Community Feedback on Police Station Project and Policing in Lexington

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Introduction

From mid-March through the end of June 2021, two members of the Lexington Select Board conducted small group discussions focused on the Town's Police Station project and the future of public safety in Lexington. We received a wide range of responses from the community and appreciate the time and thoughtfulness participants brought to our process.

This report was initially presented in two parts. Part one focused on community feedback specific to the construction of a replacement police station. Part two examined feedback focused on how the police force operates in Lexington. After presentation to and deliberation by the Select Board, this report has been reissued as a single document integrating the two parts. This work complements the Town-commissioned report by Town Counsel (Anderson Kreiger, LLP) led by Carmen Ortiz on Reviewing Lexington Police Department Policies and Practices (hereinafter Ortiz Report).

Background

The Lexington Police Station was built in 1955 and is now too small and in poor condition for providing its primary services. It is overdue for replacement. In 2011, the Town commissioned a study reviewing the state of the facility and the needs for a modern replacement. In 2013, the ad-hoc Townwide Facilities Master Planning Committee formally recommended advancing the replacement of public safety facilities as the highest priority municipal facility projects.

In 2016, Town Meeting appropriated funding for a feasibility study to replace the police station and, in 2018, design funding was appropriated for rebuilding the station at its current location. In 2020. a national debate on policing emerged in response to George Floyd's murder in Minnesota. With this debate, the Select Board chose to pause design development to allow the community to reflect on national and local issues.

To assess local issues, the Town held several public meetings where residents could voice their concerns in a large, public setting. The Town also commissioned Town Counsel (Anderson Kreiger, LLP) led by Carmen Ortiz, former US Attorney for the Boston District, to review our police policies for any unintended bias or discriminatory policies. In parallel, the Select Board undertook to engage with a cross-section of cultural, civic, and community organizations to better understand local perspectives on policing and, in particular, on plans for replacing the police station. Of the thirty-three groups that were contacted (see Appendix C for a complete list), twenty-two engaged in an informal but structured dialog. Two Town committees, the Commission on Disabilities and the Human Rights Committee, participated in public meetings following the same format as the small group meetings.

In addition to the meetings with the affinity groups, we offered meetings for any individual wishing to speak privately with two members of the Board on this topic and solicited feedback via email through

our Public Information Officer (see Appendix D). We held 8 individual meetings with residents and received 34 substantive e-mail submissions from residents with feedback to consider.

Small Group Discussion Format

Our experience with the early public meetings was that relatively few people felt comfortable expressing their experiences with or attitudes toward the Lexington Police Department. To encourage broader participation, our engagement with the community was limited to small-group discussions with no more than six participants from each affinity group at any meeting. Further, participants were told that their individual comments would not be made public and that any specific interactions described would be generalized to avoid identification. Our goal was to elicit honest and candid responses. All groups were given the option for follow-up meetings and individuals were encouraged to have a private follow-up meeting should they have sensitive information they wished to disclose without exposure to members of their affinity group.

Questions Posed

In the small-group discussions conducted by two members of the Select Board, all participants were prompted with the following questions in writing prior to each meeting and then guided through the questions during the discussion:

> We would like to ask you your thoughts about some of the following:
> - If your group has taken part in [the Town Counsel and Carmen Ortiz] outreach efforts, how well this outreach is working – and working with your community in particular.
> - What has your experience or that of members of your community been in their interactions with the police department?
> - Do you have concerns about the current police department operations that might impact how we would build a new police station?
> - Any other thoughts you might want to share about policing in Lexington?

General Feedback on Policing Discussions

Generally, community members were very supportive of our Police Department (PD) and of proceeding with replacing the police station. These attitudes were expressed in most of our discussions. Nonetheless, we heard some direct concerns and negative experiences from varied participants. While no one reported to us that they felt there were broad underlying problems and few participants called for extending the delay on the construction project, clear specific issues were identified and are explored in this part of the report on community feedback on policing.

Most participants in our group sessions had few direct experiences with the Lexington Police Department - or, in general, with any police department. Some participants, however, had specific positive or negative interactions with the department. The feedback collected and outlined below represent both general perceptions and reactions to specific events that occurred in Lexington or nationally.

It is important to note that attitudes regarding policing appear to be "sticky." We heard descriptions of numerous incidents that had occurred twenty or more years ago. The perceptions formed through interactions with the police - both good and bad, but especially bad - seem to remain firmly lodged.

As noted above, our aim was to elicit honest and candid responses and we assured respondents that any specific interactions described would be generalized to avoid identification. At times, this commitment to privacy and confidentiality has led our commentary to appear vague, but we have labored to retain as much of the flavor of the detail as possible to convey the core issues.

These comments by Lexington community members were collected over a three-month period and represent community attitudes. We did not eliminate comments that were addressed by the Town's ongoing response to the Ortiz report or that were addressed by Town management. Similarly, we include comments suggesting practices that may already be in use by the PD. Our intention is to allow Town management to provide a consolidated response to how the PD operates as part of its outreach and engagement efforts. Also note, some of the comments may appear to be direct contradictions of others. This is because the comments originated with different individuals who have had different impressions or experiences. We should take care to recognize that the respondent's feedback encompassed this full range.

Finally, and importantly, we caution readers of this report to refrain from attributing comments to particular individuals or groups. We assure you that your assumptions are likely to be wrong.

Part 1: Feedback on Building

Feedback specific to replacing the police station was varied. Participants were clear that they want a station that serves the Police Department and the community. There was keen interest in establishing deeper community connections between staff and residents so that bonds were created. There is a desire for community policing where members of the community are known to the Police Department and individual officers are known in the community and that these connections be forged in positive contexts rather than having first contact occur in a stressful situation.

To serve this goal, the key concerns expressed were that the station be _welcoming_ to the public. This means that public elements of the station should have less of an institutional feel, and that the spaces are _accessible_ for all using universal design approaches that enable interaction. A number of suggestions were made that the Commission on Disabilities be involved throughout the design process.

There was strong advocacy for _flexibility_ so that the station can meet changing needs over time and there was a desire that there be opportunities for public safety programs to be conducted in the building to draw the public into _community centric_ interactions with the department.

Timing for the project weighed on many people's minds. Most of the comments we received supported moving forward with the project without delay. Some respondents, however, felt that it was important to rethink policing in Lexington first so that the station design would reflect these principles.

Several participants underscored the importance of making the building _inclusive_ of all members of the public and staff. In particular there were questions about the separation of command staff from other functional units in the building. Similarly there was a call for gender neutral facilities throughout the building.

Finally, we received a variety of comments about the _functionality_ of the police station - many of which have already been accounted for in the developing design. We note these below in case there are areas not provided for in the design of the station or consciously located elsewhere.

For further context around comments related to the building project, please see Appendix A: Specific Comments Regarding the Building

Part 2: Feedback on Police Operations

In this section, we provide a narrative drawn from our interviews where we may merge issues raised by multiple individuals or groups. We have collected the feedback into categories and present the categories alphabetically without a presumption of priority. Appendix B follows with more specific commentary drawn from our interviews where each item originates with one respondent. In both this narrative section and in Appendix B, some comments are impressions expressed by respondents. These impressions may be of national events or of local issues but are not attributable to an incident experienced directly by the respondent. Some comments do arise from a particular incident and in this case, we try to make clear if the reported incident occurred recently or at some time in the past. We felt it important to note this timing to avoid minimizing or omitting issues but recognizing that the attitudes, policies, and personnel involved in events occurring years or decades in the past may no longer reflect the current PD operations.

Bias

There was strong feedback that residents want a Police Department that is fair and treats everyone respectfully. Specific concerns were expressed by some participants that racial, gender, language, and ethnicity bias might exist within the department and could influence policing responses.

We heard general feedback from one ethnic group that some of their members have encountered bias directly while the vast majority of members of this ethnic group have not. Further, we heard from some participants about specific forms of bias they encountered directly. These incidents range from racial profiling and harassment of teenagers years ago to incidents of implicit bias where individuals were treated with indifference or disrespect. In addition, specific concerns were expressed that a disproportionate number of traffic stops due to race or gender are occurring.

Some respondents commented that the Ortiz Report did not capture the nuances of racism and other areas of marginalization and that additional exploration of potential bias is warranted.

Additional suggestions were made that the Police officers be more intentional in their efforts to reach out to citizens on the streets to make all members of the community feel valued by the PD.

Effectiveness

A wide range of both concerns and praise were expressed in the effectiveness of the PD performing its duties.

A majority of respondents noted that they feel safe living in Lexington in part because of the effectiveness and strength of training of the Police Department, and that overall, the department is an asset to the community. Specific feedback included comments on the high level of respect for the School

Resource Officer (SRO) and the speed and efficiency with which the police respond to incidents and solve cases. Further, the public perception is that the police are generally helpful and supportive of our residents whether at public events, or when interacting with them individually.

Conversely, several areas for improvement were identified by some respondents including a lack of consistency with traffic and parking enforcement (for example, U-turns in the center and abuse of handicap parking) as well as frustration with the handling of investigations. Further, a few respondents noted that the Police Department personnel working traffic and crowd details could be more effective in their roles by being more attentive.

Some residents also reported that the style of interaction could detract from the effectiveness of a response. A few individuals reported feeling harassed during a traffic stop or as a youth being stopped by police years ago, and these interactions led to future distrust of police in general. In a different setting, the arrival of police cruisers and EMTs with flashing lights and large vehicles at an incident surrounding a special needs child further traumatized the child. It was felt that a lower-intensity arrival could have reduced the child's discomfort rather than exacerbating it.

Engagement

This section comments on how the PD engages with the community outside of a law enforcement incident. While most respondents commented that they had very little interaction with the PD, they had a strong desire for more engagement. Respondents observed that engagement builds trust. They want to see the PD as approachable and want an opportunity to understand each other so that when difficult events occur, like those seen over the past two years, the relationship between the community and the PD is already in place. Some respondents expressed concern that the engagement doesn't currently exist, that there is distrust of the PD and tension exists at events.

A respondent pointed out that two-way communication is key, and that community groups also bear some responsibility to initiate contact with the PD to build relationships. Covid has made this more challenging both in sustaining existing linkages and creating new ones. Several suggestions for positive interactions were made, including the participation in ethnic, youth and social activities where residents can be exposed to the police in a positive setting. This, they felt, would allow for the development and exercise of cultural competencies for the PD in a non-threatening setting.

Some examples of positive interactions cited include the Toys for Tots program, youth group visits to the Police Station, Special Olympics, Police Explorers and Cadet programs, and police personnel participation in ethnic and social events. The respondents who experienced these had a strong sense of appreciation. It was noted, however, that not all ethnic groups have an easy array of events to plug into and may require more effort to find an appropriate venue for interaction. Additionally, not all interactions require the formal structure of an event, and suggestions were made to have drop-in type of events in an effort to humanize the police officers. One example cited from a neighboring town was of drop-ins at local coffee shops where officers chatted with patrons.

Residents expressed concern that the public, in general, has little awareness of what the PD does and that this can lead to negative assumptions. Some respondents noted, however, that they found the new web pages and videos about the police operations helpful and that this a step in the right direction. One

respondent recommended that we should use the new Police Chief hiring process as an opportunity to describe the role of the PD and the role of the Chief in particular to the community.

Some respondents expressed appreciation for the leadership shown by the former Police Chief at engaging in public events around controversial topics. Some also expressed a desire to have this type of commitment manifest itself throughout the organization.

Requests for better connection between PD and community include better visibility in the neighborhood through the presence of more foot patrols and not just cruisers driving through.

Governance

Some respondents expressed concern over the accountability of the PD and wondered whether or not the police were following their own policies. When a violation of policy occurs, they question what happens after an incident. Some expressed fear that an open environment free of favoritism doesn't exist. For example, the public is unaware of the results of an investigation into an incident of unauthorized information disclosure. The incidents seemed to disappear, they felt, without any corrective action.

Several respondents discussed the need for more transparency within the PD, particularly around data collection, dissemination, and responses to incidents. Further, some requested that additional data be collected to better understand how the PD records the use of their perceived authority (ticketed and non-ticketed). Generally, respondents want to better understand how the PD operates on paper and in practice.

Several respondents recommended the creation of some form of an independent public oversight board to improve transparency and accountability. Additionally, some requested a more structured complaint process that protects individuals from potential retaliation when reporting feedback or complaints regarding their interactions with the PD. One suggestion was to have an ombudsman that falls outside of the Police structure for reporting these complaints.

Further suggestions were made to fully adopt and implement the recommendations from the Oritz Report. Requests were made for the PD to define the department's core values and issue a statement reaffirming those values. One respondent suggested that these values be developed jointly by the PD and community.

Miscellaneous

Generally, there were positive comments, praise, and support for the PD, and respondents were satisfied with the department. However, there were a number of concerns expressed that ranged from fears that we won't adequately support the PD with staffing, training, and equipment to concerns that there will be continued bias and hate in the community which will need more protection by the PD.

Additional concerns were expressed that residents need to take an active role in educating children in how to interact with the PD and fears that traffic stops can turn dramatically bad for anyone involved. Individual reactions to the police presence can vary greatly. For example, negative experiences with police anywhere can create fear and anxiety for future interactions, and the mere presence of

emergency vehicles can create a sense of anxiety. One respondent reported that they grew up respecting police, but now - due to impressions from global reports - fear they don't take care of the community.

People recognized that policing is very difficult. They reflected on how different perspectives can lead to different expectations such as when police should intervene. One individual felt harassed by protesters at a rally, but perceived that other attendees found the event to be entirely positive. Similarly, there was great support and praise for the SRO, but other respondents wondered if we need the role of the SRO.

Finally, a couple of respondents expressed general concerns about potential inappropriate actions by the PD such as unauthorized leaking of information or retaliatory filing of complaints by the PD.

Politics

Several respondents expressed concerns that political statements by the PD, such as the display of stickers, flags, or politically charged social media posts can create a feeling of distrust. Respondents expressed an expectation that the PD would act apolitically.

One respondent expressed concern about limiting the symbols used to appropriately honor fallen police officers.

Process

Issues surrounding mental health arose repeatedly in conversations. Some suggested that we utilize the 988 number being rolled out nationwide in 2022 for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, and others suggested a better triaging and handoff of emergency calls related to mental health. Other suggestions included having a crisis intervention team arrive with the police to an incident. Having this system in place might create better outcomes and mental health support. In addition, respondents suggested that a system be put in place to allow the PD and mental health professionals to know about potential needs in advance of a crisis. Finally, respondents expressed concern that police officers should receive adequate mental health counseling and support.

Several respondents expressed concern over the militarization of the PD. Suggestions were made that we explore opportunities to have unarmed police respond to routine traffic stops. Further suggestions included the use of electronic measures to supplement the unarmed officers.

Some concerns were expressed regarding the interaction and utilization of the SRO for discipline that otherwise would be handled by LPS staff. Additionally, one respondent questioned the follow-up protocols for complaints about unsatisfactory PD interactions.

On a positive note, some respondents provided anecdotes where the PD process led to a good result. These anecdotes included helping to de-escalate a child, working with a potential run-away, helping with registration renewal and good follow-up with an abuse situation to ensure mental health services were in place.

A series of suggestions for possible improvements in or expansion to police services included:

- Police patrol on bike, motorcycle or on foot
- Improve the automatic phone system for the business number

- Better enforcement of littering
- Improved monitoring of parks using cameras
- Training for senior citizens on life skills
- Further utilization of Jail Diversion Programs

Staffing

Some respondents advocated maintaining adequate staffing levels for the PD, including more police presence in Lexington Center and full staffing of the animal control position, while others questioned the need for such a large police force.

Respondents wondered if all current PD tasks are best performed by police officers. Many respondents discussed the possible integration of mental health or human services employees with the PD. Some respondents saw value in having mental health issues to be addressed primarily by mental health professionals at the beginning of contact. Others thought having a hybrid approach to responses to mental health incidents (i.e. mental health professionals and PD arrive together) would be more effective than current practice. Others felt that having mental health professionals review cases with the PD after an incident would be an improvement over the current model. Similarly, some questioned the role of the SRO and wondered if the SRO might be more accessible if they had a social worker role not identified with the police.

Lastly, some concern was expressed regarding the diversity of the PD staff. Respondents want the PD more reflective of the community make-up and are concerned about how few minority officers are in the senior ranks.

Tone

The perception by respondents of police officers' tone varied greatly based on individual interactions. Many respondents felt good about their interactions and used comments to describe the police such as: caring, compassionate, helpful, courteous, professional, and supportive. Others had unpleasant interactions and felt there was room for improvement sharing comments such as: rude, aggressive, exclusionary, combative, insensitive, loud, intimidating, disrespectful, defensive, unempathetic, and unenthusiastic. *For further context around these tone comments, please see Appendix B of this report "Specific Comments Regarding Policing".*

Some noted appreciation for the tone set by former Chief Corr's leadership. Residents noted, however, that there seems to be a difference in commitment to inclusivity between administration and command staff and the rank-and-file officers. Respondents also noted that attitude issues are bi-directional - some residents have a jaded view of the police and initiate combative responses.

Training

Many respondents commented on the importance of additional diversity training in the PD. The concepts for cultural-awareness training suggested by some include training for those with a language barrier, those where eye contact might be inappropriate, how to deal with wearing shoes when entering homes, or appropriate body searches by a gender-parallel officer. Another example is that some cultures don't consider dogs to be pets so care should be taken if a K9 unit is deployed. Additional training was

recommended for how the PD should interact with those in the LGBTQ+ community including, but not limited to the appropriate use of pronouns.

Participants also noted the importance of training the PD on how to interact with individuals with a variety of disabilities. For example, some people with disabilities slur words, so it is important for the PD to distinguish between a disability and an impairment. Similarly, concerns were expressed that those with hearing loss or deafness might not respond immediately to verbal commands by the officers, or that they might reach for a placard in their car to notify police of their condition. Further, when an individual has a visual impairment or blindness, police officers should be sensitive to their condition and not ask for information that requires sight. Additional training was suggested on how to deal with those disabilities, such as autism, and how to diffuse a situation most effectively.

As noted above, response to mental health issues is a key concern in the community and many expressed the importance of mental health training for all first responders, especially newer police officers.

The importance of de-escalation training and having the police be perceived as less hostile and more of an ally to community members was expressed by some. Additionally, the need for officers to moderate disputes and diffuse tense situations, including for domestic conflicts, was noted as important.

Some express appreciation for the current funding and efforts at training our PD, while others would like to see more frequent training. Some noted that the goal isn't training in and of itself but rather the true adoption of the principles being taught into everyday policing and that the attitudes and practices taught become the natural reactions for members of the PD.

Conclusion

Once again, we caution readers of this report to refrain from attributing comments to particular individuals or groups. Our experience with briefing this report to various individuals is that their assumptions were almost invariably wrong. The strength of this report, we believe, is that it offers the PD, Town leaders, and the public the equivalent of a "listening tour" of candid remarks from a broad section of the community. We hope that this will help contribute to better policing, public safety, and justice in Lexington.

Appendix A: Specific Comments Regarding the Building

In keeping with the commitment to confidentiality made to participants, the following comments have been generalized from our notes while we tried to preserve nuance and flavor. We have abstracted the comments into categories and present the information alphabetically without a presumption of priority.

Accessible - Universal Design

- calming spaces (lighting) for people with neurological disorders
- FM amplification systems (for people with cochlear implants)
- low-noise low sensory environment for people with disabilities
- make sure the building is fully accessible
- noise management (reduction of square spaces that vibrate more)
- ramp is a nightmare
- support for people with disabilities

Appearance

- current design is an expression of the (former) chief's vision; it is designed as a fortress (and in part should be) but not necessarily as much
- likes the colonial look

Community Centric

- Center location is important
- community / training room
- community oriented spaces
- community room
- community space
- enhance interaction with the community
- facility that links community will help with coping with events (eg, national problems)
- friendly in a community facing way
- people's station

Flexible

- access to social workers
- be flexible to allow meaningful number of embedded social workers
- community room is very helpful
- community supports new or rehabilitated station
- create space for human services department to be co-located
- current design has forward-thinking flexibility
- current design is large and flexible enough
- gender separation in holding cells
- it might be helpful to have some social services in the building to create more interaction
- meet Lexington needs
- more open spaces, more transparency, different staffing and more opportunity for community interaction should all be part of a meaningful and well considered design
- multi-disciplinary orientation
- resources for mental health, language, domestic abuse

- space for families to use
- space for handling mental health issues
- space for youth issues
- spaces that are family friendly

Functional

- dedicated space for youth
- learning areas
- privacy for discussions with public
- private space for counseling
- space for animal control
- training facility is important
- wouldn't imagine that there would be a need for full time mental health personnel in the building

Inclusive

- all bathrooms/locker rooms should be gender neutral
- bring department staff together and reduce separation from command staff
- locate command offices among staff
- support for non-gendered restrooms

Timing - Building the Station Now

- build the station
- current design is major needed upgrade
- current station is really drab
- deteriorating building detracts from morale
- facility overdue
- full support
- like the FD, our public employees deserve a facility where they can work safely
- long overdue
- move forward asap
- need appropriate facilities
- not dependent on rethinking how policing should be performed
- station is completely separate from how we undertake policing
- support building

Timing - Delay the Project

- challenge for residents to cope with cost of station
- develop policing principles first and then design with an intentional embodiment of principles
- do we need a new station
- concern that broader facility function might impact footprint and can't be known until we explore evolution
- rethink policing model before designing building

Welcoming

- appealing lobby

- as inviting as possible
- balance pd safety with welcome
- design is welcoming
- display policing principles prominently in lobby
- inviting space
- meeting areas should be more comfortable
- more open
- more open space at entrance
- more welcoming, less institutional
- no lobby (should have)
- open and welcoming station
- place where people can be comfortable
- police department should feel like home
- signage, banners outside building
- spaces with a more positive vibe (could be color and décor choices)
- station should be more welcoming
- station walled off and opaque (currently, new station should not be)
- welcoming area is critical
- welcoming space
- welcoming station
- welcoming to public

Appendix B: Specific Comments Regarding Policing

In keeping with the commitment to confidentiality made to participants, the following comments have been generalized from our notes, while we tried to preserve nuance and flavor. We have abstracted the comments into categories and present the information alphabetically without a presumption of priority. We again caution readers to avoid making assumptions about the source of these comments, but instead to absorb them in a way that can serve our community constructively going forward. Note again that apparent duplication or contradiction in these items arises because the comments originate with different individuals.

Bias

General Comment / Question

- Concern that correct pronouns are used for addressing gender fluid/non-binary intersex and trans individuals
- Nuances of racism was lost in the Ortiz report – walked away thinking issues were unheard
- One affinity group reported that 7% of its members experienced 1 or 2 incidents of bias due to language or ethnicity; 93% have not experienced any bias from PD
- Ortiz report: in some cases, with racism and other areas of marginalization the report just didn't get it
- Some residents call police on Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC)
- Want PD to be fair and uphold law for everyone
- Worry if gender fluid/non-binary intersex and trans individuals are adequately protected from abuse

Criticism / Areas for Improvement

- At event police officers approached resident of color as if resident didn't belong
- Black drivers being pulled over by PD
- Black friends report bias at all levels of PD
- Female friend reported she was treated disrespectfully and that her requests were dismissed by male officers because of her gender
- In the Town center individuals of marginalized group treated with indifference - feel the onus is on the PD to have intentional outreach with citizens on the streets
- Incident decades ago - PD would often follow non-white daughter home.
- Incident experienced 20 years ago of racial profiling - black teenagers intimidated
- Marginalized community member was approached in center by PD and asked if she needed help – but not in a friendly way
- Perceived disproportional stopping of BIPOC
- Public safety – racial disparities about who gets pulled over, possibly a gender difference
- Stories at MLK Day by residents of color about harassment by individual officers
- Witnessed BIPOC being pulled over; feels like they are being followed by PD

Effectiveness

General Comment / Question

- Incident at school for child with PTSD was traumatizing (vehicles and EMTs) - Concerned about sensitivity while responding to students in distress
- Police investigated a road accident, was there favoritism?

Criticism / Areas for Improvement

- Attentiveness at traffic detail assignments is poor – poor flagging, distracted; we should hire flaggers
- Crowd/detail duty - police often out of sight, don't deter incidents
- Felt ignored when visiting police station
- Incident several years ago - harassed for minor traffic
- Lack of enforcement of Handicapped Parking (HP) – ice cream truck, other parkers
- Lack of enforcement of U-Turns in the center
- Lack of follow-up after break in
- Incident many years ago of mishandled stolen property
- Multiple incidents of PD harassing youth led to distrust of police
- PD staff not wearing masks during pandemic
- Questioned warrantless entry into home several years ago
- Tickets at meters even with HP tag
- Traffic Details - officer just standing rather than working
- Warm and supportive officers did not intervene in face of more aggressive officer's behavior

Praise

- Effective in managing "trolls" at public events
- Efficient
- Feel protected
- Feel Safe
- Feel safe and supported
- Good experiences – even as a teen
- Helpful at events
- Immediate response to call for help
- Integral part of keeping community safe
- Keep us safe
- Kept everyone safe
- Live in Lexington because of the safety
- Mental health training is very good
- Never felt safer than in Lexington
- PD is a tremendous asset to the community
- Police came to help with storm damage
- Police were helpful during a skidding accident
- Police were responsive to call regarding an trespasser

Effectiveness (continued)

Praise
- Positive intervention with teenager having difficulties
- Quick response
- Responsive
- Responsive
- Responsive
- Responsive
- Solved burglary
- SRO has been very supportive of LGBTQ students
- SRO well respected
- SRO: she has been a fantastic resource
- Vast majority feels supported
- Very supportive with public events

Engagement

General Comment / Question
- Community groups should also initiate contact with PD
- Covid has made outreach very difficult
- Ethnic group would like better contact with town to deepen cultural competencies and expose customs
- Humanize officers through participation in town / group events
- Lack of awareness of PD programs can lead to negative assumptions
- Limited contact
- Minimal contact
- Minimal interaction
- Not hearing a dialog between PD and community
- Not many festive ethnic group holidays so there are few opportunities to host cultural gatherings
- Not much interaction
- PD should get to know community
- Sensed tension between defund folks and PD at public event
- Should have intentional overt interaction with citizens by PD
- Take new police chief hiring opportunity to describe role and how we're hiring
- Trust can be built from learning about use of Communities for Restorative Justice - C4RJ and diversionary activities
- Very little interaction with community
- We don't know, in general, what the police do
- Would like more opportunities to interact with PD in non-threatening ways
- Would like PD more involved with youth and diverse members of the community
- Would like to see police at civic and social activities

Engagement (continued)

General Comment / Question

- Would like to see ways of getting to know individuals on the PD (Arlington drop-in at Starbucks / Trader Joe's)

Criticism / Areas for Improvement

- Don't feel the PD are friends and public servants
- Don't see officers in neighborhood – they should park cruiser in different neighborhoods and walk-around, be seen

Praise

- Appreciate interactions with PD for kids at events like Truck Day at library
- Appreciates officers dropping in to meet youth group
- Appreciates youth group visits to PD
- Approachable
- Easy to work with PD
- Elementary school visit to PD was excellent
- Feels like the Police Chief is a partner
- Good connections build trust
- Great support from Chief Corr
- Great youth group visit to PD
- Had a positive visit to station for youth group
- Liked seeing Chief being at BLM and other interactions
- Likes new web pages
- Likes police academy for youth (explorers, cadets)
- Likes Police Explorers and cadet program
- New videos on Police operations are helpful
- PD is supportive of Special Olympics
- PD provides support for LABBB events
- Toys for Tots exposes children to Police in a positive setting
- Youth group visiting to Police station was great

Governance

General Comment / Question

- Are police following policies and are they accountable
- Citizens advisory group recommended
- Civilian oversight board recommended
- Important to adopt Ortiz report recommendations
- Likes the idea of a civilian oversight committee
- Need complaint process independent of PD

Governance (continued)

General Comment / Question

- Need data on stops that are not ticketed
- Need more transparency
- Need more transparency around data
- Need ombudsman for reporting outside Police structure and free from retaliation
- PD Needs better data collection
- PD should be more transparent in how it changes its approach in response to incidents
- PD should collect and disseminate data broadly
- PD should define core values and issue statement reaffirming values
- PD should make data on policing available
- Principles should be developed jointly by PD and Community
- Town should improve independent oversight
- Transparency – concerns that the community doesn't know how department works

Criticism / Areas for Improvement

- Concern that corrective action in response to political symbols displayed in station, misuse of official social media accounts, or leak of information has not been taken
- Lack of transparency in operations and access to data
- Perception that old-boys network exists in PD and hope that new Chief will change this
- Resident had no avenue to complain without risking retribution
- There is limited transparency in current PD

Miscellaneous

General Comment / Question

- Disrespect should not be grounds for arrest
- Feels the need as parent to educate children on how to comply with police to prevent escalation
- Grew up respecting police, but now fear they don't take care of community (generally, not necessarily in Lexington)
- How do we better integrate the police with community; (e.g. when PD is at an elementary school parents wonder what danger has happened even though they are simply present to help with traffic)
- Minors should not be able to waive representation
- Negative experiences with police anywhere can create fear and anxiety for future interactions even when they are only marginally intimidating
- PD needs more support and to be fully staffed
- Policing is a difficult profession, even a simple traffic stop can turn deadly
- Policing is very difficult, e.g., when do police intervene – at a recent protest some felt harassed by protesters, others would describe as 110% positive event
- Support our police in all aspects (training, equipment, station, respect)
- Teach children police are your friends

Miscellaneous (continued)

General Comment / Question

- Tension exists between not wanting police-based SRO and concerns over school shootings
- We need the PD to continue to protect residents against bias and hate crimes

Criticism / Areas for Improvement

- Leakage of information to controversial blogger was concerning
- Incident many years ago - resident reported that an officer filed a complaint to intimidate a resident in retaliation for a relative's action

Praise

- All positive
- All positive
- All positive interactions
- All positive interactions
- Good department
- Great
- Interactions have been great
- Not so bad
- Peer department felt that a ride-along project was good
- Positive
- Praise for what they do
- Satisfied
- Supportive
- Very supportive

Politics

General Comment / Question

- Concern there may be a white-supremacy element on force
- Need to be able to honor fallen heroes

Criticism / Areas for Improvement

- Concern that different political stickers inside police station would not be handled consistently
- Controversial re-tweets on PD account, presidential candidate sticker, and thin blue line flags creates distrust
- Political propaganda on PD social media feed creates distrust

Process

General Comment / Question

- Are we taking advantage of Concord District Court jail-diversion coordinator
- Communication is key – positive interactions build trust
- Expressed concern that teachers are using SRO academic discipline
- Is there adequate support and counseling for police officers
- Jail diversion program utilization is unclear
- Need a simple number that isn't 911 for mental health issues - Emergency Mental Health Number (988) coming in 2022
- Need a warmer hand-off from the PD to the Human Services staff
- PD does not need SWAT team
- PD should be able to triage calls to determine if it is a police issue or mental health issue
- Routine traffic stops should be unarmed
- Suggestion for a police officer to circulate on a bike or motorcycle
- Trash being left after games – can police enforce
- Use of Force reports suggest PD doesn't need to be armed
- Would help to have officers walking the beat, on bikes
- Would like the use of cameras to monitor vandalism at parks
- Would like to see crisis intervention (i.e. clergy or mental health professional) arrive with PD - this would create better outcomes with mental health support from beginning
- Would like to see life skills training targeted for seniors

Criticism / Areas for Improvement

- Business number difficult to use – especially with phone menu tree
- Limited follow-up in response to complaints about unsatisfactory PD interactions
- PD seems over-militarized
- Should reduce the footprint of armed officers, add electronic measures and unarmed officers
- Would like to see a system in place to make PD aware of mental health issues in advance of a crisis

Praise

- Fabulous job de-escalating a child experiencing a mental health episode
- Female officer appropriately responded to an abuse situation, including follow-up, and ensuring mental health services were in place
- Female police officer explained risks of running away to child
- Officer explained online registration renewal allowing driver to renew on spot and continue driving home

Staffing

General Comment / Question

- Concerns over calls to reduce police will lead to inadequate protection
- Do we need as many officers?
- Does SRO have to be in PD – maybe more accessible if not identified with police
- Expressed concerns over mental health delivery based on stories of others
- Many needs could be handled by social workers rather than PD
- Maybe SRO role is more of a social worker role
- Mental health response should be by mental health professionals
- Mental health workers should respond to mental health calls
- Need full staffing
- Need mental-health professionals
- Officers should be able to review calls with social workers
- PD needs some social workers for domestic issues
- Police need to continue to participate in calls if there is a demonstrated risk (i.e. mental health issue, etc.)
- Resident would like to offer hybrid response ideas for dealing with drug overdoses
- Social workers would be more effective rather than solely relying on chaplains
- We need a dedicated animal control officer
- We need social workers working from police station (example from another town)
- Would like to see more police presence (center and cruisers)

Criticism / Areas for Improvement

- Concern over the lack of promotion of minority officers
- PD staff diversity doesn't match community
- Want PD more reflective of community makeup

Tone

General Comment / Question

- Commitment to inclusion does not appear uniform throughout the PD
- Not heard of ugliness – silliness yes (e.g., told to get the hell back in car when observing a cyclist fall)
- Officer empathy is inconsistent – some are angels and others indifferent
- Residents can have a jaded view of police and might initiate combative responses
- Sense of some friction between command staff and individual officers

Criticism / Areas for Improvement

- Command staff dismissive of reports of lack of parking enforcement
- Detail officer used aggressive profanity in directing resident around construction project
- During routine traffic stops officers were rude and unapologetic

Tone (continued)

General Comment / Question

- During traffic stops, some officers are unfriendly or negative, looking for problems
- Experience with being yelled at during traffic stop
- Friend reported that command staff was dismissive of reports of negative interaction with officer
- Heard story of mistreatment of resident by police officer while parking
- Male officer responding to a call acted aggressive, macho, insensitive and accusatory, but was helpful when resident stood her ground
- Male officer was not "kind" – not supportive in face of language barrier
- Neighbor reported disrespectful treatment by officer and sense of gender bias
- Officer responded to call but was unenthusiastic – not my job (but did what was needed)
- PD response to abuse case was insensitive which compounded trauma
- Police officer acted aggressively when interacting while parking at an event
- Police officer responding to mental health situation was overly aggressive physically with at risk teen
- Police representatives come across as defensive when racial bias issues arise in public discussion
- Resident perceived lack of empathy in response to engaging at risk youth
- Resident perceived that police officer used unnecessary intimidation and control when dealing with teenager who failed to stop
- Specific officers were perceived to be too aggressive in responding to incident
- Stopped for no real reason; officers were rude and unapologetic

Praise

- Broad appreciation for Chief Corr's leadership
- Caring
- Compassionate
- Courteous
- Excellent
- Fair (act fairly)
- Female officer made resident feel supported
- Friendly
- Helpful
- Helpful
- Helpful
- Helpful
- Helpful and well intentioned
- Multiple interactions – all positive
- No sense of bias or discrimination
- Pleasant
- Pleasant interactions
- Polite
- Proactive

Tone (continued)

Praise

- Professional
- Professional
- Professional
- Professional
- Reassuring
- Respectful
- Respectful
- Sympathetic
- Thoughtful
- Understanding
- Very accessible
- Very kind
- Very nice

Training

General Comment / Question

- Bodily searches should be gender-parallel
- Concern over training - some people with disabilities slur words and fear that might be interpreted as impairment
- Diversity training and true adoption of principles is essential
- Expressed concern about deaf people reaching for placard in car to notify police of their condition
- More training for PD as allies - hostility should not exist between officers and citizens
- Need training which isn't a check-off item - needs to result in values that are absorbed
- PD needs continuous skill development
- PD needs cultural awareness training for when they enter homes (i.e. officers wearing shoes)
- PD needs more mental health training – especially for younger officers
- PD needs more training for dealing with non-English speakers
- PD needs more training for domestic / racial issues
- PD needs more training on cultural differences and attitudes towards police
- PD needs more training on diversity
- PD needs sensitivity training for Diversity Equity and Inclusion (in particular with regard to Asian community)
- PD needs to be aware that it is unlikely for certain ethnic groups to make eye contact
- PD needs to know that dogs are not pets for some ethnic groups (K9 units can create friction)
- Police officers need more conflict resolution, de-escalation, mental health training
- Reasonable and well conducted efforts in training is appreciated
- Sensitivity training for dealing with LGBTQ+ community
- Town should adequately fund equipment and training

Training (continued)

General Comment / Question

- Training needs to be kept current – best practices are evolving
- Would like to see first responders being trained in mental health and not rely on volunteers like clergy (good social work team in Town but would like to see it beefed up)

Criticism / Areas for Improvement

- In order to build trust, the police officers should be sensitive to the use of preferred pronouns
- PD needs more de-escalation training
- Police officer was insensitive to blind resident when they instructed resident that they should have taken down offending vehicle license plate number
- Training for dealing with autism – officer failed to defuse situation with driver when autistic child in rear seat

Appendix C - Cultural, Civic, and Community Organizations Contacted

Association of Black Citizens of Lexington (ABCL)
Bangladeshi Americans of Lexington (BALex)
Brazilian American Cultural Association (BACA)
CALex (Chinese Americans of Lexington)
Chinese American Association of Lexington (CAAL)
Indian Americans of Lexington (IAL)
Japanese Support Group of Lexington (JPLex)
Knights of Columbus Lexington Council 94
Korean-American Organization of Lexington (KOLex)
League of Women Voters of Lexington (MA)
LexFun!
Lexington at Home
Lexington Chamber of Commerce
Lexington Historical Society
Lexington Interfaith Clergy Association (LICA)
Lexington Lodge of Elks # 2204
Lexington Neighbors & Newcomers Club
Lexington Police Patrolman's Association
Lexington Retailers Association
Lexington Boy Scout Troop 160
LexPride
LexRAP
Lextinas
Lions Club of Lexington
PTA/O Presidents Council (PPC)
Meriam Hill Association
Muslim American Group
Rotary Club of Lexington
South Lexington Civic Association
Simon W Robinson Masonic Lodge
Town Meeting Members Association (TMMA)

Town Committees Engaged

Commission on Disabilities
Human Rights Committee

Appendix D – Solicitation for Feedback

https://www.lexingtonma.gov/home/news/select-board-seeks-public-feedback-policing-lexington

Select Board Seeks Public Feedback on Policing in Lexington

POSTED ON: MAY 26, 2021 - 4:16PM

Over the past several years, the Town of Lexington has been planning for the construction of a new police station. The Select Board has paused design development on the police station project to conduct public outreach on policing in Lexington.

Select Board Members have been meeting with cultural, ethnic, and social groups within the Lexington community to discuss this topic in small group settings. In the next step of this public outreach process, we are looking for the broader public to share their thoughts or concerns with members of the Select Board directly.

We are seeking feedback on the following questions:

- What has your experience been with the Lexington Police Department? (Positive and/or negative experiences)
- Do you have concerns about the current Police Department operations that might impact how we would build a new police station?
- Any other thoughts you might want to share about policing in Lexington?

How to share your feedback:

1. For an individual meeting with two Select Board Members (Joe Pato and Doug Lucente), please email selectboard@lexingtonma.gov or call 781-698-4580 to schedule a time. **This feedback would be kept confidential.**
2. If you would like to share feedback electronically, please fill out this online form. Please write "Police Station Project Feedback" in the Comment Section. **Feedback submitted electronically cannot be kept confidential and would become part of the public record.**

The deadline to submit feedback is June 15.