

**Task Force to Reimagine Policing in Brookline  
Subcommittee on Vulnerable People and People in Crisis**

First Meeting: 10/01/20, 7:00-8:30pm

**Attendance**

Subcommittee members

- Anne Weaver
- Almas Dossa
- Alexander Weinstein

Public attendance

- Savyon Cohen
- Ryan Black

- Mental Health & Homelessness & substance abuse & domestic violence (DV)
- Regular meeting: Thursdays at 6pm - 1 hour
- Alex will take minutes
- Almas + Anne will co-chair
- Public comments from yesterday's joint public meeting, and work for the future
  - Almas: Some folks have inaccurate ideas of what we're looking into. There seems to be some miscommunication about what the two committees are doing.
  - Almas: Do interviews with the first few people who talked? Would be useful to gather information about DV roundtables.
  - Anne: It was her suggestion to broaden beyond mental health and homelessness. Because DV had been set aside for later. Racism in policing. How broad should our scope be?
  - Anne: Community engagement subcommittee. She'd love to hear more from people about their experiences with police. Not completely sure what that subcommittee will be doing. How we all overlap. We'll hear more tomorrow.
  - Anne: Vision - would like to look closely at what other communities have done, in terms of alternative organizations and supports for people in crisis. Put together an overview of a few. Create some suggestions for Brookline.
  - Almas: Agrees. That way we know what has worked in other communities and states. Cahoots is one program we should look at
  - Anne: Toronto as well. Some places work alongside police, some places are more separate from it.
  - Anne: Interview people here, and ask what they would value.
  - Almas: Research and then interviews is a good idea.
  - Alex: Danger of interviewing people and experts on our own, excludes other. Bring up tomorrow at meeting.
  - Anne: Extend our deadline past November 6?
  - Anne: She does have access to a lot of information about other places doing this kind of work. So that research wouldn't be hard for her to do. Set a goal of all of us researching a set amount of other places and their alternatives.
  - Alex: When should we have them?

- Anne: Cahoots article was uploaded to our folder. Rochester as well. She was recently on a Zoom meeting with people who work in alternatives to traditional mental health, and how they are conceptualizing that work as separate from police intervention. One woman is based in Boston. She'll reach out to those people and ask them for materials. Maybe she could talk with us?
- Almas: Was that meeting recorded?
- Anne: Pretty sure yes. Will try to send it out.
- Alex: When should we give each other our research?
- Anne: Plan on next week.
- Almas: Must be on schedule by Tuesday.
- Alex: So we'll need to send our materials to Devon by Tuesday at noon.
- Anne: What June Binney said last night - She believes we should keep our committees separate. She wants to ask Raul about that.
- Alex: Let's stay on task.
- Almas: I believe we were supposed to have more joint meetings with the other task force.
- Anne: Maybe the data they've collected would be helpful for us?
- Alex: We'll send our info to Anne by Tuesdays at noon, so that she can send them to Devon
- Alex: Meetings last night: Domestic violence. Let's go to DV roundtable meeting next week.
- Alex: Susan Howards mentioned that it took 30 years to have DV defined as a crime. We should attend to the emotional and historical weight of that.
- Almas: Why not send both cops and social workers?
- Anne: DV is certainly a crime. Any crime I'm not hoping to take away from police. But services + supports for victims. Taught course on victimology at BU. Many victims are very apprehensive about going to police, because of how they've been treated by police in the past. Ashamed to report. Without taking police completely out of it if someone wants to press charges, they should be involved. Not an either/or.
- Anne: Police officers, as a profession, are the highest percentage of domestic violence perpetrators.
- Alex: Susan Howards' suggestion to listen in to arraignments was also a great idea. Very important. Impacts homeless people.
- Almas: The folks at the public hearing also talked about stakeholder meetings pertaining to domestic violence. How to access?
- Almas: Natalia Linos said we should have POC social worker.
- Anne: We could reach out to her, maybe.
- Almas: Are we looking at just US? We can look everywhere.
- Alex: And at ideas that haven't been tested yet.
- Anne: Not against having social workers in the police department. Helps police get perspectives that they're not trained in. In terms of reimagining, she's thinking more of people with experience supporting those outside of the police department, so there's an alternative there.
- Alex: Let's think about the existing community supports in Brookline.

- Anne: Not convinced that trainings work that well. So let's substantially increase the services outside the police department.
- Alex: Mental health, homelessness, substance abuse = all issues where people involved have lots of police contact, and where an arrest doesn't help anyone. Does DV with these categories?
- Anne: Trauma. But willing to narrow down, because they're different types of services and supports.
- Anne: Race: People who stand out in a community have more interactions w/ police. Can result in trauma reactions when encountering police.
- Alex: Trauma makes sense. But conceptual difference of DV when considering all of these things in relation to policing, specifically? And we heard last night that DV is very important to people, it's very sensitive and we need to get this right. Maybe handle DV separately from this committee?
- Almas: Returns to the question of separating social workers from police.
- Anne: Cahoots program will sometimes go with the cop to the house call.
- Almas: Agree about substance abuse. Just call it "behavioral health," that includes addiction.
- Anne: Hates that term. Puts people in boxes, indicates that your behavior is off.
- Alex: It's 8pm. We've accomplished most things on our list; anything else?
- Anne: Is there a racism subcommittee?
- Alex: Remembers our meeting, saying that all subcommittees should consider everything through the lens of racism.
- Anne: Brookline has a reputation as racist. Black man gesticulating in the street is perceived as more dangerous. Emy Takanami's story last night about her father's experiences in mental health crisis with the police.
- Anne: Police social worker is white.
- Almas: Racial lens - one person was going to put together a statement committing all subcommittees to looking at things through a racial lens.
- Alex: It's after 8pm.
- Public comment
  - Savyon Cohen: Nothing to say.
  - Ryan Black: You all seems to be on the right track. Be careful about gating any expansions to social services behind the police. Even if you improve the police, their institutional imperatives remain. Cops' options include threatening violence and imprisonment. Maybe 911 dispatch could send a social worker in addition to, or instead of, a cop. Domestic violence as a crime distinct from other issues.
    - Alex: On the issue of what is a crime: Anyone can be arrested at any time, for anything. A lot of this is determined by how often you encounter police. We can recognize that homelessness + mental health aren't crimes in themselves, but they're criminalized. Homeless person arrested for trespass.
    - Anne: Taught last year in MCI Norfolk. Mostly black inmates. Targeted by police, easy to fall into criminal legal system. Mental health problems are exacerbated by incarceration.

- Ryan Black: Police social worker said they connect people to social worker. Dr. Linos asked why police are the ones connecting people to mental health services, why don't they have access right off the bat?
  - Anne: And maybe people don't need mental health resources. Maybe they need housing, food security, acceptance, and they're put into a mental health box.
  - Alex: Dr. Linos also brought up that we should look into why Brookline Community Mental Health Center has such a long wait list. Could we ask the town to establish fellowships to pay for the salaries of some new counselors?
  - Anne: We haven't brought up kids and teenagers tonight. What supports and services they need. Might overlap with SROs.
- Savyon Cohen: We need to have an expanded view about the roles of social workers. Not all of them are created equally. She is a clinical psychologist, wants to see defunding efforts succeed. Social worker attached to a police department is a compromised social worker.
- Review paragraph describing our subcommittee
  - Added line about reviewing the work that other communities have done.
  - We'll wait until next week to consider whether we want to keep domestic violence in our wheelhouse.
  - Change initial sentence to phrase it as people who are vulnerable or in crisis.
  - Almas will send this paragraph to Devon.
  - Alex will ask Devon what to do with our minutes.