

# Initial Organizational Assessment and Strategic Plan

**The Montpelier Vermont Police Department**

**AUGUST 2020**

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## 1. Purpose

An initial organizational assessment of the Montpelier Police Department (MPD) was conducted so to gauge its status and health. The health assessment then provided for the development of a generalized strategic plan MPD plans to incorporate.

This assessment drew upon several data sources, including but not limited to: interviews with MPD personnel and external stakeholders, overview research, observations of departmental culture, recent targeted statistical reporting, conversations with respected peers in policing, and current department policies and procedures.

The benchmarks for comparison are based in standards defined in the President's Task Force on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing (published May 2015),<sup>1</sup> and best and evidence-based practices endorsed by the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP),<sup>2</sup> and the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF).<sup>3</sup>

The President's Task Force on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing report is recognized as the benchmarked framework for law enforcement by the International Association of Chiefs of Police,<sup>4</sup> the American Bar Association (ABA),<sup>5</sup> the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE),<sup>6</sup> The Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), The National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement (NACOLE),<sup>7</sup> the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI),<sup>8</sup> and the Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT).

## 2. Chief's Qualifications

Chief Brian Peete has a Bachelor of Science degree in Sociology with an emphasis on Employment Relations, and a Masters of Arts degree in Police Psychology. While serving as a commissioned officer in the U.S. Air Force, Brian conducted several military Operational Readiness Inspections at various installations as well as compliance assessments of detachments within the Air Force Office of Special Investigations (OSI). Brian was also the Chief Forensic Audit Investigator for Police Accountability for the City of Chicago Inspector General's Office, charged with auditing the Chicago Police Department's reform and accountability efforts immediately prior to the Department of Justice Consent Decree. Brian has other relevant and significant training and experiences to include Internal Affairs Investigations, Ethical Issues in Use of Force, Compliance Auditing, Performance Auditing and Corporate Fraud Investigations from the Associations of Inspectors General, Program Evaluation, Auditing Police Performance, Fraud Prevention and Detection, and Auditing and Investigation practices from the Institution of Internal Auditors. He is a member of the IACP and the International Association of Emergency Managers, serves on the Vermont League of Cities and Towns Public Safety Policy Committee, is a member of the Systemic Diversity and Inclusion Group (founded by Dr. Joseph Nwoye),<sup>9</sup> and has been invited by the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, the University of Cincinnati, PRA Associates, and the IACP to serve on an August 2020 panel to explore current practices, challenges, and best-practice resources for successful law enforcement responses and interactions with people with behavioral health issues and developmental disabilities.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/taskforce/taskforce\\_finalreport.pdf](https://cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/taskforce/taskforce_finalreport.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.theiacp.org/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.policeforum.org/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/all/i-j/IACP%20GMU%20Evidence%20Assessment%20Report%20FINAL.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.americanbar.org/groups/leadership/office\\_of\\_the\\_president/publictrust/](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/leadership/office_of_the_president/publictrust/)

<sup>6</sup> "The playbook for police reform already exist(s).....and NOBLE helped write it!" –Dwayne Crawford, Executive Director at National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Officers, June 2020, LinkedIn, in reference to <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/04/opinion/police-reform-obama-task-force.html>

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.nacole.org/president\\_s\\_task\\_force\\_on\\_21st\\_century\\_policing](https://www.nacole.org/president_s_task_force_on_21st_century_policing)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.nami.org/Support-Education/Publications-Reports/Public-Policy-Reports/Preparing-for-the-Unimaginable/Preparing-For-The-Unimaginable>

<sup>9</sup> <https://americandiversityreport.com/category/author/jonwoye/>

### 3. Findings

The organizational health of the Montpelier Police Department is strong. The Department has long subscribed to best and evidence-based practices and policies found in the 2015 President's Task Force Report on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing according to MPD's Annual Reports.<sup>10</sup>

#### *Crime and Perception*

Based on reporting data, social media posts and community discussions, crime and the perception of crime appear to be low. Niche.com and homesnacks.net both have Montpelier listed as the #3 best place to live in Vermont,<sup>11</sup> areavibes.com ranks Montpelier as #4,<sup>12</sup> and the crazytourist.com has it listed as #5.<sup>13</sup> These rankings are based in part on Uniform Crime Reporting data submitted to the FBI.<sup>14</sup> According to published annual reports, in 2019 Montpelier saw a 28% reduction in drug overdose calls from 2018, no armed robberies, burglary was down 70% from 2018 and 57% when compared to 2017.<sup>15</sup>

#### *Department Credibility*

Based on interviews with Peer Agencies such as the FBI, the Vermont State Police, the Vermont Police Academy, and the US and State's Attorneys' Offices, there is strong external confidence in the competence and credibility of MPD staff. There appear to be no systemic concerns of integrity<sup>16</sup> or ethics.

#### *Early Warning System Indicators*

Preliminary data does not suggest any targeting of vulnerable populations or people based on their race, sex, ethnicity, sexual preference, gender identity, socio-economic status, or political affiliations, etc. For example, traffic stops and arrest data from 2017 through 2019 indicates those stopped, ticketed and/or arrested is consistent with population data.

#### *Morale and Internal Culture*

Internal conversations indicate morale is good with no observations of internal cultural systems that support or promote preferential treatment. MPD is home to true professionals who care about this City and see themselves as active members of its communities. There also appears to be an internal Departmental culture that weeds out those who cannot meet self-imposed high demands of proficiency and integrity, or the community's high demands for dignity preservation, mutual respect and professional service.

There is dissatisfaction with professional stagnation: limited opportunities for advancement or exposure to specialized positions (e.g., investigations, traffic enforcement, K9). This is due in part to the small size of the Department. MPD's personnel allocation is on par with national averages, however this is deceptive. Montpelier sees numerous public events, public rallies and demonstrations, and a daytime work force which all cause a significant uptick in population. For example, a recent Women's March<sup>17</sup> and Black Lives Matter<sup>18</sup> March in the City saw thousands of people in attendance. MPD did not have the personnel to respond to routine calls for service, nor to effectively react to any potential crisis to include providing in-depth safety and security for those

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.montpelier-vt.org/Archive.aspx?AMID=96>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.niche.com/places-to-live/search/safest-places/s/vermont/> and <https://www.homesnacks.net/these-are-the-10-best-places-to-live-in-vermont-125153/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.areavibes.com/best-places/vermont/crime/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.thecrazytourist.com/15-best-places-live-vermont/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.fbi.gov/services/cjis/ucr>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.montpelier-vt.org/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/4860>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.lexipol.com/resources/blog/brady-giglio-and-you-how-the-duty-to-disclose-exculpatory-information-impacts-police-disciplinary-files/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.radvt.org/womens-march-overwhelms-montpelier/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.wcax.com/content/news/Montpelier-protest-gives-voice-to-Black-Lives-Matter-movement-571088341.html>

attending the events (e.g., potential violent counter-protest responses).<sup>19</sup> There are staid concerns as to whether MPD can effectively manage future festivals and events in the City which have increased each year.

Additionally, as administrative requirements continue to grow, personnel are spending less time patrolling or dispatching which in turn significantly reduces response times to community calls for service, proactive policing, or community policing efforts. The addition of part-time administrative staff or volunteers are options that may allow staff to focus on primary tasks.

There are also external factors that have had a negative effect on staff. All MPD members have acknowledged these are challenging times for policing and there is consensus agreement for institutional change towards accountability, community-based policing, dignity preservation and mutual respect in interactions with the public. However, a vast majority of personnel have overwhelmingly expressed concern with repetitive negative generalizations of law enforcement and calls for abolishing and/or defunding. Some may be uncertain about continuing their careers, which may hasten attrition rates and will leave MPD scrambling and competing for qualified candidates. A recent survey by the Calibre Press of 10,000 officers found only 7% would recommend becoming a police officer.<sup>20</sup> In-person, group meetings and virtual town halls saw consistent questions, comment or feedback that revolved around assertions that MPD's service to the community has been racially biased with assumptions of profiling, and/or allegations of civil rights violations. For example, there have been several recent publicly-made complaints on social media outlets alleging inappropriate officer conduct. Preliminary inquiries into these complaints suggest officers have acted appropriately and in accordance with the law and department policy, but these complaints coupled with the national narrative, energized a collective negative perception that strikes at department legitimacy.

A review of past internet posts and local newspaper articles suggest these concerns have not dominated local discussions until the recent deaths of people of color at the hands of law enforcement agencies in other states and municipalities. Since then, there have been demonstrations in Montpelier as well as citizen calls for defunding or abolishing MPD in City Council meetings. In 2018, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights noted the public hears competing narratives from law enforcement and community members<sup>21</sup> and its Executive Summary highlighted that current national data regarding use of force is insufficient to determine if instances are occurring more frequently. MPD does capture a significant portion of this data and it shows no indication that MPD routinely violates the civil rights of its citizens, nor does the department appear to engage in any explicitly biased behavior. With community concern amplified, it is highly recommended that MPD's first priority should be the implementation of Body Worn Cameras (BWCs), to increase transparency and accountability. BWCs are not and should not be the only investigative tool for complaints or use of force investigations, but they are an important tool that will help frame a total narrative in any given situation an officer responds to.

#### *Public Feedback*

Prevalent enforcement concerns for MPD from the public were to enforce traffic (there were consistent complaints of people driving too fast within the City). Recommendations were also for officers to be more visible and accessible especially in the downtown area. In the coming weeks, MPD will brainstorm ways in which to meet these demands.

The community has also expressed concerns over the availability of mental health treatment and how prepared MPD officers are in responding to such crisis calls after the officer-involved shooting of Mark Johnson in 2019.

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.npr.org/2020/06/21/880963592/vehicle-attacks-rise-as-extremists-target-protesters>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.calibrepress.com/2020/06/10000-officers-respond-to-policing-poll-only-7-would-recommend-becoming-an-officer/>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.usccr.gov/pubs/2018/11-15-Police-Force.pdf>

The shooting was found to be justified by State Authorities.<sup>22</sup> In 2013, MPD emphasized prevention over reaction and joined with Washington County Mental Health Service (WCMHS) to establish Team Two training<sup>23</sup>: a collaborative training model that includes both law enforcement officers and mental health crisis responders for better and safer response at the street level. In 2019, MPD partnered with Barre City and Washington County Mental Health Services in joint agreement to hire an embedded social worker who was recently on boarded. The embedded social worker will partner with officers in responding to mental health-related calls for service. This platform is based on the best practice concept of a Mobile Crisis Response Team.<sup>24</sup> MPD is also in the early stages of planning Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Training; another national best practice in responding to mental health crisis situations.<sup>25</sup> It must be emphasized strongly that the addition of a social worker responding to calls for service does not negate the need for law enforcement to respond to such calls. Montpelier is not exempt to crime and police are an essential in providing safety to our community. The co-responder model shows great promise and MPD looks forward to evaluating how the model serves our community's needs.

Some of the current national discourse seems to indicate that it is not necessary for police agencies to respond to many of the calls for service they receive, citing they may be better handled by other social service agencies or organizations. Police leaders have long wanted to reduce their obligations to respond to such broad-ranging calls for service and studies and opinions support using this current opportunity to devise responsible ways to pull police departments away from responding to calls without a criminal-based nexus.<sup>26</sup> This requires changes in departmental policies as well as public education and acceptance as to for the role of police officers in our communities. It will take a holistic approach to strengthen public safety as every establishment (social service agencies, educational and vocational systems, substance use disorder treatment facilities, etc.) has a vital role. For example, an improvement in a family's social mobility can reduce the likelihood of children growing up to commit violent crimes.<sup>27</sup>

### *Policing and Social Justice*

MPD's ultimate goal is the City's safety and it will incorporate community-based policing concepts to meet this goal. MPD understands that community policing is a philosophy and it will strive to embody that philosophy by policing transparently while ensuring mutual respect and dignity. MPD will continue to forge partnerships based in the understanding that our individual experiences contribute to our professions, institutions, and societal norms. Dr. Joseph Nwoye, an author and Subject Matter Expert on systemic diversity and inclusion, illustrated these belief systems<sup>28</sup> and that belief transformation occurs when there is a change to negative learned behaviors when there is an opportunity for positive exposure.

MPD will base its strategies on this premise and will look for ways to create exposure for its staff (diversity, training and experience/exposure to diverse communities) for opportunities to learn about disadvantaged and vulnerable populations that we serve. This exposure brings understanding and empathy and is the root of what makes true community policing work. Without it, community policing events are nothing more than reoccurring boxes to be checked off. MPD will also strive for partnerships with external stakeholders: community-based and grassroots groups, youth and student groups (via our School Resource Officer), faith-based groups, agencies and organizations such as Montpelier's Social and Economic Justice Advisory Committee, the NAACP, the Rainbow

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<sup>22</sup> [https://www.timesargus.com/news/local/states-attorney-no-charges-in-fatal-police-shooting-in-montpelier/article\\_cb57b67c-0acd-5f0e-b9b7-8a971bca90a9.html](https://www.timesargus.com/news/local/states-attorney-no-charges-in-fatal-police-shooting-in-montpelier/article_cb57b67c-0acd-5f0e-b9b7-8a971bca90a9.html)

<sup>23</sup> [https://www.timesargus.com/central\\_vermont\\_reader/team-two-vt-fills-mental-health-crisis-need/article\\_fc4d473a-50ce-5494-8455-8deb31975155.html](https://www.timesargus.com/central_vermont_reader/team-two-vt-fills-mental-health-crisis-need/article_fc4d473a-50ce-5494-8455-8deb31975155.html)

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/2018-08/ImprovingPoliceResponsetoPersonsWithMentalIllnessSummit.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> [https://www.nami.org/Advocacy/Crisis-Intervention/Crisis-Intervention-Team-\(CIT\)-Programs](https://www.nami.org/Advocacy/Crisis-Intervention/Crisis-Intervention-Team-(CIT)-Programs)

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.inquirer.com/opinion/commentary/role-of-police-law-enforcement-expert-opinion-20190228.html>

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/oct/09/parents-social-mobility-could-add-to-likelihood-of-violence-in-later-life>

<sup>28</sup> Nwoye, Joseph. Cultivating a Belief System for Peace, Equity and Social Justice For All. iUniverse COM – 2019.

Umbrella of Central Vermont, the Governor’s Racial Equity Task Force, and the Vermont State Police Office of Fair and Impartial Policing and Community Affairs. MPD will do its part in challenging damaging societal norms, policies, procedures and cultures so to effect systemic change by creating productive dialogue leading to new equitable shifts in belief structures: how we should all see and treat one another. MPD’s intent is to also follow Sir Robert Peel’s principles in recognizing that “the police are the community and the community are the police.”<sup>29</sup> The Department will immerse itself deeper into the community so that it is never considered as opposition to positive change, but as an example and powerful ally for it.

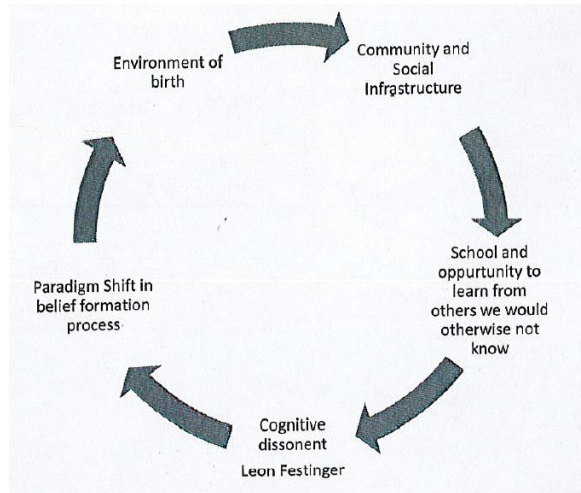


Figure 1. Dr. Nwoye’s Belief Transformation Cycle

**4. About the Department**

*Vision*

To provide exemplary police service to the residents, workers, and visitors of Montpelier in order to provide a safe and healthy environment.

*Mission*

The Montpelier Police Department, in partnership with the community, is committed to the preservation of peace, prevention of crime, enforcement of the law, protection of individual rights, and serving all with dignity and respect.

*Core Values*

Integrity, Courage, Fairness, Knowledge, Compassion, Professionalism.

MPD is comprised of Patrol, Dispatch and Investigative sections. MPD also has a School Resource Officer (SRO) program which consists of one dedicated officer. The Department also has two officers which are part of a regional task force comprised of state and federal agents. Participation with these task force teams increase investigative capabilities and bring additional resources MPD would not otherwise have. Personnel allocations are 17 full-time sworn police officers (to include the Chief), 1 part-time officer, 1 Administrator, 3 Parking Enforcement Workers (2 part-time), 10 Dispatchers (2 part-time).

<sup>29</sup> <https://lawenforcementactionpartnership.org/peel-policing-principles/>

	Sworn Officers	Dispatchers	Parking Enforcement	Administration
Male	16	4	1	0
Female	2	6	2	1
Persons of Color	1	2	0	0

Figure 2: MPD Personnel Breakdown

The average experience of sworn time officers is between 7-14 years and turnover rates have ranged from low to moderate with a majority of candidates and applicants coming from the local area.

### 5. Summarized Traffic and Arrest Data

MPD uses Valcour<sup>30</sup> as its Case and Records Management System. Valcour captures race data under five perceived categories: White, Black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Native American.

Per general U.S. Census data estimates,<sup>31</sup> Montpelier has a 2019 population of approximately 7,372: 93.2% White, 1.9% Black, 2.2% Asian, 2.7% two or more races, and 1.9% Hispanic or Latino. We are working to post this data on our department webpage.

Traffic Data:

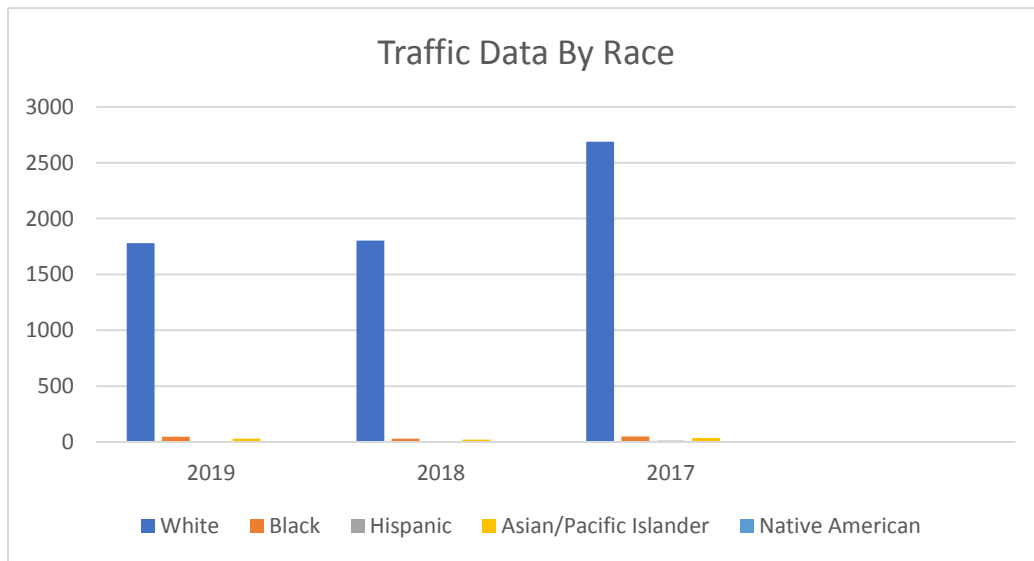


Figure 3: Traffic Data Breakdown

**2019:** 1,863 Traffic Stops - 29 perceived as Asian/Pacific Islander (1.56%) with two tickets issued and no searches conducted, 46 perceived as Black (2.47%) with 8 tickets issued and one consent search, 7 Perceived as Hispanic (.38%) with 1 ticket issued and no searches conducted, and 1,781 perceived as White (95.6%) with 224 tickets issued, 16 arrests and seven searches conducted.

**2018:** 1,862 Traffic Stops - 20 perceived as Asian/Pacific Islander (1.07%) with all persons issued warnings and no searches conducted, 29 perceived as Black (1.56%) with two tickets issued and one arrest and no searches conducted, 8 perceived as Hispanic (.43%) with one ticket issued and no searches

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.crosswind.com/public-safety/>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/montpeliercityvermont/IPE120218>



conducted, 1 unknown data (.05%), 1,804 perceived as White (96.89%) with 204 tickets issued, 7 searches conducted and 12 arrests.

2017: 2,788 Traffic Stops – 35 perceived as Asian/Pacific Islander (1.26%) 13 tickets issued, 2 searches conducted and 1 arrest, 49 perceived as Black (1.76%) 18 tickets issued and 2 searches conducted, 13 perceived as Hispanic (.47%) with 3 tickets issued and no searches conducted, 2 perceived as Native American (.07%) with 1 arrest and no searches conducted, 1 unknown data (.05%), and 2,688 perceived as White (96.41%) with 671 tickets issued, 61 arrests and 79 searches conducted.

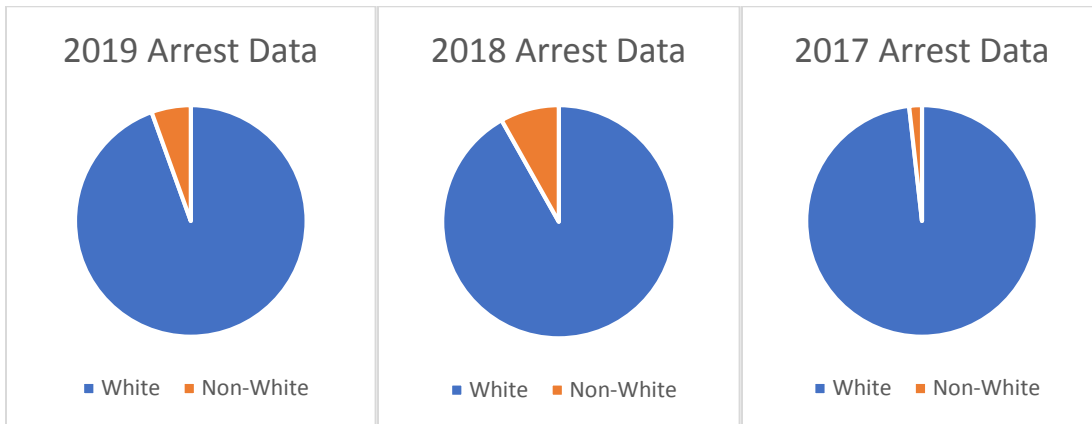


Figure 4: Arrest Data by Race<sup>32</sup>

### Calls for Service

2017	9,859
2018	9,211
2019	10,054

## 6. Community and Stakeholder Input and Internal Feedback

A total of 11 meetings with the public were held in group or one-on-one meets, by virtual town hall, or at the Statehouse lawn.

<sup>32</sup> In 2018, there was one individual charged with at least eight counts of unlawful mischief on eight different occasions. This individual was Black. All non-whites arrested were Black.

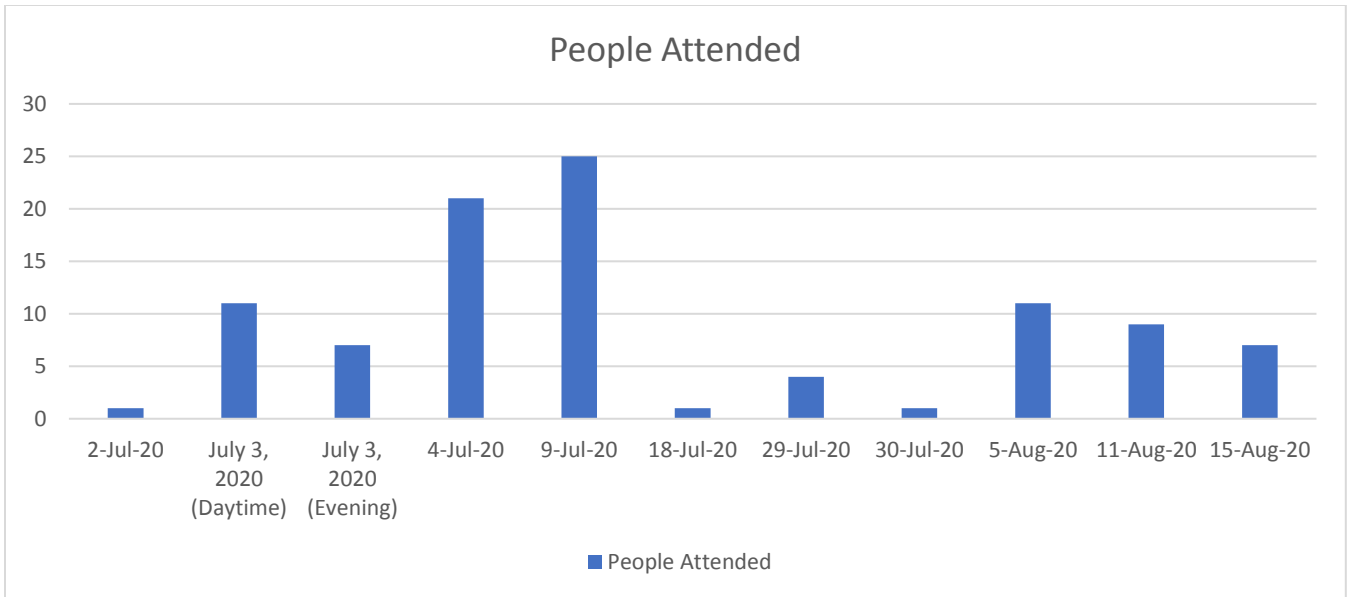


Figure 5: Number of people who attended meetings with the Police Chief



Figure 6: Summarization of the topics discussed

Voluntary one-on-one sessions with the majority of MPD staff were conducted so to assess the overall health of the department, gain personal familiarization and gather staff expectations of the Chief. This feedback is also crucial in formulating internal strategic goals. Below is summary of the most common themes from those discussions:

- Acknowledgement and support from leadership and officials when we do our jobs correctly
- Continued open-door policy and accessibility to the Chief
- Support the current culture of community-based policing practices
- Hold individuals accountable for their actions
- Support personnel when there are rumors and untrue allegations (“have my back”)
- More opportunities for training and especially scenario-based training
- Exposure to other aspects of policing and dispatching (e.g. specialized units, etc.)
- Ensure timely and respectful communication throughout the ranks and between the sections
- Minimize administrative and additional functions to allow more time to do primary jobs
- Implement CIT training
- Increase Community Justice Center involvement
- Continue the SRO position
- Ensure new policies or procedures have a functional and non-political purpose
- Provide training and resources to increase staff and public safety
- More opportunities to hone leadership skills
- Increased opportunity to be involved in areas of professional interest
- Ensure any discipline is fair across the board
- Discern honest mistakes from dishonest intent
- More opportunities for staff and community to be and work together
- “Get your hands dirty”
- Listen to people
- Staff wellness (mental health, etc.)
- “We are a family” and “Keep the family together”
- “We are a good group of people” and “People don’t leave here” and “It’s a good place”
- Continued autonomy and increase mentorship
- Timely and honest feedback
- Help people understand what we do so they know the realistic limitations of this job
- Minimize inconsistencies between supervisors
- Give supervisors a chance to handle situations at their level
- Push us further/bring in an outside perspective
- “Our teamwork is good” and “We help each other”
- Ensure transparent select processes for training and promotional opportunities
- Recognize and reward good work and productivity
- Tell us “why we’re doing what we’re doing”
- Collaboration in making decisions regarding the Department
- Find ways to minimize stagnation and feelings of underutilization
- More morale building activities
- “Support us”

There were also conversations with stakeholders and peer agencies which included the City Manager and Assistant City Manager, the Mayor of Montpelier and Council members, the Washington County Sheriff and County Police Chiefs, Washington County State’s Attorney Rory Thibault, the Rainbow Umbrella of Central Vermont, Congressman Peter Welch, Senator Patrick Leahy, MRPS Superintendent Libby Bonesteel, the Community Justice Center, the Social and Economic Justice Advisory Committee, the Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness, members of Washington County Mental Health Services, the Central Vermont Public Safety Authority, the Criminal Justice Training Council, the Vermont Police Academy, FBI Resident Agent In Charge Anna Holden, U.S. Attorney Christina Nolan, and the Vermont State Police Office of Fair and Impartial Policing and Community Affairs.

## 7. Strategic Planning Recommendations

MPD will be laser focused on implementing a strategic plan based on the six pillar identified in the President's Task Force on 21<sup>st</sup> Century policing. Below is a summarization of those pillars.<sup>33</sup> In the coming weeks when new mid and senior level leadership is identified and in place, MPD will develop specific goals and a timeline of incorporation for implementation.

### Pillar One: Building Trust and Legitimacy

"Building trust and nurturing legitimacy on both sides of the police/citizen divide is the foundational principle underlying the nature of relations between law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve. Decades of research and practice support the premise that people are more likely to obey the law when they believe that those who are enforcing it have authority that is perceived as legitimate by those subject to the authority. The public confers legitimacy only on those whom they believe are acting in procedurally just ways."

*We will bolster transparency and accountability: Revamp the department's website to provide monthly or quarterly data in critical areas tied to accountability that include race/ethnic data on traffic stops and arrests, use of force incidents, and complaints against officers. MPD will also post its policies and procedures online. MPD will host seminars for any person interested that will explain a person's rights during police interactions under state and federal law, as well as what they can do to help ensure safe outcomes. The SRO program is absolutely critical in meeting this pillar as MPD's SRO will facilitate conversations to continue exposure and building bridges with the very conscience and active youth of this community. SROs are also vital leaders in guiding restorative justice programs such as Peer Juries which are youth peers working with youth offenders towards resolution<sup>34</sup>.*

### Pillar Two: Policy and Oversight

"Pillar two emphasizes that if police are to carry out their responsibilities according to established policies, those policies must reflect community values. Law enforcement agencies should collaborate with community members, especially in communities and neighborhoods disproportionately affected by crime, to develop policies and strategies for deploying resources that aim to reduce crime by improving relationships, increasing community engagement, and fostering cooperation."

*Montpelier's policies have long been based on recognized best practices, based in legal precedent and endorsed by the City's insurer. Locally elected officials (the City Council) already provide primary citizen oversight of MPD. In its determination to solicit community feedback in determining its strategic planning and goals with a focus on vulnerable populations, MPD should convene a Community Strategic Planning Advisory Board that will assist the Chief of Police in reviewing crime fighting and community immersion strategies and aid in establishing and meeting community policing goals.*

### Pillar Three: Technology and Social Media

"The use of technology can improve policing practices and build community trust and legitimacy, but its implementation must be built on a defined policy framework with its purposes and goals clearly delineated. Implementing new technologies can give police departments an opportunity to fully engage and educate communities in a dialogue about their expectations for transparency, accountability, and privacy. But technology changes quickly in terms of new hardware, software, and other options. Law enforcement agencies and leaders

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<sup>33</sup> [http://www.americanbarfoundation.org/uploads/cms/documents/executive\\_summary\\_policing\\_task\\_force.pdf](http://www.americanbarfoundation.org/uploads/cms/documents/executive_summary_policing_task_force.pdf)

<sup>34</sup> <https://home.chicagopolice.org/about/specialized-units/special-investigations-unit-siu/peer-jury-program/> and <https://law.siu.edu/common/documents/teen-court-manual.pdf> and <https://www.sccgov.org/sites/pdo/ppw/SESAP/Documents/SCHOOL%20RJP%20GUIDEBOOK.pdf>

need to be able to identify, assess, and evaluate new technology for adoption and do so in ways that improve their effectiveness, efficiency, and evolution without infringing on individual rights.”

*MPD should procure Body Worn Cameras (BWCs) and implement an online system for reporting and receiving community complaints about officers, and a public facing crime mapping tools that allow for the public to monitor reports of criminal activity in the community. MPD should also provide as many less-than-lethal use of force options to its officers and implement stringent policies based on existing guidance and state law for their usage. The more options an officer has available, the greater the opportunities to preserve the sanctity of life in crisis situations. MPD should also increase its social media footprint and establish a Twitter account to provide immediate information to the public (e.g. gas leaks, rashes of burglaries and thefts, etc.).*

#### Pillar Four: Community Policing and Crime Reduction

“Pillar four focuses on the importance of community policing as a guiding philosophy for all stakeholders. Community policing emphasizes working with neighborhood residents to coproduce public safety. Law enforcement agencies should, therefore, work with community residents to identify problems and collaborate on implementing solutions that produce meaningful results for the community. Specifically, law enforcement agencies should develop and adopt policies and strategies that reinforce the importance of community engagement in managing public safety. Law enforcement agencies should also engage in multidisciplinary, community team approaches for planning, implementing, and responding to crisis situations with complex causal factors.”

*MPD will connect with the community it serves through educational opportunities: MPD should implement “Policing and Criminal Justice Seminars,” otherwise known as a “Community Police Academy,” or a “Citizen’s Academy.” The Policing and Criminal Justice Seminars would be hybrid models unique to the needs and demands of the Montpelier Community. They would provide initial information on policing, policy, law, the municipal and state criminal justice system and restorative justice programs. There would also be annual updated and refresher trainings for previous attendees. MPD should also consider establishing Explorer Programs which provide information and exposure to young people interested in pursuing a career in law enforcement. The Explorer program should also focus on community building, restorative justice and conflict resolution. It should also have a strong emphasis on teambuilding and community service and volunteerism. MPD should also ingrain the community and guardian mindset into departmental policy by incorporating community involvement as annual goals for staff and making immersion a factor in assignment and promotional considerations.*

#### Pillar Five: Training and Education

“As our nation becomes more pluralistic and the scope of law enforcement’s responsibilities expands, the need for expanded and more effective training has become critical. Today’s line officers and leaders must be trained and capable to address a wide variety of challenges including international terrorism, evolving technologies, rising immigration, changing laws, new cultural mores, and a growing mental health crisis. Pillar five focuses on the training and education needs of law enforcement. To ensure the high quality and effectiveness of training and education, law enforcement agencies should engage community members, particularly those with special expertise, in the training process and provide leadership training to all personnel throughout their careers.”

*MPD will provide advanced training for its officers and staff: Initial observations of the State’s Police training process are that a lack of funding and resources and sometimes inconsistent, unsupported mandates that have crippled basic and advanced training opportunities for law enforcement officers. The Vermont Police Academy staff is highly trained, professional, motivated, and has set a strong foundation*

*of positive servant-based police culture for officers crucial for early year development. Staff is eager to introduce modern and advanced curriculums in accordance to the strategic plans of the Vermont Training Council, but the VPA lacks the resources and support to implement them. This gives grave concern for officer safety and liability for all state law enforcement agencies and municipalities. Until the VPA is adequately funded and resourced, it will be incumbent upon MPD to provide advanced training for its staff. MPD should procure technology and implement scenario-based training for its officers and surrounding departments. MPD should develop, certify and provide trainings in Crisis Intervention (CIT), de-escalation, implicit bias, emotional intelligence, refreshers in use of force and tactics. MPD should also ensure a robust succession plan that allow officers more exposure to other aspects of policing so to reduce burnout and to improve department competency and capability. MPD has also been proactively working to have its dispatchers certified to the PST I Level, which would make it the first agency in the state to have achieved this accreditation. MPD should also work to enlist community members who want to volunteer their time and expertise to assist in training for the Department: several citizens have already offered their support.*

#### Pillar Six: Officer Wellness & Safety

“The wellness and safety of law enforcement officers is critical not only for the officers, their colleagues, and their agencies but also to public safety. Pillar six emphasizes the support and proper implementation of officer wellness and safety as a multi-partner effort.”

*MPD will prioritize officer wellness and safety through new programming: This is one of my highest priorities and responsibilities as without this pillar, there would be no strength for the others to hold the department up. MPD should implement an awards program that recognizes and celebrates the many accomplishments of its staff. It is critical to know that Police Officers and Dispatchers<sup>35</sup> suffer higher rates for suicide<sup>36</sup>, PTSD, substance abuse, depression and other anxiety-based disorders. These disorders often extend to their personal lives resulting in divorce and withdrawal from friends and family which only magnify mental health problems. According to Bluehelp.org,<sup>37</sup> in 2017, 172 officers took their own lives, 174 in 2018, 228 in 2019, and 108 to date in 2020. More officers have consistently died by suicide than in the line of duty for the past several years. While there is an existing Peer Support and Employee Assistance Programs (EAP), MPD should ensure a robust EAP program will cover officers and their families, implement best-practice programs for mental health,<sup>38</sup> such as officer wellness trainings, trainings for supervisors on suicide indicators, routine mental health checks (to include families), and de-stressing programs such as yoga, meditation and exercise regiments. There are also app-based programs such as MResilience<sup>39</sup> which can help guide officers in meditation techniques to decrease anxiety. MPD should also take proactive steps to aid and support its retirees, who are also at high risk. It should be noted that personnel limitations also lead to repetitive overtime can also compound issues and lead to lack of sleep, poor judgment in tactics and in dealing with the public which increases liability.*

MPD should also focus on minority recruitment efforts by consulting and advertising openings with professional minority fraternal organizations such as the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Officers and the International Association of Women Police. MPD should also work with community partners that represent diverse populations to help it in advertising for these positions.

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<sup>35</sup> <https://healthland.time.com/2012/03/29/study-911-dispatchers-experience-ptsd-symptoms-too/>

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.addictioncenter.com/news/2019/09/police-at-highest-risk-for-suicide-than-any-profession/>

<sup>37</sup> <https://bluehelp.org>

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/PreventOfficerSuicide.pdf>

<sup>39</sup> <https://tiag.net/innovations/mresilience/>

**8. Summarized Strategic Goal Implementation Timeline Chart**

Below is a timeline of recommended strategic goals for MPD that were outlined in this assessment. There may be delays in implementation due to infrastructure, personnel or fiscal restraints. MPD is looking to aggressively insert these goals within three years due to the importance and urgency of this moment. NOTE: MPD staff have presented other ideas to meet Pillar goals during feedback sessions that may be adopted.

Year	Pillar 1	Pillar 2	Pillar 3	Pillar 4	Pillar 5	Pillar 6
2020	<p>Include policies and data sets on Department website for public consumption &amp; feedback</p> <p>SRO facilitation of Bridge Building conversations and activities with youth</p>	<p>Convene a Commission to provide recommendations on how to establish a Strategic Planning Advisory Board for MPD</p>	<p>Establish a Twitter account that MPD can quickly disperse information to the Public in real time</p> <p>Research new less-than-lethal technology options</p>	<p>Incorporate community involvement and immersion in performance evaluations for staff</p>	<p>Coordinate with community stakeholders for Familiarization Conversations with vulnerable populations</p> <p>Complete Dispatch PST 1 Level certification</p>	<p>Coordinate with community to identify resources that reduce stress and increase resiliency for staff (e.g. yoga, exercise, meditation, etc.)</p>
2021	<p>SRO facilitation, implementation of a Peer Jury Program</p> <p>Implement a “Rights during Police Interactions Seminar”</p>	<p>Implement a Community Strategic Planning Advisory Board</p>	<p>Implement a BWC program*</p> <p>Implement an Online Reporting and Complaint System*</p> <p>Implement a public Crime-Mapping tool*</p>	<p>Implement Policing and Criminal Justice Seminars</p> <p>SRO facilitation, implementation of an Explorer Program</p>	<p>Implement Succession Plan</p> <p>Implement CIT Training</p> <p>Coordinate with community and SMEs to provide advanced training to staff (implicit bias, emotional intel, interviewing, etc.)*</p>	<p>Strengthen Peer Support Program for current staff and retirees</p> <p>Implement Staff Wellness training</p> <p>Coordinate routine mental health checks for staff*</p> <p>App-based resiliency tech*</p>
2022					<p>Implement scenario-based training tech*</p>	

Figure 7: Strategic Goal Implementation Timeline Chart

\*There may be financial limitations for implementation

## 9. Local and National Discussion Topics

There have been recurring themes nationwide and here in Montpelier that call for a re-imagining of the roles law enforcement should play within their respective communities, removal of School Resources Officers (SROs), and recommendations outlined by the ACLU’s (Vermont) 10-part Plan and items from the 8cantwait.org website. Several residents have also recommended MPD consider community policing examples described in Resmaa Menakem’s book, *My Grandmothers Hands*<sup>40</sup>.

The chart below outlines the respective pillar(s) that has already addressed the topics of discussion. It should also be noted that none of the suggestions in these resources look to address Officer Wellness and Safety.

	Pillar 1	Pillar 2	Pillar 3	Pillar 4	Pillar 5	Pillar 6
De-Militarization	x	x				
Transparency	x	x				
Data Collection	x	x	x	x		
Use of Force Policy		x			x	
Ban Chokeholds		x			x	
Require De-escalation		x			x	
Incorporating Acts of Community-Based Policing	x			x		

Figure 7: MPD incorporation of National Discussion Items

There have also been calls for the City to eliminate the police union to which it should be noted that a municipal employer may not decertify a police union on its own. Also, the Municipal Employee Relations Act does not allow a municipal employer to file a petition to decertify a union. A municipal employer is required to bargain in good faith with a union representing employees with the intent to enter into a collective bargaining agreement. If the Labor Relations Board determines that an employer violates the duty to bargain in good faith, the Board concludes that an employer commits an unfair labor practice and orders an appropriate remedy. This assessment has not identified the union representing MPD officers as an impediment to the incorporation of accountability or transparency programs or incorporation of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing practices.

MPD has been a State and National model in 21<sup>st</sup> Policing concepts and has long implemented the realistic and reform-minded concepts outlined in these texts. Still, MPD should never rest on its laurels and must continue to incorporate evidence-based practical policing and community-oriented concepts. It is in this spirit that every MPD staff member should look for the opportunity to meet with any organization or individual to brainstorm strategies and policies that will help MPD provide better service.

## 10. Summary

It is critical that the City continue to support MPD’s push towards best practices rooted in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing concepts. Foremost is to ensure the safety and wellbeing of staff. Efforts must also include maintaining the Department’s culture of professionalism, service, and competency, a “Guardian-Based” mindset<sup>41</sup> and servant-based practices. It is also vital that MPD’s current personnel levels and budget allocations remain intact to maintain current levels of service and equipment levels. Any reduction in the Department’s budget would

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.resmaa.com/books>

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/02/190226155011.htm>



severely limit response time to calls for service, critical competent response in investigating crime, harm morale, and create irreversible damage to recruiting and retention efforts (see current events in Burlington, VT<sup>42</sup>). Applications to police agencies (including MPD) nationally have been on a rapid decline<sup>43</sup> for at least the last three decades.<sup>44</sup> Across the country, law enforcement officers now perceive that there is a lack of faith, expressed confidence, and public support from leaders and elected officials. As such, it is anticipated that agencies (including MPD) will see a loss of staff beyond traditional attrition rates. I also suspect the profession will no longer attract top talent, leaving governments to choose between par and potentially subpar applicants to fill the gaps. This would create a cyclical effect that generates poor service and increased public complaints that will translate into fiscal and safety liabilities.

The strategic goals outlined in this assessment are ambitious, but there should be no doubt that the women and men of the Montpelier Police Department are up to the task of incorporating them. It is crucial that they receive support and resources so that allows for continued success and the implementation of these programs. I am also extremely confident that I can lead the Montpelier Police Department through our current challenges and into the next Chapter by continuing and expounding upon the Community-Based and crime-fighting strategies that have made it a respected and effective department.

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<sup>42</sup> <https://www.newsbreak.com/vermont/burlington/news/1592601548462/burlington-officers-union-said-cuts-to-police-budget-will-worsen-morale>

<sup>43</sup> <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/us-police-agencies-trouble-hiring-keeping-officers-survey/story?id=65643752>

<sup>44</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/sites/danielcassady/2020/07/29/amid-calls-for-police-reform-across-the-nation-police-struggle-with-recruiting-and-retention/#11fb9c5e4f94>