

Jan Anderson

From: Daniel Quipp
Sent: Tuesday, July 21, 2020 12:46 PM
To: Tim Wessel; Elizabeth McLoughlin; Ian Goodnow; Brandie Starr; Peter Elwell; Patrick Moreland; Jan Anderson
Subject: Material for tonight's meeting
Attachments: Community Statement re Brattleboro Policing_ Safety Review Process (and RFP Response) 7.21.20.pdf

Dear fellow board members, Peter, Patrick and Jan,

I have been involved with the group of people who created the proposal for an open, accessible and affirming process which we discussed on our meeting of 7/7. I am so encouraged by the labor, dedication and thoughtfulness that they have invested in responding to Liz's RFP and I am happy to send it to you now for consideration tonight.

As a side note, I want to draw your attention to the statement at <https://8cantwait.org/>. This project of Campaign Zero has now pivoted away from supporting their proposed reforms. I encourage you to give it a read.

With the utmost respect for your professionalism, hard work and love for our town.

Daniel

Collaborative Community Statement Regarding the Brattleboro Policing/Community Safety Review Process

Summary Statement

We are seeking a review process focused on a comprehensive examination of community safety and policing in Brattleboro to determine whether the police force effectively meets the communities' needs, and to determine how to best fund and support community safety.

Many in our community do not feel, and are not, safe. Simply looking at the Brattleboro Police Department does not adequately address this problem. Even replacing each police task with an 1:1 equivalent task enacted by a social service organization does not create a solution. We need to examine how we are framing and funding community safety here in Brattleboro. We need to ask deeply into what our community needs to be safe, and listen, and build toward that horizon that we envision together.

We need to fund the community members who will do this work, with a skilled and appropriate facilitator on a timeline that respects the historical opportunity of this moment. Achieving the depth needed to conduct this meaningful work will only be possible with a genuine commitment of time and resources.

This is an opportunity to take a step back, assess community needs and define what community safety looks like. Then, we can determine the roles of policing, local organizations, Town government, and our community members in meeting these needs.

Background

During the Brattleboro Selectboard meeting on June 16, numerous community members called for the Selectboard to reject the proposed budget and direct police funding to other community safety initiatives, local nonprofits, and social service organizations. The Selectboard passed the budget, but agreed to enter into a process of examining community safety, policing, and the budget.

In response, a group of Brattleboro town and area residents involved in diverse and collective movements for liberation and social justice put forward a Proposal (**Community Proposal**) on June 30, requesting a process that would take a real, deep, equitable, accountable look into policing and community safety. Many community members, social justice organizations, and people from groups especially affected by policing expressed a desire to enter this work together with the Town and Selectboard. (Over 150 individuals and 14 organizations signed on to this Community Proposal before the July 7 meeting!) A Selectboard member, Elizabeth "Liz" McLoughlin, also put forward a proposal on this date (McLoughlin Proposal).

At the next Selectboard meeting on July 7, community members highlighted key points of divergence between the Community Proposal and the McLoughlin Proposal; namely:

1. **Paid Work** - the Community Proposal requested a paid facilitation team, and stipends for individual contributors from the communities most impacted.

2. **Scope** - the Community Proposal requested a more expansive process that would look at the totality of community safety within the Town of Brattleboro. A process that focuses on community desires, needs, and reports of harm experienced while considering how to utilize our Town resources to ensure community health, wellness, and safety.
3. **Community Decision Making Power** - the Community Proposal requested that the creation of the process and future decision-making be led by the community, (not the Police Department or the Selectboard acting alone) and that the voices of those most impacted by policing be centered and given power.

After a lengthy discussion, agreement about the community safety process was not reached. Continued conversation was scheduled for the Selectboard Meeting on July 21. Prior to this meeting, Selectboard Member McLoughlin submitted the Request for Proposals (RFP) copied below. Some community members involved in submitting the original Community Proposal met to discuss creating an addendum with more specifics, and instead took a look at McLoughlin's RFP. While there is appreciation for the work put in by McLoughlin, the Community Group has serious concerns with this RFP as written, and have crafted the following response.

Request For Proposals Response

While appreciating that a Selectboard member took initiative to begin work on this process, we know that everything worth doing is worth doing together. (If it affects the community, it should involve the community!) We are glad that McLoughlin's RFP is seeking to pay facilitators for their work, and that many of the specific requests for an open and accessible process have been included. There are, however, ways this RFP should be changed to be more in line with the vision of the Community Proposal.

Key points of dissent

1. Wider Scope Needed - We are seeking a review process focused on a comprehensive examination of community safety and policing in Brattleboro to determine whether the police force effectively meets the communities' needs, and to determine how to best fund and support community safety. Many in our community do not feel, and are not, safe. Simply looking at the Brattleboro Police Department (BPD) does not adequately address this problem. Even replacing each police task with an 1:1 equivalent task enacted by a social service organization does not create a solution. We need to examine how we are framing and funding community safety here in Brattleboro, not just look at how the BPD is doing. We need to ask deeply into what our community needs to be safe, and listen, and build toward that horizon that we envision together.

2. Community Decision Making Power - as requested in the Community Proposal, we continue to assert that future decision-making be led by the community, and that the voices of those most impacted by policing be centered and given power. If a Review Committee will be created, empower that committee to make recommendations and decisions. They should not just be an information gathering tool, but rather have the authority to craft proposals for change (if they identify that change is needed and possible) that will be approved by the Selectboard and Representative Town Meeting.

3. Chosen Framework & Leading Outcomes - The assumption that "BPD will be examined in accordance with Campaign Zero Solutions" is already supporting an outcome for community safety goals before there has been a process to examine and identify community safety needs. We don't support the goals of Campaign Zero (and neither do the founders of Campaign Zero, who themselves shifted their objectives toward defunding and abolition after concern about the soundness of their statistical analysis and feedback from communities that these objectives did not align with the long-term goals of anti-racist organizers across the country). This framework would exclude voices from this process. Much of the work ahead will inevitably be based on what other communities have found to be successful; however, at this point we are focused on process and not outcome.

4. Short Timeline - Anticipating that this deep and significant work be completed within the next four months (by November 2020) is not realistic. Understanding the reality of budget deadlines, we propose that this process be conducted in stages. Phase 1 could address funding in the FY21 Town Budget, with additional phases continuing afterward to understand and implement community safety improvements. We hope this body understands the historical opportunity of this moment to not just grasp low hanging fruit, but to engage in a long term look at creating community safety & wellness.

5. Valuing Community Work - Many community members are actively engaged in the work of community safety, are heavily impacted by carceral systems, and/or have deeply studied these systems. Over 150 individuals and 14 organizations signed on to the Community Proposal that was debated against a proposal written by one Selectboard member. We ask that the knowledge and labor of these community members and this community process be listened to and valued.

Thank you to those Selectboard members who have played a part in the larger community process. We request that all Selectboard members step into deeper collaboration with the many community members already investing their time and energy into these projects. It would be much more desirable and effective to work together to create mutually beneficial processes rather than pit proposals created in community process and proposals created alone against each other!

Agreements Needed

It is important to establish agreements for clarity and mutual understanding before a Request for Proposals is created and approved.

1. **Facilitator Qualifications**: Establish agreements around the qualifications, perspectives and experience of those who will be sought as facilitators.

Qualities we are seeking in a facilitator:

- Anti-racist. A helpful way to think of this is a person experienced in "identifying and eliminating racism by changing systems, organizational structures, policies and practices and attitudes, so that power is redistributed and shared equitably." [*NAC International Perspectives: Women and Global Solidarity*]
- Experienced in creating spaces and processes where many voices are included and power differences do not result in less privileged people being excluded.
- Experienced in qualitative research methods (e.g. semi-structured, interviews, focus groups, community forums, ethnographic observations, participatory research)

- Familiar with and open to creating new/decolonized systems instead of only looking for solutions within currently operating systems. (i.e familiar with restorative and transformative models, etc.)
- Ability to handle sensitive data in an ethical, legal, and culturally appropriate way.
- Incorporates processes for transformative and liberated work that includes somatics (body-based). Uses these processes to "get" information from our community that is not traditional and in a way that is easy for people to interpret and participate in.
 - For example, creating art, movement or other initiatives where our community can express their experiences in a way that feels accessible to them. This will include people who have been harmed or alienated by prevailing processes. (i.e. the "sit for 3 hours and respond to questions by an authority figure" scenario.)
- Experienced in working with groups that have been historically marginalized by police (e.g. BIPOC, LGBTQ+, low-income, psychiatrically labelled people, those in recovery and/or actively using, etc.)
- Experience in rural communities

2. Review Committee Selection: Establish agreements about how to define and choose the "cross-section of Brattleboro citizens" that will be solicited for the review committee. It is important that folks are not chosen solely based on population data. Consider weighting the feedback of individuals from groups who experience more frequent police interactions and are more likely to be harmed in those interactions. This includes Black, Indigenous and People of Color as well as the narratives of other community members who are especially impacted: those who use drugs, psychiatrically labelled people, people with disabilities, domestic violence and sexual assault survivors, and poor people, homeless people, LGBTQ+ folks, and more.
3. Compensation Agreements: As is standard with this type of research, individual participants should be financially compensated for their time, emotional labor, and transportation through a stipend. Establish, or be prepared to establish, this budget.
4. Bid evaluation criteria: Establish the criteria/rubric for bid evaluation with community input.
5. Timeline: Create an agreed upon phased timeline. Understanding the reality of budget deadlines, we propose that this process be conducted in stages. Phase 1, to end in November 2020, could address funding in the FY21 Town Budget, with additional phases afterward to continue understanding and implementing community safety improvements. The details can be adapted by facilitators once chosen, but should be crafted with the understanding that this is deep, meaningful work that will only be truly possible with the commitment of time and resources.