



# New London Public Safety Policy Review Committee

Report & Recommendations  
January 13, 2021

Submitted to Mayor Michael Passero

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the summer of 2020, George Floyd and other Black Americans were violently killed by police officers, most often without penalty. These violent police killings sparked the latest iteration of a global social movement against structural racism and police brutality. Locally, New London residents connected with this global movement and questioned the policies and practices of our local police department.

In response, Mayor Michael Passero assigned a committee of volunteers to review relevant policies and practices of the New London Police Department and to present recommendations regarding areas for potential improvement. The committee reviewed numerous resources to understand the full context and the nuances of national calls for the “abolition” and/or defunding” of police units. One important case study for the committee was the ongoing work in Minneapolis to better align city resources with the educational and social services that would improve the quality of life for residents and decrease the need for traditional forms of policing.

The committee met on an almost weekly basis for more than six months, which resulted in findings of strengths and areas of improvement. In addition to regular meetings, the committee engaged in research and thoughtful analysis and consulted with city officials as well as local and national experts. Strengths of NLPD included recent adaptations to the department’s use of force policies, including: banning neck and chest holds; implementing the use of body and dashboard cameras; and improving surveillance technology. Another area of strength was in the department’s longstanding participation in a 40-hour Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training model, though a relatively small proportion of officers have completed the training.

Areas of concern uncovered by the committee led us to create five overarching goals, listed below, with a set of 18 specific

recommendations that are provided in greater detail beginning on page 10 of this report.

- 1. Prevent police misconduct and strengthen the system of accountability**
  - a. Fully implement body and dash cameras
  - b. Establish a Civilian Police Review Board
  - c. Review and update complaint procedures
  - d. Revise the city charter to allow for establishment of a Police Commission
- 2. Improve NLPD hiring and evaluation practices**
  - a. Develop a recruitment pipeline
  - b. Create community-oriented onboarding
  - c. Improve staffing structure
  - d. Develop formal performance evaluation process
- 3. Expand and enhance NLPD officer training**
  - a. Develop specialized training programs
  - b. Expand Crisis Intervention Training
  - c. Develop anti-racism training and certification program
- 4. Strengthen NLPD and community relations**
  - a. Renew the mission and goals of the Police Community Relations Committee
  - b. Remove School Resource Officer (SRO)
  - c. Enhance social media policies and practices
- 5. Restructure funds and identify new funding sources to strengthen human services in New London**
  - a. Employ a holistic approach to budgeting for public safety and support services
  - b. Increase Funding to the Department of Human Services
  - c. Involve City Council in contract negotiations
  - d. Explore external funding

The committee also advises the Mayor to adopt relevant portions of the Act Concerning Police Accountability (HB 6004), as articulated in this report.

## INTRODUCTION

Built upon a long history of racial violence in the United States, the senseless killings of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and countless other Black Americans by police in the summer of 2020 set this nation and the world ablaze with outcries for racial justice and greater police accountability. In New London, consistent with trends around the country, many activists and organizers took to the streets to express solidarity with the global Black Lives Matter movement and to make demands of their local and state governments to reform, and in some cases, abolish the current policing model.

On May 25, 2020, Mayor Michael Passero responded to demands from New London citizens by calling together a group of volunteers to review the policies and practices of the New London Police Department (NLPD). This group would eventually become a working committee that would be charged to make recommendations for actions that could be taken to improve policing in the city.

The report that follows summarizes the research and analysis completed by the committee, presents findings on the current state of policing in New London, and offers recommendations to the Mayor and City Council for areas of improvement.

## COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Mayor assembled a small group of community leaders with varied professional backgrounds and areas of expertise to discuss policing in New London. After a few discussions and organizational meetings in July, the group decided to formalize its work and expand its membership to include additional representation, specifically, to amplify the voices and perspectives of New London youth. The final membership roster of the committee is provided below.

Lonnie Braxton, Esq.  
Senior Assistant CT State's Attorney

Rev. Florence Clarke  
Retired Educator and Minister

Efraín Domínguez, Jr.  
President, New London City Council

Jerome Fischer  
Retired Executive Director, Jewish Federation of Eastern Connecticut

Curtis K. Goodwin  
New London City Councilor

Jean Jordan  
President of New London NAACP  
Retired New London Teacher

Tamara Lanier  
First Vice President of New London NAACP  
Retired Chief Probation Officer

Daryl McGraw  
President of Formerly Inc.

Dr. John F. McKnight, Jr., *chair*  
Dean of Institutional Equity and Inclusion and  
Affiliated Associate Professor of Education at  
Connecticut College

Clayton Potter, *youth representative*  
Community Engagement Coordinator at  
Connecticut College

AdannaLee Robitaille, *youth representative*

Mary Savage  
Director of Campus Safety and Emergency  
Operations at Connecticut College

In order to obtain important documents and review information about current NLPD policies and practices, the committee issued a standing meeting invitation to the following officials

from the city of New London, most of whom regularly attended committee meetings:

Mayor Michael Passero  
Mayor of New London

Steven Fields  
Chief Administrative Officer

Jeanne Milstein  
NL Director of Human Services

Chief Peter Reichard  
New London Police Department

Captain Brian M. Wright  
New London Police Department

The committee especially appreciated the consistent and cooperative participation of Police Chief Peter Reichard and Captain Brian Wright. They answered committee members' questions and provided all the documents and information we requested. We also appreciated the participation of Director of Human Service Jeanne Milstein (whom we formally interviewed), and the constant and respectful support and participation of the Mayor and Chief Administrative Officer Steven Fields. All New London officials respected our independence and determination to be as objective and thorough in our review as possible.

#### SUBCOMMITTEES

The committee worked as a whole to complete the NLPD policy review, to review practices for the hiring and retention of NLPD officers and to discuss police accountability. The group divided into subcommittees to delve more deeply into three areas of focus. The subcommittees were assigned as follows:

##### Restructuring funding

Tamara Lanier, chair  
John McKnight

Efraín Domínguez, Jr.  
Jerry Fischer  
Curtis Goodwin

##### Training and education

Mary Savage  
Clayton Potter, chair  
Lonnie Braxton

##### Police and community relations

Daryl McGraw  
AdannaLee Robitaille, chair  
Rev. Florence Clarke  
Jean Jordan

#### INVITED GUESTS

As part of our deliberations, we met with two resources outside of New London city officials: Jack Drumm, Chief of Police of the Madison, CT Police Department, and Katharine Evans and Samantha Rabins, representatives of the Denver Police Department and Mental Health Center of Denver Co-Responder Initiative.

We also met with the Police Community Relations Committee on two occasions to learn more about the committee's formation and current function.

#### COMMITTEE CHARGE

After a few organizational meetings, Mayor Passero formalized the committee and provided the following specific charge to the group:

The Public Safety Policy Review Committee is charged with reviewing all aspects of law enforcement within the City of New London. This will involve reviewing current police department policies, practices, and any other aspect of the police department's operation that the committee considers important for its consideration. The committee should also review the police department budget and deliver an opinion on whether the budget is appropriate with regard to the overall

distribution of city resources in relation to other critical city services. The committee should also review relevant statistics on police department operations such as use of force and civilian complaints. The committee should consider the effectiveness of the existing civilian complaint process and the existing Police Community Relations Committee. The overall goal of this committee is to evaluate whether New London polices our community in a manner consistent with community expectations. The committee will complete its work by identifying shortcomings and recommending changes.

## COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The committee decided to meet on a weekly basis starting with an initial meeting on June 17, 2020 and continuing through January 13, 2021. These meetings were set up and administered by Mayoral Secretary Richelle Meneses. We thank Richelle for her dedication and skill in facilitating our virtual gatherings.

The committee was not intended to serve as a standing committee in the city of New London, nor was the committee granted budgetary or other decision-making authority. Therefore, in order to accomplish the work outlined in its charge in an efficient and timely manner, the committee members agreed to meet privately and to offer once monthly public hearings. Video recordings of private meetings can be made available to the public from the Mayor's Office by request.

## NATIONAL CONTEXT

### POLICE REFORM: THEORY AND PRACTICE

Across generations, many scholars, activists, and everyday citizens have imagined and reimagined different approaches to policing that would enhance public trust in law enforcement. The events of the summer of 2020 reenergized discussions in American cities

and towns about a range of possible actions—with terms like defunding, dismantling, and downsizing being used interchangeably and as subcategories under the overarching idea of “abolishing police.”

The committee referenced numerous news stories, journal articles, and other resources to understand the variety of current ideas about police reform. We tapped into a lively debate among scholars and activists about the feasibility of building an entirely new approach to public safety with so few practical ideas about how they can be implemented. This section seeks to define and summarize the important elements of two key concepts in the national discussion on policing: abolition and defunding.

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### DEFINING TERMS

**Abolition.** Calls to “abolish” the police have been a consistent refrain in movements for racial justice and protests against police brutality. The rhetoric of abolition has been used in a variety of ways and for different purposes and, in an important presidential election year, it has also been heavily politicized.

Martin Sheeks, member of Minneapolis-based community organization MPD150, defines abolition and related concepts as follows:

“There are a lot of different terms floating around right now — defund, dismantle, disband — but what it comes down to is a call for the abolition of policing. This does not mean that when you dial 911 there won't be someone to respond to your emergency; it means that the right person will respond with the right skills and tools to provide the care needed. We already have some of this in the form of fire departments and EMS... As we abolish policing, what we need to think about is what other systems we can put in place to make sure people are getting their needs met. Not having the response be police also means that more

communities will feel safe calling for help” (Illing, 2020).

Ayobami Laniyonu, a sociologist at the University of Toronto, describes police abolition in the following manner:

“Police abolition to me is a framework for thinking about and imagining alternatives to the nation’s current model of policing. My work and the work of many other scholars demonstrate that policing works in part to manage and perpetuate inequality, especially racial inequality. Abolition is an orientation toward changing our current model of policing that puts policing’s role in managing the deep racial and class inequality in the United States at the forefront” (Illing, 2020).

**Defunding.** The idea of defunding police is closely related to calls for abolition in its focus on reallocating funds from police toward education, health and wellness, and human services departments. Georgetown University law professor Christy Lopez connects the two ideas as follows:

“‘Police abolition’ and ‘defund the police’ are not terms I came up with, and different people mean different things when they use those terms. But a shared objective among most defund proponents, which I also share, is that we need to reset public safety in order to eliminate our overreliance on law enforcement, discrimination, and avoidable harm in public safety, including unnecessary police killings... What this means in terms of action items and policy initiatives is that we need to scrutinize our state and local budgets, educate ourselves about what police do versus what we need to be and feel safe, and realign the budget and our social programs to better serve our public safety needs. We start this process by rethinking what we mean by public safety and by questioning our assumptions about when and why law enforcement is the right vehicle to address a problem” (Illing, 2020).

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## CASE STUDY: MINNEAPOLIS

The Minneapolis Police Department has been in the national spotlight for months following the viral spread of video footage of the four officers involved in the killing of George Floyd. It perhaps comes as no surprise, then, that the actions of city officials following Mr. Floyd’s death continue to be scrutinized by leaders and decision-makers in cities and towns across the country. Minneapolis has become an important case study for observing how police and community relations are intensified in moments of crisis and how community organizers, law enforcement, and elected officials often struggle to find common ground.

Perhaps most notably, in June 2020, the Minneapolis City Council decided by a majority vote to [dismantle](#) its Police Department in order to create a new system of public safety, a pronouncement that was met with widespread approval from activists and organizers (Searcey & Eligon, 2020). However, a few months later, attempts to move forward with dismantling the department [faltered](#) because of political and legislative speed bumps, including the lack of support from the city’s Mayor. Several City Councilors were interviewed as saying there was confusion among them about what dismantling and defunding MPD would entail and how it could be practically achieved (Herndon, 2020).

There continues to be vast disagreement among the residents of Minneapolis as to how best to allocate the city resources to deemphasize the role of police. But conversations about abolition have helped the city to engage in thoughtful dialogue about other possible models for ensuring public safety.

Using Minneapolis as one example of many, the NLPD Review Committee has taken into account the need to balance idealistic and pragmatic approaches to police reform in order to achieve the goal of making substantive changes that will keep the New London community safe and free

from unmitigated racial bias, violence, and brutality in policing.

## U.S. CONFERENCE OF MAYORS WORKING GROUP ON POLICE REFORM—STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

In June 2020, the United States Conference of Mayors (USCM) developed a national Working Group on Police Reform and issued a [Statement of Principles](#) in which city leaders expressed a shared commitment to “recasting the relationship between our police departments and the communities they serve.” The principles of police reform—adapted from an original version authored by former UK Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel—are presented, in full, below because of their relevance to our work in New London and the committee’s recommendations.

*The six sections that follow have been excerpted from the USCM Working Group on Police Relations Statement of Principles.*

### 1. REDEFINING THE ROLE OF LOCAL POLICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY

The current moment calls into question, but also provides a unique opportunity to discuss, the first principles of policing and requires a community conversation on the proper role of police in addressing the needs of residents. Building healthy, safe and vibrant communities requires many other tools than law enforcement alone. We must reset the compact [understanding/trust] between police and communities they are sworn to protect. This should begin with a hard but essential dialogue defining the proper role of the police. We need to ask, “Who is best equipped to be the first responder in addressing a long list of calls for service?” The reflexive answer cannot be “the police.” When the government has no presence in communities in a healthy and supportive way, the primary governmental actor that people see and identify are the police. In the absence of appropriate levels of funding for

things like mental health care; affordable, high quality health care; accessible housing; healthy food options; good paying jobs; quality and safe education options; and other social services, the police are consistently thrust into a role of addressing these various social issues – a role for which they were not created and for which they will never be properly equipped. We must meet community needs with proper funding and investments and avoid inserting the police into roles in which they must be the primary or only public response. If we ask too much of the police, and not enough of ourselves, our residents will always get too little.

### 2. TRUST AND LEGITIMACY

Public approval and acceptance are the basis of effective policing. The public and police must find common ground on which to trust each other. Police must earn their community’s trust and cooperation, and, in turn, the public must respect officers as faithful guardians of the community who both follow and enforce the law. This requires those who enforce the law to be accountable for adhering to it. Unintentional mistakes are not the same as intentional misconduct, but when police cross the line of established policy or legally permissible conduct, they must be held accountable in order to have legitimacy in the eyes of the public. Effective policing requires the police and members of the community to develop constructive and respectful ways of interacting with each other. The principles of community policing are critical to this process. The well of good will must be built and filled daily and long before a crisis hits. These principles of trust and legitimacy must also permeate the decisions about supervisor selection, especially the front-line supervisors who are in most frequent contact with officers on a daily basis. Thus, the criteria for supervisor selection, training and accountability are essential elements of defining the culture of a department. Supervisors must be held accountable for reinforcing the core values of the department in the discharge of their daily responsibilities.



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### *3. SANCTITY OF LIFE*

At the core of a police officer's responsibilities is the duty to protect all human life and physical safety. To ingrain this fundamental principle, use of force policies must clearly state this requirement, with specificity, and require officers to intervene when a fellow officer is using disproportionate or unnecessary force. As is often stated, just because one can use force, does not mean that it should be used. It is critical that we ensure that officers are properly trained to value the sanctity of life and only use the minimum amount of force necessary, if any, to accomplish lawful objectives. Officers must have the tools and judgment to differentiate circumstances that do not warrant the use of force. Use of force policies and training must also include, but not be limited to: bans on chokeholds or any other carotid restraints; de-escalation and critical incident training; peer intervention to prevent misconduct; bans on shooting at moving vehicles except under extreme circumstances where a life is at risk; limitations on car pursuits to avoid death or great bodily harm; and defined parameters for foot pursuits, among other things.

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### *4. EQUALITY AND DUE PROCESS*

Police conduct must not vary on account of race, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity or other status. Every person is entitled to equal treatment, respect for his or her constitutional rights and due process of law. Fairness, respect and professionalism enhance public safety as they enhance public support and cooperation. We are mindful that the history of policing in many places has been interwoven with the nation's history of racial discrimination, including efforts to use police forces to ratify and maintain segregation and other forms of racism. To ensure equal and just treatment of all persons, departments must provide consistent training on impartial policing, anti-discrimination principles, and cultural literacy.

Members of the community must be included as teachers in the training process and given an opportunity to assist in curriculum development so that a community perspective is part of the mandatory training for all recruits and veteran officers. Departments must also do more to ensure that in recruitment, promotion and retention decisions, diversity matters.

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### *5. COMMUNITY*

Departments must strive for a sincere belief among officers that respectful, constitutional engagement with the community is the most powerful tool they possess, over and above a gun and a badge. Police officers must be regarded as guardians and part of the community they serve and work to support and engage with those communities to effectively discharge their public safety mission. We should support police outreach initiatives and more broadly consider how to address the needs of youth, people with mental illness, people with disabilities, immigrants and refugees, people from various faith traditions and others who come into contact with law enforcement. Police departments' hiring, retention and promotion practices should strive to be more representative of the populations they serve. Departments must also incentivize officers to live in the communities they serve and to otherwise spend time building real, authentic relationships with members of the community, especially youth.

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### *6. TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY TO REINFORCE CONSTITUTIONAL POLICING*

True police reform will not come about through improved policies and training alone. We must ensure that police fulfill their commitments to protect the residents they serve and that police build trust and legitimacy through transparency, engagement and accountability. Police must play a role that reinforces democratic principles in our society. To ensure public awareness and

reassure the public that officers are working to protect the community, departments should make their policies publicly available and, consistent with relevant laws and agreements, provide access to law enforcement data and findings of officer misconduct. Technology that can enhance accountability—such as body cameras and early warning systems—should be utilized. Cities should adopt uniform policies for the prompt release of video, audio and initial police reports on all matters of public interest, including specifically those arising from police-involved shootings, deaths in custody, or allegations of First Amendment violations. The collective bargaining agreements between cities and their police departments should provide fair, sensible and workable accountability mechanisms and eliminate any provisions that are roadblocks to addressing conduct that is inconsistent with the policies and laws that govern our officers. Police unions must engage with good will as well and participate in these urgent reforms, work with cities as partners — not obstructionists — on accountability and transparency and other reforms so that we can create stronger police departments that are truly responsive to the needs of residents and establish better police community relations that serve both communities and officers. Cities should also work to eliminate any state laws that impede the implementation of sensible accountability measures across police departments. Transparency and more robust accountability mechanisms are necessary to improve police-community relations.

## NLPD REVIEW COMMITTEE FINDINGS

The committee completed an extensive review of NLPD policies and practices in order to make recommendations for improvement. The committee learned that NLPD officers have not discharged firearms (except to exterminate rabid animals) since the year 2011. There have also been relatively few complaints about police conduct to the department (approximately 10-12 annually). However, many more complaints

have been issued to external organizations, like the New London chapter of the NAACP. Given these details and our review of policies and practices, this section outlines areas of strength and challenges for the department to consider.

## STRENGTHS

**Use of Force Policies.** The impetus for establishing this committee was the death of George Floyd and many other African Americans at the hands of local police officers. Some of these tragic incidents occurred after our group was convened. Therefore, we first reviewed policies related to the use of force, and we are pleased that the NLPD now, of their own volition, and in conformity with State guidelines, has the following regulations and plans in place:

- Choke holds are not allowed. Nor are neck or chest holds, which restrict breathing or the flow of blood.
- Body and car dash cameras will be used constantly by all officers on patrol.
- Technology will be upgraded to accommodate the use of body and dash cameras, improve 911 responses, and to monitor surveillance cameras.

**Crisis Intervention Training.** The New London Police Department has been considered a leading agency in the state of Connecticut because of its specialized training in de-escalation and crisis intervention. The Department was the first in the region to partner with an outside organization to offer De-escalation Training.

NLPD was also the first department in the New England region to adopt the Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Model, which they initiated in the year 2000. Often referred to as the “Memphis Model,” the CIT program was first developed

and implemented in 1988 as the result of a partnership between the Memphis, TN Chapter of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, Inc. and the Memphis Police Department. The team was developed to address the special challenges to law enforcement posed by persons with mental illness. An important aspect of this model was to create specialists in crisis management within the department as opposed to creating a special unit. There were initially 14 NLPD personnel trained in CIT and as of 2021 the current number is 40 which, represents more than 50% of the department.

The ultimate goal of CIT is to respond more professionally to crisis situations, to treat individuals with respect, mitigate the issue in a peaceful manner, and prevent its recurrence. The benefits of CIT include: lessening the need for use of force; reduction in injuries to consumers; improvements in community relations; decrease in involuntary commitments; and jail diversion.

The CIT training requires 40 hours for completion and officers are paired with mental health providers to complete the program. NLPD has partnered with IBH health providers to complete the training and have transformed the model over time to “CIT Plus,” an approach that is now used by more than 14 police departments across the state.

## CHALLENGES

**Hiring Practices.** The committee learned that the department struggles to recruit new officers from the New London community. There are also challenges in recruiting a racially diverse workforce that need to be addressed.

**Staffing and Budgetary Considerations.** There are differences of opinion about the best way to staff the department both in terms of overall numbers and the proportion of patrol officers to supervisors. While some argue that an

increase in the total number of officers would allow for a reduction in overtime expenses, that would also mean an increase in the budget for salaries and benefits, including retirement packages. Finding the right number and proportion of staff will require ongoing research and discussion.

**Contract Negotiations.** The influence of the police union in contract negotiations presents challenges to the ability of City Councilors and the Mayor’s Office to analyze and determine reasonable salary and benefits packages that are in alignment with regional and national benchmarks.

**Regional Hub.** Our discussions with NLPD leadership made it clear that the department is tasked with responding to calls and handling a variety of incidents involving residents from other towns and municipalities in the region because we host the major hospital and other key human service agencies. There are also several colleges and non-profits in the city who require first responder services. This means a substantial amount of time and services are granted to non-tax payers within New London.

**Community Relations.** Some New London residents, particularly people from marginalized backgrounds, feel that the relationship between police and the community is strained and needs considerable attention and improvement. Some of the strain is exacerbated by what the committee deems to be inappropriate usage of social media by individual officers. Committee members learned about concerns related to the role of the Police Community Relations Committee in helping to foster solid relationships and to contribute to help prevent police misconduct.

**Accountability.** Several concerns were raised about the current processes and procedures for filing formal complaints about police misconduct. The committee also learned that

there is not a formalized or consistent practice for conducting annual performance evaluations for police officers.

## COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

The committee respectfully submits the following goals and recommendations.

### 1. PREVENT POLICE MISCONDUCT AND STRENGTHEN SYSTEM OF ACCOUNTABILITY

#### 1a. Fully Implement Body and Dash Cameras.

The department has already committed to the practice of having patrol officers wear body cameras and having dashboard cameras in patrol vehicles. The full implementation of these new technologies will help instill a sense of confidence among citizens in their interactions with police.

#### 1b. Establish a Civilian Police Review Board.

The committee recommends that City Council establish a Civilian Police Review Board, as authorized by new legislation in the State of Connecticut’s Police Accountability Act (HB 6004). There are various models for City Council to consider in establishing a Civilian Police Review Board. A report by the National Institute of Justice outlined four models as follows:

1. The board investigates allegations of police misconduct and submits recommendations to the police chief;
2. Police officers investigate allegations and submit findings for review by the board; the board sends approval or rejection of recommendations to the chief of police;
3. Complainants appeal police department findings to the board who review them and submit their recommendations to the police chief; and
4. An auditor investigates the process by which the police department processes complaints and reports to the board and the police department.

The committee requests City Council to consider the merits of these and other possible models with the aim of providing sufficient authority to the Civilian Police Review Board to discourage police misconduct and increase accountability. The Review Board should have the full power vested by HB 6004 (Section 17), including the authority to “issue subpoenas to compel the attendance of witnesses before such board and require the production for examination of any books and papers that such board deems relevant to any matter under investigation or in question.” They should also be granted authority to engage in consistent and continuous review of NLPD policies, including those related to use of force, to ensure alignment with national best practices.

#### 1c. Review and Update Complaint Procedures.

We recommend that the appeals process for resolved civilian complaints that currently exists, which require only a hearing before the Mayor of the City, be reworked and assigned as a charge to the newly established Civilian Police Review Board.

We also recommend that the appeals process be more fully explained and prominently positioned in the letter sent to a complainant upon resolution of the complaint, and these letters should be offered in Spanish and other common languages.

**1d. Revise the City Charter to Allow for Establishment of a Police Commission.** More than 40 Connecticut municipalities have Police Commissions, civilians who are elected or appointed to oversee hiring, dismissal, and other personnel related matters for their local Police Departments (see Table below).

Ansonia	Berlin	Bethel
Branford	Bridgeport	Bristol
Brookfield	Clinton	Colchester
Cromwell	East Haven	Easton

East Windsor	Fairfield	Guilford
Madison	Milford	Monroe
Naugatuck	New Britain	New Canaan
New Haven	Newtown	North Branford
North Haven	Norwalk	Plainfield
Plymouth	Redding	Ridgefield
Seymour	Simsbury	Southington
Stamford	Stonington	Suffield
Waterbury	Waterford	Watertown
West Haven	Weston	Wilton
Windsor Locks	Woodbridge	

Source:  
<https://www.cga.ct.gov/2001/rpt/2001-R-0383.htm>

This committee thoroughly researched the benefits and challenges of establishing a police commission. While we feel that a commission will significantly strengthen police accountability by granting the authority to hire and dismiss officers, we also recognize that the establishment will require a significant amount of time and political will, beginning with the process to revise the City Charter and contract negotiations with the Police Union.

Our recommendation is that City Council establish a Civilian Police Review Board as an initial step toward greater police accountability. After the Review Board has been successfully established, it shall determine what steps should be taken to establish a Police Commission that is designed to fit the specific needs of New London.

## 2. IMPROVE NLPD HIRING AND EVALUATION PRACTICES

**2a. Develop a Recruitment Pipeline.** We recommend that NLPD develop outreach initiatives and recruitment programming to develop a pipeline for New London youth to consider careers in law enforcement. It is notable that NLPD has low numbers of African American and Spanish-speaking Officers. The police department should more accurately reflect the racial composition of the city of New London. We feel that the Department needs to continue its efforts to recruit underrepresented officers to the Police force and to explore how to ameliorate or remove the obstacles that seem to prevent the recruitment and retention of minority officers on the force. One consideration discussed by the committee was the notion of developing a housing incentive program to encourage officer recruits to live in New London. We also recommend that the City consider budgeting for a continuing education incentive program for the NLPD, with a goal of attracting quality candidates and retaining officers for the long term.

**2b. Create Community-Oriented Onboarding.** A part of new officer training and onboarding should require that they engage with the city's youth organizations. And perhaps the youth of the city should provide new as well as experienced officers with guided tours of city neighborhoods sharing their perspectives on local affairs. This is a task to be pursued by the Police Community Relations Committee in collaboration with the NLPD.

**2c. Improve Staffing Structure.** From our discussions with Police Chief Reichard and Captain Wright it became clear that the presence of a supervising Sergeant is a key factor in preventing difficult situations from getting out of hand. We therefore recommend staffing such that there will always be a ratio of Sergeants to Patrol Officers of not greater than 1:6, and ideally 1:5.

**2d. Develop Formal Performance Evaluation Process.** The committee believes there should be an annual, or at the minimum bi-annual, review of the officers' performance, with incentives for exemplary performance and disincentives for poor performance.

### 3. EXPAND AND ENHANCE NLPD OFFICER TRAINING

**3a. Develop Specialized Training Programs.** We recommend the restructuring of the NLPD from a policing model to a prevention model which would include specialized training in the area of youth/gang violence, domestic violence, crisis intervention/mental health, and female offender programs. Partnerships should be established with community social service partners to deliver such training on an annual basis.

We recommend specific training of all officers so that they can more quickly recognize and understand the special needs of an individual having an encounter with the police. These issues include both mental health and autism conditions. If these individuals are already known in the community, officers should be aware of their conditions, and if not, officers should refer them to the Department of Human Services for appropriate follow up in order to prevent the recurrence of another incident requiring police intervention. A data base system should be developed to ensure that the information on individuals with specific conditions requiring special care exists and is accessible to patrol officers.

**3b. Expand Crisis Intervention Training.** We recommend that all the remaining NLPD officers not CIT certified be trained in the State of Connecticut CIT program so that the entire New London police force is prepared to employ skills in supporting individuals with mental illness or cognitive impairment. We request additional training for the department so that police officers will more easily be able to identify

individuals with mental health concerns and to route them to appropriate resources.

**3c. Develop Anti-Racism Training and Certification Program.** NLPD currently offers implicit bias training to officers, but the effects of the training are unclear. In fact, implicit bias training, in general, has been shown to have mixed results in terms of long-lasting shifts in attitudes and behaviors. As noted in a recent report:

"Implicit bias training aims to increase fairness in officer decision-making and to enhance the outcomes of police-citizen encounters. The problem, however, is that no empirical evidence exists on the impact of implicit bias training on officer decision-making in the field, whether officers who are trained in implicit bias are perceived to be fairer by citizens, which training modality (e.g., classroom vs. simulation based) is most effective in producing persistent changes in police behavior, or how long training effects last" (Mitchell & James, 2020).

We recommend that the city of New London go beyond the usual approaches to bias training, which typically involve a single occurrence of a training program, choosing instead to work with community partners to develop a certification program for officers in anti-racism. New London is in the unique position of being a small city with several two-year and four-year colleges in the region. Developing a certification program in partnership with these educational institutions could be mutually beneficial, as the colleges would benefit from their campuses being policed by officers with an advanced understanding of race and racism.

### 4. STRENGTHEN NLPD AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS

**4a. Renew the Mission and Goals of the Police Community Relations Committee.** In our discussions with the members of the Police Community Relations Committee (PCRC), we learned that in the absence of other forms of

community oversight, they are tasked with reviewing the outcomes of civilian appeals, but have little to no actual authority to overturn investigative decisions.

Our aim is that over the next few years, both a Civilian Police Review Board and a Police Commission will be established, providing more robust community oversight and police accountability. Therefore, we recommend that the PCRC begin renewing its mission and goals, taking on a more proactive role in improving the relationships between NLPD and the community at large.

While we feel it would be most appropriate for the PCRC itself to determine exactly how it might renew its mission and goals, here are some suggestions for the committee members to consider:

- Develop and deliver onboarding programs for newly hired officers and those transferred into new districts
- Develop and oversee youth programs in collaboration with NLPD
- Create new opportunities for community engagement and positive social interaction between police and residents (see the Department of Justice COPS Program [newsletter](#) on ideas for community engagement)

If there are current members of the PCRC who are more interested in police accountability than police and community relations, they should consider pursuing membership on the Civilian Police Review Board or the eventual Police Commission. We believe distinguishing and clarifying the roles of these boards will greatly improve overall police and community relations and create more civilian oversight for the department.

**4b. Remove School Resource Officer.** The committee recommends the removal of the uniformed NLPD School Resource Officer (SRO) from the local schools. The Department can work with school administration and the Police

Community Relations Committee to develop new ways of effectively connecting officers with school-aged youth. The NLPD should consider reestablishing an official police-youth liaison position within the department and hiring someone with the qualifications and personal traits to help them relate with young people.

**4c. Enhance Social Media Policies and Practices.** The committee learned from the Police Community Relations Committee that there have been instances of individual police officers sharing messages on personal social media outlets that have been perceived as inappropriate, hostile, and bullying in nature. Additionally, the New London Police Union has made a habit of identifying citizens with whom they are discontented and sharing their names and photos on the Union website with negative and commentary that has been experienced as threatening in nature.

We find this behavior completely unacceptable and condemn it in the strongest manner. Although individuals have the first amendment right to freedom of speech, as law enforcement officials, who take oaths to protect and serve, we expect New London police officers to maintain the utmost professionalism, decency, and respect for the communities where they act as public servants. It will be impossible for police to develop a trusting relationship with the community if this kind of behavior continues and becomes endemic to police culture in New London.

Therefore, we recommend that the NLPD review and strengthen its personnel policies and expectations for the use of personal social media to avoid officers sharing personal and political views. Either by policy or by practice, the Police Union should also cease targeting individuals in the community on their website and social media channels.

Additionally, NLPD can more strategically use departmental social media accounts for positive community outreach and development, especially as a way of connecting with youth.

## 5. RESTRUCTURE FUNDS AND IDENTIFY NEW FUNDING SOURCES TO STRENGTHEN HUMAN SERVICES

**5a. Employ a Holistic Approach to Budgeting for Public Safety and Support Services.** The NLPD budget for 2019 was \$11,170,450, up from \$7,680,879 in 2014. It is the second highest budget item in the City budget after the Board of Education, which in 2019 was \$43,102,904. We do not recommend an outright reduction in the police budget, rather that areas mentioned elsewhere in this report, especially regarding training of supervisors, additional CIT certifications, cooperation with social service agencies, CALEA accreditation, and bringing the service up to full force with the ideal ratio of sergeants to patrol officers reaching 1:5 or 1:6 be a goal in building future budgeting processes.

In keeping with national trends, wherever possible, the Mayor and City Council should make every effort to redirect funding and resources from policing to education and social services.

**5b. Increase Funding to the Department of Human Services.** The committee would like the Mayor and Chief of Police to work with Jeannie Milstein, Director of Human Services, on a plan to expand her department and to develop the professional capacity of NLPD officers to partner with social service agencies to respond to calls, make referrals, and follow up on individual cases. Extending the contact beyond the initial call response might reveal for the first time when individuals are under duress or suffering from issues that can and should be addressed by agencies other than the Police Department.

This recommendation can be accomplished in different ways. One model would be to establish a Co-Responder Program within NLPD, similar to the Mental Health Center of Denver program, that would connect law enforcement with licensed counselors and/or or social

workers for ride-alongs and responses to dispatch calls. The Denver model involves cost-sharing with health departments and social service agencies.

Another alternative would be to develop specialized and highly trained units within NLPD to respond to calls involving mental health, substance abuse, sexual or domestic violence, and other social issues of concern. This approach, would require significant additional funding and resources to be allocated within the department to provide expansive training, whereas, partnering with social service agencies would tap into expertise that already exists within the New London community and redirect funds away from police.

The Director of Human Services has also expressed that they would benefit from the development of a standing advisory board made up of New London residents who are interested in coordinating and strengthening social services support in the region. The advisory board would also meet regularly with the Mayor and Chief of Police to discuss patterns pertaining to the department's caseload (e.g., assessing housing and food insecurities; evaluating substance dependency and healthcare concerns).

**5c. Involve City Council in Contract Negotiations.** The U.S. Mayor's Conference Task Force on Police Reform report offers in great detail an analysis of how Collective Bargaining agreements (CBAs) have evolved over the years beyond typical personnel related matters into setting up "substantial barriers to basic accountability" (pg. 29). The report also outlines the following examples of provisions in some CBAs that limit the power and authority of mayors and police chiefs:

- Arbitration issues
- Barriers to misconduct investigations
- Delaying investigations
- Ending investigations prematurely
- Giving officers special access to information



- Purging records of misconduct
- Expeditious review
- Duty to cooperate

We recommend that the Police Chief and Captains review the relevant section of the Task Force report (p. 29-34) to consider if and how any of the items in the current police contract might hinder police accountability, and to share that information with the newly established City Council Task Force. This section of the report also contains important information about state laws affecting CBAs and the processes of decertification of officers.

We recommend that City Councilors be a part of the contract negotiation team with the Police Union.

**5d. Explore External Funding.** In order to support the above proposals, the committee recommends that the City explore external funding, both from state and federal government as well as private granting agencies. There are opportunities to collaborate with local colleges and agencies in exploring grant funding to support these efforts.

## ACT CONCERNING POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY (HB 6004)

On July 24, 2020, the House of Representatives passed HB 6004, An Act Concerning Police Accountability. The proposal has been modified from earlier versions, especially in regards to government immunity. The bill has 45 sections with approximately 27 varying proposals that address police officer training, oversight, actions in the field, equipment and liability.

Below are the pertinent excerpts from the Connecticut Council of Municipalities evaluation of the Bill. The full evaluation is also provided as an addendum to this report. The committee further recommends that full attention be given by New London officials to the totality of this act, and in particular, the sections that follow.

Note sections 10, 11, 17, 18, and 44 in bold, which directly support committee recommendations.

**Sections 10 and 11: Requires each law enforcement agency in a municipality that serves a “relatively high concentration of minority residents” to develop a report regarding efforts to recruit, retain and promote minority police officers.**

Sections 3, 15-16: Requires police officers to undergo mental health assessments every five years.

- The assessments must be conducted by a board-certified psychiatrist or a licensed psychologist that has experience diagnosing and treating PTSD.
- Allows law enforcement administration to stagger the scheduling of police officer assessments of an entire department to ensure at least 25% are conducted each year over a five-year period.
- Allows law enforcement administration, for good cause and in writing, to require additional mental health assessments of an officer. The officer would need to comply within 30 days. The results of any assessment would be provided to both the law enforcement administration and police officer.
- Requires POST and DESPP to create policies which will examine, among other things, the fiscal implications of such assessments as well as permissible personnel actions, if any, that law enforcement units may take based on the assessments’ results, all while considering the officers’ due process rights.

**Section 17: Makes the provision for the legislative body of a town, by ordinance, to establish a civilian police review board. The ordinance shall prescribe, at minimum, the scope of authority of the review board, the number of members, the process for selection, whether elected or appointed, the term of office, and the procedure for filling any membership vacancy.**

**Section 18: Requires each municipal police department to evaluate the feasibility and impact of using social workers for the purpose of remotely responding to particular calls, or accompanying officers on certain calls where their assistance may be needed.**

Section 29: Modifies the law regarding excessive use of force by narrowing the circumstances which an officer is justified in using deadly physical force. In particular, establishes two new factors to consider when evaluating whether an officer's use of deadly physical force was "objectively reasonable" to include whether: The person upon whom deadly physical force was used possessed or appeared to possess a deadly weapon (current law); The officer engaged in reasonable de-escalation measures before using deadly physical force (new); and any of the officer's conduct led to an increased risk of the situation that led up to the use of such force (new).

Section 30 and 43: Requires a police officer that witnesses another officer use "unreasonable or illegal use of force" to intervene and attempt to stop the excessive force. In addition, requires particular reporting requirements for the witnessing officer.

**Section 44: Requires law enforcement units to obtain accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) by 2025.**

## IMPLEMENTATION

Our committee recognizes that the majority of the recommendations in this report will require time and effort on the part of the Mayor's Office, City Councilors, the Police Community Relations Committee, and the Police Department itself. We respectfully ask these entities to prioritize the recommendations in this report and to expeditiously begin implementing them in order to meet the urgent calls for change from New London residents.

To that end, we have organized our recommendations into near-term, mid-range, and long-range phases along with an articulation of who should be responsible for implementation.

**Near-Term Recommendations.** The following recommendations are presented in sequential order and we request implementation to begin, if not conclude, **within six to eight months** of publishing this report.

- (1a) Full implementation of body and dash cameras (*NLPD Chief*)
- (1b) Establish a Civilian Police Review Board under the provision of HB 6004 (*City Council*)
- (4b) Remove School Resource Officer (*NLPD Chief, Mayor*)
- (4c) Enhance social media policies and practices (*NLPD Chief*)
- (2d) Develop a formal performance evaluation process (*Mayor, NLPD Chief, NL Human Resources*)
- (4a) Renew the mission and goals of the Police Community Relations Committee (*Mayor, Police Community Relations Committee*)
- (5a) Employ a holistic approach to budgeting for public safety and support services (*Mayor, City Council*)
- (5d) Explore external funding opportunities (*Mayor, City Council, College Partners*)

**Mid-Range Recommendations.** The following recommendations are presented in sequential order and we request implementation to begin, if not conclude, **within nine to 18 months** of publishing this report.

- (2c) Improve staffing structure (*NLPD Chief*)
- (2a) Develop a recruitment pipeline (*NLPD Chief*)

(2b) Create community-oriented onboarding for new hires (*Police Community Relations Committee*)

(1c) Review and update complaint procedures (*Civilian Police Review Board*)

(5b) Increase funding to Department of Human Services (*Mayor, City Council*)

(5c) Involve City Council in police contract negotiations (*Mayor, City Council*)

(3b) Expand Crisis Intervention Training (*NLPD Chief*)

**Long-Range Recommendations.** The following recommendations are presented in sequential order and we request implementation to begin, if not conclude, **within 18-24 months** of publishing this report.

(3c) Develop anti-racism training and certification program in partnership with local colleges (*NLPD Chief, Mayor, College Partners*)

(3a) Develop specialized training programs (*NLPD Chief*)

(1d) Revise the city charter to allow for the establishment of a police commission (*Mayor, City Council*)

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