within the research of “fear of the police” and fear of “retaliation” which will be discussed in greater detail in the *FINDINGS* section of this report. When asked to indicate how many people they reached out to in order to complete seven interviews, the majority of CAs indicated on average, they reached out to 10 people, meaning on average at least three said no. One CA said that in order to complete seven interviews she reached out to 17 people. This is an indication that ten people were too fearful to speak about their experiences with the Amherst Police Department. One community ambassador shared that two participants who completed their interviews followed up with the community ambassador the next day and asked that the recording be destroyed. Respectfully, and in alliance with the parameters outlined in the informed consent form, all evidence of the interview was deleted, and the data from these two cases was not analyzed. These examples are illustrative of the fear that BIPOC and AAPI residents hold for the police due to their experiences within the town of Amherst.

As is the case in any qualitative research, participants' well-being is the priority. The limited time frame set forth by the town added to this challenge and required careful consideration from 7GenMC in order to establish a research design that reduced the risks for CAs and community participants. 7GenMC made concerted efforts to provide support systems for CAs and community participants alike. They allocated part of their budget to provide access to a BIPOC-identifying therapist whom participants could speak with in the event that the interview process was triggering and/or retraumatizing. Ultimately, the lack of time, and the sensitivity of the topic may have limited participants' ability to fully disclose their experiences. In the future, 7GenMC advises that the town allocate an adequate time frame (no less than six months) to such a weighty and important project so as to uphold the integrity of the research process and the well-being of Amherst's BIPOC residents.

DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS

In the analysis process, 7GenMC researchers drew on grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1991). Grounded theory allows the themes to emerge from the data (in this case the interview recordings and their accompanying transcriptions), rather than the researcher looking for evidence of predetermined themes. In examining the impact of policing on the BIPOC community, researchers (one BIPOC, one white) listened to the recorded Zoom sessions and noted significant passages that responded to the overarching research question: *How does policing impact the BIPOC community in Amherst?*

Researchers deliberately began with the interview data in order to prioritize the experiences of the BIPOC community participants. After listening to over 30 hours of recordings and documenting significant passages from each, the researchers categorized these passages according to their similarities and came up with multiple "codes". Some of these codes were grouped together, resulting in six themes that are discussed in the following section. From there, the researchers reviewed additional data sources (including CSWG community forum recordings, emails, public comment at CSWG meetings) to identify how they support, or contradict the identified themes. Critical discourse analysis served as the framework by which the researchers identified what is referred to here as "significant passages." In sum, critical discourse analysis legitimizes one's discourse (words) as a reliable source to examine the impact that policing has had on an individual.

FINDINGS

“Policing takes us to that site, that space where violence and the ugliness of American racism converge and is legally sanctioned by the state.” Professor Eddie Glaude Jr., *The Last Word with Lawrence O’Donnell*, MSNBC, April 20, 2021

Solving the problem of policing in BIPOC communities in the United States is no simple matter. This is so for several reasons of which the racist, violent foundation upon which the police institution is built is paramount (Neal, 2021). There, of necessity, has to be an acknowledgment of that history of violence and surveillance of Black and Brown bodies. We cannot hope to accomplish any meaningful change to the way policing is done without the police institution’s forthright acknowledgment of its racism, cruelty and violence disproportionately targeted at Black and Brown people. Those communities are understandably distrustful, suspicious and terrified of police presence. This response of communities of color serves ultimately to hinder police work and investigations.

The findings described below are inclusive of the data received from the CSWG in community forums held in January 2021 and through email communication with them over the past months. It is the voices of the community participants that were recruited by the Community Ambassadors that were the main source of data. As previously mentioned, participants were not recruited based on their positive or negative experiences with the police. What we found was while a handful spoke neutrally about their experience with the police, an overwhelming majority expressed the negative impact of their encounters. What we are unable to show in this report is the extent of the distress that even the recall of these negative policing experiences have caused the participants as well as the Community Ambassadors and researchers. In compiling the participants’ responses we have sought to include several of the quotes from participants that support the findings. We allowed the data to speak and are keenly intrigued by how much the words participants used to describe their perception of the police and their recall to their varied interactions comport with the racist, terroristic, antagonistic, violent and cruel history of the police with people of color, but most especially with Black people. The visual below displays the first word that comes to participants’ mind when asked to describe Amherst Police. While the font color is insignificant, the font size indicates that the larger the word, the more frequent the word was used in describing the police.



Upon analysis of the data, however, we found that the accounts overwhelmingly fell into one or more of the following categories/themes: fear, dehumanization by the police, deep distrust of the police, incongruity of police values with BIPOC culture, lack of diversity of the police force, and disrespect of communities of color.

Fear

❑ Of death at the hands of police officers

❑ Time and again reports of Black people dying at the hands of police officers for suspicion of nonviolent offenses has made this a very real possibility for BIPOC - George Floyd, Daunte Wright, Breonna Taylor, Eric Garner, Sandra Bland, Elijah McClain, Tamir Rice, Ramarley Graham...

❑ “Police don’t need to acknowledge their biases before they kill Black people.”

❑ “‘Good’ police officers are still maintaining an oppressive system that murders Black people. They are still culpable.”

❑ “As a Black person in America, I have to debate whether I should call the police because doing so may cause a situation to escalate and someone could end up dead because I called the police.”

❑ “Sgt _____ sat me on the floor and said, ‘I’ll f----ing kill you if you f----ing move!... F--k your kids!!’”

❑

❑ Of unjust arrest and persecution

- ❑ The idea of being seen as guilty till proven innocent
- ❑ Not knowing the outcome of routine police interaction and thus fearful of it happening at all.
 - ❑ “Don’t ask me nothing. No. I can’t get involved....They push your buttons till you react and to the jail cell you go.”
 - ❑ “If you get into a fight in town, they ask you who took the first swing. They will flip the script on you, claiming they saw it.”
 - ❑ “I stay away from them. My kids know if police don’t have a warrant, they should not come inside my house.”
 - ❑ “I see them often as judge and jury.”

❑ **Of police violence and bodily harm**

- ❑ The foreknowledge of police violence against primarily Black people in other parts of the country, and the knowledge that Black people are perceived as violent and threatening creates heightened fear and apprehension in members of the BIPOC community whenever they encounter police.
 - ❑ “I tell no one in my house to call the police. I don’t call the police because things could go either way.”
 - ❑ “When police approach especially males of color, the darker they are the more police try to exert dominance. They do this before someone is given the benefit of the doubt.”
 - ❑ “We never hear of White people getting choked out by White cops.”
 - ❑ “I feel an anxiety when I see them even though I know I am not doing anything wrong.”

❑ **Of police retaliation and harassment**

- ❑ Unwillingness to share experiences of negative police interaction for fear of being targeted and further harassed by police
 - ❑ “[Police] will harass you till they get you. I’ve seen them do this!”
 - ❑ “I told you about that girl they slammed to the ground. That [police officer] is a [expletive] captain now.”
 - ❑ “My sister was harassed a lot by Amherst police... one of the reasons she hardly comes to Amherst now”

In Amherst, of the over 40 community members interviewed, only two expressed a willingness to initiate calls to police with the remainder of respondents expressing a willingness to do so only in dire situations of accident and death. Participants overwhelmingly expressed fear of the possibility of being accosted and wrongly accused of some criminal act, or worse.

The fear of police interaction is further heightened by the fact that police rarely face consequences for the devastation and death they often leave in the wake of their encounters with members of BIPOC communities.

Dehumanization by the police

❑ Animal (including having superhuman strength)

- ❑ “...Police were on horses. It was dehumanizing to see the police round us up like cattle.”
- ❑ “Black community is viewed as threatening, antagonistic, inhuman, animals to be tamed, to be brought down to the ground and kneeled on...”
- ❑ “I am a taxpayer; I’m human
- ❑ “Their training doesn’t allow them to humanize people.”

❑ Aggressive

- ❑ “[Police] see themselves as warriors preparing for battle instead of people serving the community.”;
- ❑ “... I get to my house as the father of the minor [who called the police because of a white intruder] and the police officer approached me in an aggressive manner - an officer I had just interacted with the week before [at my job in a professional capacity].”
- ❑ “ We are viewed as a threat to White supremacy. Our very existence poses a problem to us.”
- ❑ “Police officers’ behavior is aggressive from the beginning. Police tend to be more aggressive with BIPOC.”

❑ BIPOC are criminal-minded and criminal-intentioned

- ❑ “[My loved one] was arrested because he did not show up to jury duty. He had no priors.”
- ❑ “Their aim and objective seem to be to see me as Black and that makes me a

suspect and they feel they can control and do whatever they want to do with you.”

- ❑ “The first question he asked me [upon approaching me after a traffic stop] was if my car was mine.”
- ❑ “I was accused of fitting the description of someone who had stolen at the CVS. The pictures they showed us were all of white people. We were told to go with police nonetheless

Deep distrust of the police

❑ Police escalate than de-escalate

- ❑ “Police always claim to fear for their lives”
- ❑ “Their intention should be to de-escalate the situation. They (sic) protecting and serving shouldn’t lead to someone getting a bullet.”
- ❑

❑ Do not “protect and serve” BIPOC

- ❑ “I can’t remember any good experiences with Amherst PD ... everything I can think of ...I can’t recall a positive experience with APD.”
- ❑ “I view the police as disconnected from the community.”

❑ Always targeted by police

- ❑ “I wouldn’t call the police for help. They know me, man! They know me by my first name! Some of them are evil, man!”
- ❑

❑ Police unreliability

- ❑ police don’t come at all or turn up late when summoned to communities of color
- ❑ “I was unsafe because the police did not respond... when they were called when [someone] tried to gain entry to my home.”
 - ❑ Police often end up treating BIPOC who call for their intervention as if they are the criminals
- ❑ “I flag down the police to help me. They respond by running my plates and checking my background.”

❑ Expectation of being victimized and/or of having situations needing their (police) intervention misinterpreted/misread by police

- ❑ “Police enter our lives; we don’t enter theirs. They enter our lives and then take [our lives]away.”
- ❑ “Even when we aren’t reaching out to police officers, they interject themselves into our lives. We don’t initiate with them. They initiate with us.”
- ❑ “As an African American man, they may misinterpret why I’m on the scene and I end up getting in trouble.”
- ❑ “I don’t put myself in the position where I will have to have interaction with police, because, like I said, people who look like me, things can get from ugly to deadly.”

Incongruity of police values with BIPOC culture

❑ BIPOC experience community in markedly different ways than white community

- ❑ BIPOC tend to be more open and more outwardly expressive in their interactions with each other. This is often misread as aggression and disturbance prompting police overreaction.
- ❑ “They don’t deal with de-escalating a situation. At a party they just shut down the event entirely. For instance, I was at a party on campus and something happened outside. Within 30 minutes they had shut the event entirely. Not so with majority white events. Look at Blarney! They de-escalate, but at the Black event they shut it down altogether.”
- ❑ “At a Black party they always impose curfew. They do this all the time with [student of color events].”
 - ❑ White members of the community also contribute to police surveillance of BIPOC community members by reporting them to police thus prompting negative BIPOC/police interaction. Very often police are called on POC for noise complaints.
- ❑ “I turn (sic) up to hear that the owner of the establishment called the cops because he hated the way my son was sitting in a chair!”



The overarching sentiment from which the aforementioned have sprung is the reality of **RACISM** and **BIAS** that permeates at all levels of the police force. The BIPOC/AAPI communities of Amherst are aware of the fates of innumerable members of their community who have been beaten, jailed and murdered with impunity in this country by police. This reality serves to reinforce their terror of police presence and their experiences with Amherst PD only strengthen these perceptions.

Lack of diversity in police force

- **RACISM & BIAS**

- “The police force is not diverse. I want to see action taken by police that shows equal respect for people of color as white people.”
 - “Whenever there is a huge presence of POC the police presence is strong. But not when the crowd is white. Why is there **bias**?”
 - “I recall an incident in which kids of color wearing hoodies were followed off the bus by police and accosted in **CVS**.”
 - “A lot of them are **racist**! There’s a lot of racism where police go after certain demographics...”
 - “Police shouldn’t exist because policing is rooted in very **racist** systems. They remind me of ‘slave patrols’ and what they did then, they do now: surveil and capture Black people.”
 - “Diversity trainings have not changed them. They cannot be reformed! They shouldn’t exist as a system!”
 - “Police behaviors are predetermined by the color of one’s skin. Their behavior is based on what they think our lives as Black people are worth. They behave according to their **biases** and assumptions.”

- “Not because someone is not overtly **racist** does not mean they are not indoctrinated by **Black hatred**.”
- “There needs to be more BIPOC representation [in the Amherst PD].”

Police disrespect for communities of color

- **BIPOC respondents speak repeatedly and with pain and anger of the general disrespect that police have routinely shown to them whenever they interact.**
 - “They are disrespectful! They should behave with respect. They conduct unnecessary searches and always claim that I look like someone [who shoplifted] at the CVS!”
 - “Police should serve and protect with respect, not just for white or affluent community, but for everybody.”
 - “They don’t see serving and protecting us like they serve and protect White people. They think to keep us in line, but serve and protect white people.”
 - “They should be respectful and professional as they were trained to be. I was called names by Amherst police. They should keep name-calling to themselves. You disrespect someone else, you disrespect me!”
 - “They don’t take the time to develop a holistic view of our community.”
- **BIPOC Overserveillance-**
 - “There is too much of a saturation of police in Amherst. There isn't really that need. Aside from students the majority of the population is old white people”
 - “I was [driving] towards Pelham doing about 35 mph. A cop stopped me. I tried to explain that I had a meeting and was trying to make it on time. We argued back and forth for about 15 minutes. Then he told me to go on my way....They continue to stop us because they want to anger you by stopping you needlessly.”
 - “Police were called for [family member with mental health issue]. There were about 10 cops surrounding my family member. They all had their hands on their guns. Just the sight of police holding their guns before even asking questions was beyond scary. Every time I would walk by [the spot] where this happened, it triggers me,”

As we interact with and to analyze the data, we use the words as spoken from community members' own lips to show the impact that policing has had on the communities of color in Amherst. Our findings also show that the experiences of policing in Amherst do not differ from the negative policing experiences of People of Color in other parts of the country. The graphic above is a representation of the perception that the people interviewed have of the APD. They have asked that we use these data as the basis for enacting REAL and MEANINGFUL CHANGE to the way policing is done in Amherst. Please see our recommendations below:

RECOMMENDATIONS

"I hope that the responses from these [interviews], actually, like, create a change, and that they learned from this experience. They just didn't just become a report, you know." Interview with community participant, April 2021

Participatory action research called on the expertise of the BIPOC community throughout all stages of this project. The community ambassadors drew on their experiences to inform the research design and create the questions that they asked their research participants. Community members have shared their observations and first-hand encounters with the police. Their truths illustrate the reality of the impact of policing on Amherst's BIPOC population and substantiates the victimization of the BIPOC community by the Amherst Police Department.

In community forums (January 13, 2021), CSWG meetings (April, 21, 2021) and interviews with community participants (April 2, 2021) many Amherst residents referenced the history of policing and its roots in slavery. One interviewee noted, "they need to know where policing comes from. They were slave catchers at first." The interviewee makes the connection to the systemic impact of current day policing practices, noting "they aren't there to protect the black people." This is the reality that must be at the forefront when making recommendations; a few community programs or altered funding cannot undo years of systemic racism in the police force. Additional training cannot alter "serve and protect" to instantaneously include the Black and Brown bodies that were the initial impetus for policing centuries ago. The BIPOC community is well aware of this, which is why so many snickered before responding to the question of how they would change the way policing is done in their community. Based on what community members have said, we recommend increased accountability and transparency, and we recommend reducing the number of police by half over the next five years.

Increase accountability and transparency

One means of increasing accountability and transparency is increasing the data that is collected and made easily available to the public. When someone is stopped for a traffic stop, and not arrested, there still must be documentation in terms of the demographics of the person who is being pulled over, why they were stopped, and what further actions took place (e.g. searched, vehicle search, etc.) Any incident involving the police should end with an incident report, signed by the officer and the people involved which summarizes who initiated the call, for what purpose, and what the result was. Demographic information should be collected, and more importantly summarized on a regular basis to identify the trends and any discrepancies in the data.

Many in the BIPOC community expressed a desire to know who the police officers are in town, and what they do to “serve and protect.” They desire more out-of-uniform presence from officers. They would like to know who they are; they would like to see that they are invested in the community they serve and protect. As such they would like to see them dressed as civilians, present at community meetings, performing community service, and in general, gain a stronger sense of what their role is in the community. In response, 7 GenMC recommends that police officers provide regular updates at Town Council meetings, for example, so that the community may gain clarification about their work, and to field questions about their work. One participant illustrated how simple this could be:

There's a lot going on in this country. And I feel like as a community that has a lot of people of color, I feel like the least they could do is kind of provide some comfort in the community with everything that's going on. You know what I'm saying. Maybe do like a city hall meeting or something, or even on zoom or whatever, and just be like ‘we know that there's a lot going on but we as the Amherst police department wants you to know that we're here to protect everyone from all races, all backgrounds just to provide some comfort’, you know, it could take them like an hour, half an hour, or like it you know quickly. I feel like that's the least they could do...use your voice and your power to kind of provide some comfort. (interview with community participant, April 2021)

“The least they could do” are powerful words, and this participant feels that silence from the police shows no support for the BIPOC community, and goes against their mission to protect and serve *everyone*.

Reduce the number of police by half over the course of 5 years

The findings outlined in the section above illustrate that the BIPOC community experience over-policing, and are surveilled to the extent that the presence of police in their lives do more harm than good. In community forums and in interviews, BIPOC members repeated over and over that they feel unsafe and threatened around police, which impacted many peoples’ responses to the question of under

what circumstances they would call the police. They are aware that when police are brought into a situation, their risk of harm, simply because of their skin color, is heightened. As one person commented, “I wouldn’t call them because I’m afraid of being the suspect when I’m trying to help.”

Informed by the findings that show the BIPOC community featured herein would feel *safer* if there were fewer police in Amherst, we would recommend that over the course of five years (no later than 2026), the Amherst Police Department reduce the number of police officers by 50%, following the suggested timeline below.

Year	Year 1 (2022)	Year 2 (2023)	Year 3 (2024)	Year 4 (2025)	Year 5 (2026)
Reduction in police force	15% (6 officers) 34 remaining	15% (5 officers) 29 remaining	10% (3 officers) 26 remaining	10% (3 officers) 23 remaining	10% (2 officers) 21 remaining

Continue the ongoing work of the CSWG

In order to oversee and support the implementation of these recommendations, we recommend that the Community Safety Working Group continue to meet on a regular basis through 2026 or until the listed recommendations have been achieved. The CSWG serves as a necessary liaison between the town and the Amherst Police Department and its presence is essential to ensure more measures are taken to increase accountability and transparency on behalf of the police. Likewise, the CSWG will help advise the process of scaling down the police- a process that requires overseeing the reallocation of the police funding, and ongoing research of its impact.

CONCLUSION

The end goal of participatory action research is not simply to discover, but to address and take action in addressing the findings. The process allows to unveil the issues that the community is facing, but ultimately to address next steps. The BIPOC community has spoken, and the 7 Generation Movement Collective members have illustrated the impact of policing on this community. The findings show that there is much work to be done in Amherst, and that Amherst is not excused from the trends happening nationally.

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