

Newton Police Reform Task Force Second Update to Mayor Fuller - November 18, 2020

The Newton Police Reform Task Force continues to meet on a regular basis as we work to fulfill our charge. Thanks to the time spent and information shared with us by the Newton Police Department, we have learned a great deal of information that has been invaluable to us.

Since our last update, the task force has been working in subcommittees to take on the work. This has allowed us to focus more deeply on the many areas we are charged to make recommendations in.

We are excited that the RFP selection process has resulted in the selection of the local firm Strategy Matters. We met as a group for introductions and to share the work of the task force and subcommittees thus far. Strategy Matters has already begun to familiarize themselves with the past recordings of meetings and other relevant material.

During this six-week time period, we have had three additional opportunities to engage directly with the community. One highlight was the joint session we co-sponsored with the Newton Overdue: Confronting Race and Racism series where Professor Mahzahrin Banaji, known internationally for her expertise in implicit bias, gave a presentation on implicit bias for our city and included an opportunity for questions and answers to be discussed.

Professor Banaji and Prof. Jack Glaser noted scholar on the psychology of bias, with a focus on policing, held a follow-up session for the task force, members of the Newton Police Department and representatives from Strategy Matters, which incorporated the information from the first session on implicit bias with specific information about policing, and data and about practices that have been successful and not successful in policing around the country. During this meeting, Professors Banaji and Glaser answered questions and offered science-based suggestions for us to consider as we go about our work. We were delighted that we were joined by a substantial cohort from the Newton Police Department who also used the opportunity offered to engage in a very substantive way. We look forward to more opportunities to engage and work collaboratively with the NPD.

The task force held a second open community forum for people to share both positive and negative experiences with the Newton Police Department adding this time, a request for public input on recommendations they would like to share. We received many suggestions for our consideration.

Finally, we held a second re-imagining safety session involving a group of community stakeholders led by our earliest facilitator Dr. Ayesha McAdams Mahmoud. We look forward to receiving the de-identified data from that report to continue to inform our work.

Moving forward, the task force will be working closely with our new consultants who will be assisting with creating and implementing an overall strategy. We will have regular meetings to collaborate and look forward to this partnership.