



Community Safety & Social Justice Committee Agenda

Thursday, July 28, 2022 6:00 pm via Zoom

Join the Meeting

<https://amherstma.zoom.us/j/87693680422>

Or join by phone 253-215-8782 or 346-248-7799

Webinar ID: 876 9368 0422

Pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021, this meeting will be conducted via remote means. Members of the public who wish to access the meeting may do so via Zoom or by telephone, see instructions below. No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings in real time, via technological means

1. Call to Order:

Welcome, Announcements, and Agenda Review

2. Public Comment:

3. Member Reports:

4. Action and Discussion Items:

- a. Finalize Letter to Council re: APD Facebook Post

5. Updates:

6. Upcoming Agenda Items & Meeting Schedules:

7. Other Topics:

Other topics the Chair did not reasonably anticipate 48 hours in advance of the meeting

8. Adjourn:

***Public Comment:** During the public comment period, the Chair will recognize members of the public. When called on, please identify yourself by stating your full name, preferred pronouns, and residential address. Residents are welcome to express their views for up to 3 minutes, at the discretion of the Chair based upon the number of people who wish to speak; no speaker can cede their time to another speaker. The CSSJC will not engage in a dialogue or comment on a matter raised during Public Comment.

To join the CSSJC meeting via Zoom teleconferencing

<https://amherstma.zoom.us/j/87693680422>

Or join by phone 253-215-8782 or 346-248-7799

Webinar ID: 876 9368 0422

To indicate you wish to make a comment click “raise hand” To join the CSSJC meeting via telephone: Call Enter webinar ID when prompted: When prompted to enter your participant number press # To indicate you wish to make a comment, press *9 on your telephone.

The members of the Community Safety and Social Justice Committee (CSSJC) have seen the July 5, 2022 video of Amherst Police Department (APD) officers telling a group of majority BIPOC youth that “you have no rights” during their response to a noise complaint call. The U.S. constitution guarantees a person’s rights no matter what age. Our youth did not deserve such mistreatment from APD officers.

The incident captured in this video shows clearly the need to implement the 2021 recommendations of the **Community Safety Working Group**. The following statement comes from our charge as created by the [Town of Amherst and shaped by the work of the CSWG](#). There are two immediate points from our charge we would like to highlight: 1. The prompt activation of CRESS to respond to future calls of this type, that is, i.e. civil complaints such as noise complaints. 2. The establishment of a [Resident Oversight body](#) that is charged with developing a system of public oversight and accountability of the Amherst Police Department. The CSSJC will be prioritizing these two areas of responsibility in light of the recent incident at the Amherst Housing Authority Property, Watson Farm on July 5, 2022.

Effective implementation of these action areas are so critical to the new system of community safety we are trying to create in this town. We know the Amherst community wants to see this and we call upon the town council to encourage the town manager and the APD under his authority to support our work.

From our review of the incident, it is abundantly clear that the work of the members of the CSWG was correct, important and timely. This incident demonstrates the continued bias, and abuse of power that modern policing forces are capable of enacting. How did the officers’ statements during this interaction line up with training they have received? How soon will the recommendations from CSWG to create an anti-racist culture be adopted? Will there be an apology to the involved families? We hope that when CRESS responders are fully trained, the APD will step back from responding to non-violent, non-criminal calls.

We understand that the Human Rights Commission has called for an investigation into the incident on July 5, 2022. We support this call for accountability and further ask whether any outreach has occurred regarding these youth and their families by the Town of Amherst? In addition, has the Chief of Police filed a report and issued a statement regarding the abuse of power demonstrated by his officers, and were the officers removed from active duty or suspended?

In line with our charge, we call for the prompt activation of CRESS and the establishment of clearly defined protocols for non-violent police calls and complaints more appropriate to community safety responders. It is important that this body (CSSJC) appointed to continue the work of the CSWG be a part of the creation of these guidelines along with members of CRESS.

In addition, what is the timeline for establishing a Resident Oversight Board in the town of Amherst? Such a body could assist in establishing a means of safely filing resident complaints regarding police misconduct and help create guidelines for community safety. A safe and efficient means of registering complaints made by residents has been a continually neglected piece of modern community safety practice in Amherst for many years. A critique made in [2014 by former Boston Police Commissioner Edward Davis](#) sent to study our ApD made this issue abundantly clear and it has remained unaddressed by the APD and the Town.

In our role as the CSSJC, it is important to support the Town of Amherst to reimagine community safety together. Beyond the implementation of CRESS and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Departments, how can we join together to care for one another, while avoiding the unnecessary intervention of police?

In 2020, the “Town of Amherst's Commitment to End Structural Racism and Achieve Racial Equity for Black Residents” was adopted by the Town Council. These words ring hollow without bold action. CSWG has outlined programs and policies to help shift the culture of Amherst Police and reduce its harmful impact on BIPOC communities. The implementation of CRESS and DEI are a start, but many policy recommendations remain untouched. We reaffirm the following CSWG recommendations:

- Freeze all Amherst Police Department hiring as recommended by the first CSWG report (May 21, 2021) in item 5, including the vacant position until the CRESS Department has been operational for at least six months to determine whether CRESS would be a more appropriate way to resource the community ([CSWG, pg. 15](#)).
- Engage the community in Visioning sessions to help heal from white supremacy.
- Hold “Know your rights” workshops for youth and community members: The nonprofit organization [Citizens For Juvenile Justice](#) could be a resource for such efforts.
- Create the Resident Oversight Board to increase police accountability in the community as advised by CSWG Report in recommendation 2. ([pg. 13](#)).
- Establish protocols and utilize the CRESS Department in all non-violent, non-criminal calls.
- Eliminate pretext stops, consent searches, and sector-based community policing model to reduce the opportunities for contact between the Police and BIPOC drivers ([7GenMC Report, pg. 6-7](#)).
- As recommended by CSWG, create a BIPOC Youth empowerment center under the DEI Department to provide positive opportunities for all youth in a BIPOC-led space.
- In addition, the CSSJC would like to recommend the following:
 - The Amherst Police Department should create a victim compensation fund for people impacted by police harassment and over surveillance.

To the youth impacted by this event, thank you for your bravery in documenting and sharing the incident despite the very real threat of retaliation. You should not have to shoulder that burden. You deserve to be treated with dignity and respect, which was not the case in your recent interaction with the Amherst Police Department. We recognize that incidents like this are traumatizing, and can impact your worldview and your view of our community. We hope you will find healing through your family, friends and this community. We hope together we can build a future deserving of all your gifts, time and energy through the Youth Empowerment Center.

The work of CSSJC “to advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and community safety in Amherst,” has just begun, this incident demonstrates however that the road may be rocky and long, if the town lacks commitment. Let us work quickly to utilize the research already published and shared by CSWG to prevent further incidents like July 5th. We do not want our children to suffer for a slowly paced implementation that could prevent harm to our youth and other vulnerable groups in Amherst.