

City of Montpelier Police Review Committee
Meeting Minutes · April 26, 2021
Video Conference

Committee members present: Justin Drechsler, Michael Sherman, Alyssa Schuren, Abbey Jermyn, Daniel Towle, Lauren Hierl, Jack McCullough, Jen Duggan

Other individuals present: Mary Smith, Morgen Edwards (committee intern), Carol Plante, Moody Rose Christopher, Chief Peete, Cameron Niedermayer, Kesha Ram

The meeting was called to order by the Committee Chair Alyssa Schuren at 5:02 PM.

The committee approved the meeting agenda for April 26, 2021. There were no amendments to the agenda.

1. The committee members approved the meeting minutes for the April 5, 2021 meeting and the April 19, 2021 meeting.
2. The Chair opened the public comment period by reviewing the committee's charge. There were no public comments.
4. Mary noted that the committee intern, Morgen Edwards, will be graduating this weekend. Morgen has offered to stay on with the committee until the report is finalized.
5. The committee discussed the schedule for finalizing the report. The Chair noted that the committee is a little behind schedule, but would still like to put out a draft report for public comment before the report is finalized even if this means we may have to ask for an extension of the due date. Committee members agreed with this approach. The schedule is:
 - Constituency stakeholder engagement completed by April 5
 - Topics prioritized for the report by April 19
 - Analysis completed by May 3
 - Draft report completed by May 31
 - Feedback on the report through June 14
 - Final report by June 30th
6. The committee reviewed the outline for the report and no members recommended changes. Justin noted the need to make clear in the report that the committee will make recommendations, but the City Council must adopt these recommendations and make policy changes. The committee members also discussed the scope of recommendations, including potentially alternative models of policing and aspirational recommendations. Lauren noted that she does not think the City Council intended to impose any restraints on the scope of recommendations, but that the recommendations should be based on successful models.

7. The Chair noted that Justin has volunteered to take the lead on merging the sections we are drafting for the report and drafting any gaps in the report. The Chair asked members to send their drafted sections to Justin.
8. The committee members discussed the section of the report related to the proposed landscape of community safety portion of the report. Abbey noted that we should include non-government support systems in this section. Michael and Lauren noted the intersection with the work of SEJAC and Creative Discourse and that our report should be informed by this. Lauren and Dan are drafting this section, and the committee agreed to review and decide whether to include once they have an opportunity to review the draft.
9. The committee members reviewed the outline for the section of the report related to current MPD practices and assigned sections. Justin suggested adding a section related to how the dispatch system works. Michael noted the potential overlap with the arrests section and traffic stop data. Jen suggested that we add a section on use of force and internal affairs. Justin suggested adding a section on militarization. Chief Peete noted the importance of defining what this means in the report because this can mean a wide variety of things from uniforms to the use of military training to the 1033 program. Lauren noted the need to compare to Chief Peete's initial assignment of current practices. Chief Peete will send the relevant documents to the committee.
10. The Chair asked members to try and get their report sections completed by May 4 so that the committee can discuss.
11. The Committee briefly reviewed the chart that identifies themes from stakeholder engagement. The Chair noted that themes and experiences with the MPD were different in each constituency group and were sometimes mixed within the constituency group.
12. Kesha Ram gave a presentation related to the work Creative Discourse is doing with SEJAC, including leading BIPOC affinity group conversations and meeting with City staff. General themes are:
 - BIPOC residents exhausted, experiencing consultant/process fatigue
 - City staff eager to build equity lens and plans but currently feel unprepared, siloed, and unclear on concerns
 - Parks & Rec, wastewater treatment facility were bright spots
 - "In-group" & "out-group" based on class, privilege, available time, identity
 - The City council is seen as intimidating, unapproachable to some
 - Lots of processes but no sense that change is occurring
 - Strong mutual aid network in Montpelier

Themes related to policing and public safety are:

- Other emergency services staff report difficulty in de-escalating situations without emphasizing the lack of police response

- Lingering trauma from past use of force incidents, particularly resulting in death possible role for community and restorative justice
- Black & LGBT residents reported avoiding certain places or experiences for fear of police interactions
- Being connected with resources beyond police can be "hit or miss" depending on the time and the person responding
- Residents and neighbors weaponize the police
- Concern over uneven police presence at different types of events, rallies (e.g., massless rallies, BLM protests, Juneteenth, etc.)
- Unclear role of police in city engagement processes

Jack asked whether Creative Discourse has encountered individuals that state they have been arrested, have been a victim of use of force, or otherwise mistreated by the MPD? He wants to ensure that the recommendations of this committee reflect experience of community.

Kesha noted the need to maintain confidentiality and noted that people did express trauma around interactions with MPD or had stories about negative interactions with MPD. Kesha noted that they hope to close the survey by May 1, but want to have at least 300 responses with significant percentage of BIPOC community. Cameron noted that, as of this morning, there are 175 responses with 8% BIPOC response.

13. Alyssa asked members to think about these themes, and the themes from the stakeholder engagement that members have done, as we begin writing the report. Members were encouraged to begin thinking about recommendations. Dan noted the need to adjust the outline for the recommendations section, which currently states reforms because it suggests a limited set of proposals. Alyssa agreed to change to recommendations.

The meeting was adjourned by the Chair at 6:01pm.

Meeting minutes submitted by: Jen Duggan