

**JOINT SELECTBOARD,
POLICE ADVISORY COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND
EQUITY AND USE OF FORCE COMMITTEES**

May 17, 2021

Remote Zoom Meeting was opened at 6:00 PM.

PRESENT: Board of Selectmen: Chair Rich Kuklewicz, Michael Nelson, Chris Boutwell
Town Administrator Steve Ellis, Executive Assistant Wendy Bogusz, Police Chief Chris Williams
Police Lieutenant Chris Bonnet, Building Commissioner Chris Rice, Police Community
Engagement Advisory Group: Chair Chris Pinardi, Colin Mitchell, *Michael Nelson*
Police Equity and Use of Force Advisory Group: Facilitator Ariel Elan, Maddox Sprengel, Faith
English,, Deborah Frenkel, *Rich Kuklewicz*
Conversation Facilitator: Paula Green

ZOOM Video Link: <https://vimeo.com/551748813>

Selectboard Chair opens the meeting, including announcing that the meeting is being recorded and roll call taken.

Personnel Board

Appoint Melissa Brown, 911 Dispatcher, NAGE Grade B, Step 5, 37.69 hrs/wk, effective 5/23/21

Boutwell makes the motion to appoint Melissa Brown, 911 Dispatcher, NAGE Grade B, Step 5, 37.69 hrs/wk, effective 5/23/21. Seconded by Nelson, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Nelson - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye

Personnel Board

Inspector of Buildings Search Committee Recommendation - Bill Ketchen

- Ellis shares information regarding the Search Committee's process for selecting a candidate.
- Ellis shares background information on Bill Ketchen
- Rice shares his opinion that Ketchen would be a good Building Inspector for the Town of Montague.

Meet and Consider Appointment of Bill Ketchen as Inspector of Buildings, NAGE Grade G, Step 3, 35 hrs/wk, effective 6/7/21

Boutwell makes the motion to appoint Bill Ketchen as Inspector of Buildings, NAGE Grade G, Step 3, 35 hrs/wk, effective 6/7/21. Seconded by Nelson, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Nelson - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye

Event Application: Montague Center Town Common; Montague Center Fire Dept, Memorial Day Service - Honor fallen Veterans, May 30, 2021, 10:30 AM to Noon

Boutwell makes the motion to approve the request for Use of Public Property: Montague Center Town Common; Montague Center Fire Dept, Memorial Day Service - Honor fallen Veterans, May 30, 2021, 10:30 AM to Noon. Seconded by Nelson, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Nelson - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye

Registration for Use of Public Property: in front of LaMariposa, 111 Avenue A, Turners Falls

Gabriella della Croce, Pioneer Valley Workers Center, Community Food Distribution, every other Thursday, 2:00 PM to 4:30 PM starting May 20, 2021

Boutwell makes the motion to approve the request for Use of Public Property: Gabriella della Croce, Pioneer Valley Workers Center, Community Food Distribution, every other Thursday,

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2:00 PM to 4:30 PM starting May 20, 2021 pending Bogusz's review of their insurance information. Seconded by Nelson, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Nelson - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye

Leslie Chaison, Peoples Medicine Project, WMTC, Free massages, NADA protocol
Boutwell makes the motion to approve request for Use of Public Property: Leslie Chaison, Peoples Medicine Project, WMTC, Free massages, NADA protocol, with the understanding that they must further amend their

Nelson makes motion to recess the meeting until 6:30. Seconded by Boutwell, unanimously approved. Nelson - Aye, Boutwell - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye

Meeting recessed, reconvened at 6:30 PM.

There was not a quorum for the Police Community Engagement Advisory Group.

Elan calls the Police Equity & Use of Force Advisory Group to order, roll call taken.

Police Advisory Groups Public Information Session

Overview of Meeting Goals/Process - Paula Green

Green gives an overview of the goals and processes which involves focusing on the reports and the data collected, then having an open discussion.

Advisory Group Findings in Brief

Elan shares that the Equity & Use of Force group received much data from Chief Williams and Lieutenant Bonnett including information on traffic stops, arrests broken down by demographics, use of force broken down by demographics (including race, age, and other categories), a recently updated policies and practices manual, descriptions of calls and how what the dispatcher writes down is often not what the officer finds at the scene, and the de-escalation/harm reduction focus of the Montague Police Department (MPD).

Elan shares other key findings in the police data, including that any form of coercion is recorded as a "use of force"; that force was used in 1/10th of 1 percent of police calls during the years 2017 through 2020, and that no use of force resulted in a serious or lasting injury to a civilian. [This group's Final Report can be downloaded here: <https://www.montague-ma.gov/g/77/Police-Equity--Use-of-Force-Advisory-Group>]

Pinardi shares that the Community Engagement & committee decided to focus on people of color and youth. A community survey was designed and conducted by the group. Member Colin Mitchell created pie charts and graphs with the data collected. The survey also included questions that respondents could answer with anonymous comments. The committee's Final Report includes all data and responses. [Download here: <https://www.montague-ma.gov/g/78/Police-Community-Engagement-Advisory-Group>]

Pinardi also thanks Jimena De Pareja, the Spanish language liaison for the Gill Montague Regional School District (GMRSD), who helped the CE group to translate the survey into Spanish, and distribute it to Spanish-speaking residents of Montague. Pinardi says her help brought in a large number of responses from Hispanic community members.

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New Montague Police Department Initiatives

Chief Williams reports the following:

The Police Department has started a Pilot Co-Response Program with the Deerfield and the Greenfield Police Departments, which includes having a physician working with us. Clinical Support Options will be paying for this until November 1st. They have applied for a grant for after that date.

The Northwestern District Attorney's Office and the Opioid Task Force have included Montague, Deerfield, and Greenfield in the Connect Pilot Program.

In addition there will be new policies in the Police Officers Standard in Training.

Community Questions and Discussion

In response to a question by a community member (Ang) about bias, Pinardi states that the Police Community Engagement group is made up of people of different races, ethnicities and personal experiences. Elan clarifies that two of the original members of the UoF Committee, who left at different times due to a school and a work conflict, were a person of color and one of mixed ethnicity. Elan states that the Equity/Use of Force group made an effort to examine data and make recommendations as neutrally as possible. Ang further expresses concern that individuals with bad experiences with the police were not reflected in the report.

Mike Naughton wishes that the CE report had listed the members and what they each brought to the table, especially from their racial diversity.

Pinardi states the CE committee members are listed on the website and can be added to the report. He states that everybody on his committee was very respectful, and members had a lot variety of opinions.

English states that despite the fact that the remaining members of the E/UoF C committee were white, they did have a good diversity in age and professional backgrounds.

Sprengel says that the E/UoF Committee did not acknowledge the bias they were bringing due to being white folks who have not experienced police violence in the same way that people of color have.

Ian Tapscott asks to hear from more committee members than have responded so far.

Frenkel feels that none of the members of the E/UoF Committee have personally experienced race-targeting by entities in power.

Mitchell states that the survey conducted by the CE committee was to get subjective opinions about the police from the community. The statistics indicate that overall, the Town is happy with the police.

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In response to a question by Naughton regarding the location of the Excel spreadsheet where the raw data from the CE survey are entered, Pinarci states that Ellis is still looking at what information needs to be redacted.

Ellis clarifies that names of individuals and a few specifying comments need to be removed to preserve the anonymity of respondents.

Eileen Mariani states that as a Town Meeting member and longtime Montague resident, she understands why Town Meeting last year felt an urgent need to know how Montague police were treating people of color, and other groups, in light of national events. She says that reading both advisory group reports thoroughly showed her that our local police are doing very well; are responding to changing times; and do not have the problems that need to be addressed in many police departments around the country. Mariani finds that the arrest data confirms that Montague police emphasize de-escalation and keeping arrests low. She adds that she is sorry that we are a white community, but we have a police department that shouldn't have to feel defensive; and should be funded.

Abby Graseck expresses concern that the tonight's meeting doesn't allow for critique from the community. She feels that the survey asked how well the policing is going, and not if it should be going or if we need alternatives. In addition, she feels there was an emphasis in the CE report summary about the two focused subgroups being people of color and youth, but the responses from many LatinX responders to the survey are not translated. In addition, she feels that even if negative comments are few, they are still significant. She suggests not taking any further steps, as the Town does not have the right information. Lastly, Graseck feels that LatinX folks weren't placed in their own category.

Elan states that the MPD provided breakdowns of arrests and traffic stops of people of Hispanic ethnicity. This information is on the E/UoF web page, if not in the group's report.

Green responds that the committees were given a charge that was "in this box," not one that was bigger, and they were asked to stay within this scope of work [that is covered in the reports].

Kuklewicz explains how the committees were chosen. Diversity was a priority, as was having people who would have thoughts that are different from traditional ones. He also states that all of the committee meetings were public; all were advertised; and due to the pandemic, all were held *via* Zoom. As a result, he and others were hoping members of the public would attend, who would have input to share.

Kuklewicz reads the charge that was given to each advisory group.

To the Equity & Use of Force group:

"What are the Montague Police Department's policies and practices relative to equitable policing and use of force; what is the impact of these practices on key sub-groups; and how might they improve?"

To the Community Engagement group:

"What are the Montague Police policies and practices relative to community engagement: what is the impact of these practices on key sub-groups; and how might they improve?"

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He explains that the charges did not seem like “restrictive” requests, and were intended to shed light on those questions in a way that groups of volunteer citizens could accomplish without taking years of work.

Ellis notes that part of his job as Town Administrator is to advise the Selectboard. In helping to structure the advisory groups. He recounts his perspective when he was helping to structure the advisory groups in 2020: “Critical self-examination, and exploration, was absolutely the goal. There were *huge*, important questions that resonated for me, and people I know, as they did for so many others. [Questions like:] ‘Are we, in fact, treating people in an inequitable fashion?’ And ‘Are we showing signs of excessive use of force? And in what circumstances, if that is the case?’ Questions like these, he emphasizes, deserved their own focus, and the need for answers was ASAP.

Responding to a question about Spanish translation, Pinardi states that the Google translate function they tried first was not as accurate as hoped, so an individual is now working on translating the survey results.

Regarding design of the surveys, Pinardi quotes from p.4 of the CE report: "While we are proud of the work we did on the survey, we are not professionals, and we recommend that the Town consider hiring an expert(s) to continue surveying the Town on matters of policing." He notes that respondents to the survey included individuals of all races, ethnicities, gender and non-gender identifications, age groups, and more.

With regard to questions that were not answered by the survey, Pinardi states that questions were asked that allowed people to tell us their experiences. Mitchell adds that the PE CE committee spent hours agonizing over what questions to ask.

Pinardi states that he would welcome suggestions on how to better survey the community.

A community member (Carolina) feels there is a need to figure out a way to do this process in a more equitable way. Wants to see more responses from people of color, and people younger than 41. She advises that future surveys find a way to bridge the “digital divide” that some people experience who do not have access to as much internet technology.

In response to a question by Matt Lord, Chief Williams states that all Massachusetts officers receive de-escalation training. Lieutenant Bonnett states that every year, different trainings are completed (i.e., for working with elderly individuals, working with developmentally disabled individuals, handling critical incidents, etc.).

Naughton describes some concerns expressed at last year’s Town Meeting that he feels were not addressed by the committees. Elan responds to some of these, then yields the floor because time is short.

Don Tomaskovic asks Williams and Bonnett what they do with comments from the survey that were negative. How might these inform the MPD’s managerial and training strategies?

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Williams states that all officers are trained to treat everybody with dignity and respect.

Bonnett responds that the Police Department is hoping that through this process, they can build whatever bridge is needed so that negative comments don't have to be anonymous anymore, which will enable the MPD to address complaints and make changes as needed.

○

Tomaskovic is says he sees good reason to be skeptical about how policing is done in the country, but that different departments also vary widely from each other. He feels de-escalation and low arrest rates that the Montague Police Department stress are key antidotes regarding these issues, that are coming out of the Black Lives Matter movement today.

○

Emma expresses concern that these reports may end up translating to significant policy and budgeting issues in the Town. She wants to address what the needs of this community are and whether the police the right ones to meet those needs.

Sprengel responds that the E/UoF group did not get enough input from the community about what people's needs are and why are people calling the police in the first place. He agrees that we need to spend more time understanding the needs of the community so that material-condition changes to peoples' lives can be made.

Elan states the reason they didn't explore budgetary issues is they weren't asked to. The Town Meeting members did not ask them to reconsider whether the police are a necessary and useful service in the community. As a Town Meeting member who looks into the budget, she feels the police force is minimally-staffed and under-funded even for its emergency response services in Montague.

● **Closing**

- Green reiterates that this is not the end; this is a process. Things go back to the Selectboard and Ellis, and people will be coming back to figure out what to do next.
- Kuklewicz thanks everybody who attended and asked good and pointed questions that the Board will consider. He states that if anyone has a comment that they were not able to express, they can reach out to the Board members.
- Kuklewicz thanks Paula Green for helping facilitate as well as the two committees for their advisory services.

Adjourn Meeting

*Boutwell makes the motion to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Nelson, unanimously approved.
Boutwell - Aye, Nelson - Aye, Kuklewicz – Aye*

Upcoming Meetings:

- Selectboard Meeting, **MONDAY, May 24, 2021, 6:30 PM** via Zoom
- Annual Town Meeting, **SATURDAY, MAY 22, 2021, 9:00 AM**, Franklin County Tech School, 82 Industrial Blvd., Turners Falls