

**Grand Rapids Task Force Community Meeting
Community Feedback on Staffing and Deployment—
Sorted by Common Topics
3-7-18**

1. NEIGHBORHOODS/NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS

Neighborhood associations know the community, the City should sustain and strengthen the capacity and role of neighborhood associations as active partners to address the underlying root causes of crime and social disorder:

- Not all neighborhoods or neighborhood associations are the same, neighborhoods at higher risk need more investment by the city and by other neighborhoods. The City should assist with forming and funding neighborhood associations that currently don't have them, especially the most vulnerable neighborhoods, by ensuring that they have the resources to be involved and mobilized.
- Survey neighborhood associations by blocks to understand what they feel/think about their neighborhoods, city services, and police interactions, to be sure that **all** people have a real voice and are being heard.
- Promote resident interactions with neighborhood organizations. Several years ago MLive used to go around to the different neighborhoods and talk about community involvement and how community members can participate in their neighborhood associations.
- Provide information through neighborhood associations about services that are available, and how to find out what your neighborhood association is, so that the public knows where to go and how they can get involved.

Neighborhoods need to be more involved, especially in high crime areas. Addressing problems by neighborhood creates a mechanism for residents to participate and interact with police in deciding solutions to address the root causes of crime and to engage in community problem solving.

- Reinvent neighborhood watch/block captains to better represent and mobilize all sectors of each neighborhood.
- Utilize strategies like community gardens and other shared spaces to build neighbor-to-neighbor relationships.
- Encourage Block parties attended by police officers to provide informal opportunities for neighborhoods to feel heard and have more constructive engagement with the police.
- Neighbors need to get back to getting to know their neighbors through formal and informal mechanisms. Utilize churches, schools, businesses, block organizations and neighborhood associations to promote community engagement.

There needs to be more intentionality in getting programs to the people who need them.

- Families and neighborhoods need access to resources, the City and GRPD should increase efforts to connect youth and residents to resources and organizations to achieve positive outcomes and improve public safety.

- Promote the use of a Directory for the GRPD to use to send people to who ask about their neighborhood organization to get more resources. The neighborhood associations have them in-house at their offices. Make them available online.
- We need more community liaison workers who work directly and indirectly with the GRPD. Community liaison workers could be funded by social impact bonds and/or resources from the Auto Theft Prevention Authority Insurance Fund.

2. POLICE COMMUNITY INTERACTIONS

Create more opportunities for intentional, positive, non-punitive interaction between the community and the police, we are not seeing officers making casual contacts. We need more community police officers.

- Police get pulled out of meetings and non-enforcement interactions because of lack of staffing. The GRPD and the City need to make sure that there is a staffing level sufficient to support responding to calls for service and proactive policing activities. Officers need the resources and time to create good community police relationships.
- Tap into the neighborhood schedule. There are easy ways to for officers to interact with youth and communities, stop in the gym after school and do a few free throws, even when at work, support music and arts events such as Rock-a-Block, Symphony Soul, the Southeast Farmers market and the Hispanic Center events.
- Would like to see Neighborhood Branch Offices where officers could hold meetings and interact with the community, maybe co-locate with or next to neighborhood associations.
- Natural barriers exist that prevent officers from living in neighborhoods. The City should create incentives for police officers to live in the community in order to increase their vested interest and knowledge of their neighborhoods.
- GRPD should share positive PR from department about good things that are happening. Police need public appreciation, when its good celebrate it.

The City and the GRPD should increase intentional community engagement and dialogue mechanisms between community and the police to address the fear and lack of trust on both sides. Relationships and knowing the community are the key.

- Make the mini community police academy training more widely available.
- Concern about officer attitudes toward the people they serve, it can't be looking at everyone as a suspect, based on incidents where youth and minorities have bad experiences with police, where people are treated as suspects when they did nothing to provoke the treatment.
- Promote beneficial dialogue, healing and trust building through broad-based listening sessions between different groups of people can talk about their own struggles and the GRPD, to be used in a way to highlight similarities and not just outline negative things about the department.
- Encourage assigning officers to beats or districts for longer periods of time so they can become more familiar and culturally competent in the areas they are assigned to.

- Officers must be aware of community/be able to identify what's happening, they don't have to live there, but they must know community members, have their ear to the ground, including the immigrant community.

3. YOUTH/SCHOOL STRATEGIES

Kids are scared of police officers, we need to be improving positive connections between youth and police, it might lead to less crime.

- Expand police youth academies, pathways to policing, explorers program, youth mentorship programs with police officers, and starting younger with elementary school police--youth interaction.
- Talk to young black people more, have community police officers reach out to the kids, and tell them what the GRPD is all about. Ask for their input, maybe at an assembly or classroom levels.
- Create safer places for youth to hang out (i.e. parks) where officers are walking and providing security.
- Resources include volunteers, not just money, parents, after school, community centers for youth/engage with officers/sports/play.
- Explore alternatives to arresting kids, diversion and early intervention strategies instead of arresting them and holding them at gunpoint.

Interrupt the school to prison pipeline: Police need to be more interactive with the schools and in the schools in a proactive positive way. Get the kids used to cops and seeing cops as friends. Have the teachers bring officers into the classroom more.

- Find and stop suspensions from high schools, that's where students get into trouble.
- When the police use high schoolers for ideas and how we're doing it helps a lot
- It's good that GRPD has thought about this already, as young people are often targeted or interacted with, what is GRPD doing?
- "Every kid knew those officers by name" and the officers names are Tichon and Skryski
- Shouldn't we do more? If kids can be identified early, not necessarily as bad kids but even at risk or starting to deviate to intervene before they become bad kids. Work with the school system to identify troubled students and students in struggling families, financially and otherwise.
- Educate youth about their rights and their civic responsibilities.
- Partnerships are important. We need to expand partnerships to address gaps in access to services, like not having a boys and girls club open during break.

4. COMMUNITY POLICING STRATEGIES

The best way to build trust is to have more officers who can interact with the community. Community officers need to be community officers and not get pulled away to assist on regular patrol duty calls. Officers are wearing too many hats, they have too much to do to focus on community policing.

- Increase the millage for the GRPD to expand officer community engagement so the community police officers are not all assisting the patrol officers on calls.
- There needs to be a longer period of time in which retiring officers are paid to assist the new officer coming into the area so they can be introduced and get to know the residents.

Create partnerships so when issues come up there are resources in the community to respond to them, such as working with pastors/faith leaders, retired police officers, probation officers, nuisance abatement and code enforcement, community organizations and others.

What is community policing? Community policing needs to be clarified and revisited. Officers need to get out of their cars, you can't do COP in a car. Officers need to focus on specific crime problems and the root causes of crime. It's important to know what the next level of community policing is, if we are already involved in the community.

- One comment—I don't believe in COP—the people in most need aren't here—those who show up have a voice.
- Community policing means the entire community interacts with police.

5. CULTURAL COMPETENCY

Officers need more training from a cultural competency perspective.

- Officers should receive training on the history of race relations in this country so they can understand this in its proper context. Learn from history
- Raise consciousness among officers regarding privilege and historical issues of race in Grand Rapids (visit Jim Crow museum, Holocaust, Arab American Museum in Dearborn)
- Encourage events beyond sports like meeting with the LGBTW community, family reunions, NAACP, Soul, police department seats at the African American Dearborn Museum-Islam.
- We need more bi-lingual officers and offer more training in Latino relations.

6. CRIME MAPPING AND DATA COLLECTION

- Use crime mapping and evidence-based strategy to measure success with a mechanism for the public to see the changes and reason/discussion behind the positive changes.
- Explore a cell phone application to alert the community after a crime occurs and allow the community to provide feedback and/or assistance to the police.
- Data based evidence-polling officers where needed—new and younger officers—officers who are believable should be explored in the evaluation, the city has multiple police as community.
- Voiceless community - ensure that GRPD is keeping track of stops and reasons why.
- Co-production of public safety with community and measuring results, engage the community, track results, be transparent about police performance.
- Economic factors correlate with crime rates, could we track so we can learn more?
- A tool for accountability would prevent us having these same discussions over and over

- Officers should have access to information and data for problem solving.

7. COMMUNITY ROLE

- What is oppressive is defined by the community being oppressed. Community must be consulted by the Task Force to address these issues.
- This is a community problem not just a police problem, if we had more information we could help more.
- The community needs more education on protocols for staffing and deployment.
- The citizen's police academy needs to be more available to more people.
- We need to know our rights.
- Community members also need to be accountable, you don't have to be friends, but you can look out for each other.

8. SUGGESTIONS FOR THE CITY

The City also needs to look at ways to reduce disparate outcomes beyond policing. Areas the City should look at include:

- Examine fees related to local criminal justice system, including civil fees and fines and the impact on poor people, especially those not able to pay, who continue to be penalized.
- We need a city manager who specializes in community police relations.
- Groundhog Day—revisit the Community Service Centers established by former Police Chief Harry Dolan.
- Invest more in outreach and engagement of those most in need and in technology.
- The GRPD is understaffed, 1/3 are retiring in the next few years, need to be more proactive on recruitment and hiring. They are down so many officers that it is hard for the GRPD to function.
- The City needs to invest in resources for both mental health and the police department.

9. SUGGESTIONS FOR THE GRPD

- Ensure equal application of law—reaction to incident with the asst. district attorney.
- Re-examine the civil forfeiture policy of the GRPD.
- Put more emphasis on restorative justice strategies to create alternatives to incarceration.
- Have a mental health professional on call to work with officers when they encounter the mentally ill.
- Identify the balance between safety and service, concern about the child arrest incident, it caused harm to public perception.
- The public needs a realistic view of what police officers do, families in crisis, trauma that officers experience, the impact of night shifts, over time, stress on officer wellbeing.
- Officer promotions are tied to the evaluations including community feedback
- Learning and identifying problems earlier oversight with confidence of officers

10. SUGGESTIONS FOR TASK FORCE

- How does the community feel they are influencing it? Integrate the police more
- Need to see a budget to implement recommendations and more people involved.
- Make sure we are not beholden to agendas that are contributing to the problem.
- Time investing in the people, intentional small steps.
- Report publicly what happens at task force meetings.
- Cut the task force police membership in half or less, where police do not equal all the citizens in weights.
- Invite public, especially neighborhood associations to task force meetings.
- Get the questions for community meetings out to the public prior to the meetings.
- Would like to have meetings in more neutral locations without police presence, just civilian task force members present.
- Have a survey available, paper or online for people to make suggestions that cannot make public meetings or are uncomfortable speaking in public.
- Where are the recommendations regarding traffic stop disparity? Look at why we are stopping people, i.e. equipment violations and what the outcome accomplishes.
- Address violence as a public health issue.
- Would like to see more marginalized people, i.e. people with drug and alcohol additions, homeless, social workers/mental health invited to meetings to express their thoughts on inequities and issues.

11. RECRUITMENT AND HIRING

- Screen out bias in the hiring process, recruit out of schools of social work, cultivate recruits from public schools with scholarships.
- Take a look at the hiring practices to achieve the best police force possible that represents the community with officers that have the skills and cultural competence to protect and serve.

12. TRAINING SUGGESTIONS

- Provide mental health first aid training division for treatment and support.
- Training non-biased, non-discriminatory, non-violent crisis intervention including history of race in America, understanding privilege.
- Better training and better education means better officers.

13. CIVILIAN OVERSIGHT

- Allow and embrace more civilian oversight
- Keep civilians on public safety committee for oversight and reporting
- Where are the teeth for the citizen review board—very frustrating that this is not on the list—subpoena power

14. DE-ESCALATION

- Establish PD awards for exhibited quality de-escalation.
- Lansing Chief is creating partnerships-holds officers accountable but also publicly commends officers.
- Award ceremony—give awards for de-escalation efforts.
- Improve and build officers skills and judgment—to prevent a default to fear, implicit bias.

15. COMMUNICATION

- Ensure transparent and open ongoing public relations, a lot seems negative on the news and social media even before the facts are all in, communicate more broadly to the community.
- Employ a community liaison to get info out to the community on a regular basis, stay current, try a community TV show.
- Have officers suggest 311 to neighborhood orgs with every contact.
- Use technology to reach everyone especially when there are benefits we should know about.