

Proposal for a Community Safety and Equity Board

The goal of this work is to create a structure for a single Town board that provides meaningful community involvement in **Safety and Equity decision-making** and would likely include: 1. Recommendations on police department training and community collaboration efforts 2. Review of complaints against the BPD 3. Development and Review of proposed critical Bennington Police Department policies and procedures 4. Analysis of safety and equity data.

The work of the Community Safety and Equity Board (working title) is to ensure safety, accountability, transparency and trust in the community and to move Bennington toward achieving its vision of becoming “a welcoming, engaged, inclusive, and resilient community where everyone, regardless of identity, shares in our vitality and benefits from an outstanding quality of life”.

We propose a two-part process: 1. Create a taskforce to explore the name, charge, membership, structure, and scope of a safety and equity board and 2. Establish a safety and equity board.

Taskforce Creation

We propose that a taskforce comprised of up to 11 community members be established to be facilitated by staff from the National Organization for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement (NACOLE) to accomplish the charge as set by the Bennington Select Board.

The Select Board, as the duly elected legislative body of the Town of Bennington, will review and consider the recommendations of the Task Force. The final decision regarding the community safety and equity board remains at the sole discretion of the Select Board.

Charge: *The Safety and Equity Taskforce shall develop recommendations for the name, scope, structure, membership and responsibilities of a community safety and equity board. Areas for consideration include but are not limited to the following: 1. Recommendations on police department training and community collaboration efforts 2. Review of complaints against the BPD 3. Development and review of proposed critical Bennington Police Department policies and procedures 4. Analysis of safety and equity data.*

Taskforce membership would include individuals with the following areas of expertise and experience:

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|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Mental Health | 8. Recent HS/College grad |
| 2. K-12 Education | 9. Domestic Violence |
| 3. Lived Experience | 10. Interfaith |
| 4. Active BPD officer | 11. Disabilities |
| 5. Law | 12. LGBTQ |
| 6. BIPOC | 13. Migrant Labor |
| 7. Business | |

The Taskforce will be an official committee of the Town of Bennington with a charge not to exceed six-months and will abide by appropriate processes and procedures of governmental bodies including open meeting law, agenda setting, recording of minutes, and other requirements as determined.

Criminal Justice Training

All Taskforce members will be required to complete 7.5 hours of criminal justice training. The training will consist of three 2.5-hour sessions. The first two sessions will provide an overview of the criminal justice system including goals, agencies and institutions. The third session will be conducted by the Bennington Police Department and focus on the current day-to-day activities and roles of staff including officers, investigators, and dispatchers within the department; an overview of policy and procedures; and existing collaborations with local programs.

Taskforce Development of community safety and equity board

Using professional facilitation through NACOLE, the Taskforce will examine all aspects of their charge. A Town of Bennington staff person will be assigned to assist the Taskforce. The Taskforce will elect two co-chairs of the Taskforce to set the agenda, run the meetings, and assure compliance with all requirements of an official board. The Taskforce will complete this work within a four-month timeframe. The Taskforce will determine how often they will meet to complete the work.

Written Recommendations to the Select Board

At the completion of the Taskforce's committee work, a written record of recommendations will be forwarded to the Select Board.

Presentation of Findings to the Select Board and Community

The Taskforce recommendations will be shared at a warned Town of Bennington Select Board meeting at the earliest convenience of the Taskforce and the Select Board.

Public Comment Period

There will be a formal comment period on the Taskforce recommendations of no less than 10 days.

Final Consideration by the Select Board

The Select Board will review the recommendations of the Taskforce and public comments in determining the name, scope, structure, membership and responsibilities of a community safety and equity board.

Establishment of Board

The Select Board will create a safety and equity board to be part of the Town's Boards and Commissions to be established and have membership terms that coincide with other town board and commission appointments.

This timetable is provided for illustrative purposes only

Example Timeline

August 2 – Opening online meeting with Select Board and NACOLE outlining process and reviewing oversight models /applications open for Taskforce membership

August 27 – Applications close for Taskforce membership

September 7 - 17 – Interviews for Taskforce members

September 27, 28, 29 – CJ 101 Workshop for Taskforce members (5 -7:30 pm)

October 4 – Taskforce begin meeting this week with 4-month charge

January 30 – Deadline for Taskforce written report to SB

February – Recommendations presented at a Select Board meeting/public comment period begins

February/March – Public comment period on recommendations ends

March – Recommendations are taken up by board at regular SB meeting

May – Establishment of Safety and Equity Board