

Hoboken Policing Policy Task Force

Members of the Task Force

- City Council Members: Emily Jabbour, Michael Russo
- Police Officers: Lt. Jonathan Butler, Lt. Steven Aguiar, Edgardo Cruz (retired)
- Hoboken Residents: Mariah Tarawally, Christi Hoffman, Agan Singh
- Hoboken Housing Authority Representative: Lavon Jason Smith
- Hoboken School District Representative: Christopher Munoz

Task Force Goals

1. Review the Policies and Procedures of the Hoboken Police Department (HPD) with a focus on excessive use of force complaints.
2. Review the HPD's involvement in the community.
3. Review HPD's hiring practices.
4. Determine how best to implement the [8x8 pledge](#) from Campaign Zero.
5. Survey Hoboken residents to get a sense of the perception of the HPD.

HPD Community Involvement

There are a number of events that HPD sponsors to engage with the community, including:

- Coffee with a cop (Adult focused)
- Virtual Story Time (Child focused)
- Back to School BBQ
- Police Youth Bike Ride
- Turkey Drive with Hoboken Fire Department
- Kiddie Christmas Party and holiday gift drive
- Golf outing for charity
- Junior Police Academy (ages 12 - 15)
- Housing Community Dinners
- National Night Out
- Informational Traffic Initiatives

Hiring Practices

A few of the hiring policies that need to be addressed are:

- Reaching out to communities within Hoboken through a Career Fair.
- Individuals should have a second chance at Police Academy.
 - NOTE: The second chance policy is determined on a case-by-case basis, depending on the reason for dismissal. During Chief Ferrante's tenure, all second chance candidates have been approved.
- In-house training for Police Academy -- some diverse candidates have had issues at the Police Academy.

Summary of Community Survey Results (1 of 3)

Outreach:

- A link for this survey was distributed via the City of Hoboken in several Nixle alerts and social media posts, including related stakeholders (e.g. Hoboken Housing Authority, Councilmembers).
- The survey was made available online in both English and Spanish.
- Paper and pen copies of the survey (in both English and Spanish) were distributed as part of larger community events including multiple food pantry distribution events at the Multi Service Center and Hoboken Housing Authority.
- Paper copies of flyers that included a QR code to access the survey link via smartphone were also distributed throughout the community.

Timeline:

- The survey launched at the end of September 2020; a Nixle alert with links to the online survey was distributed on September 24th and again on October 13th and 15th.
- In person outreach took place during October and November. The link was closed by January.

Summary of Community Survey Results (2 of 3)

Results:

- Over 2K responses were collected including both electronic and paper responses (N= 2,066). Nearly 99% of respondents were Hoboken residents.
- Approximately 59% of respondents reported having interacted with the Hoboken Police Department (HPD) in some way - a majority having interacted 2-3 times, with most having been in person.
 - For those who interacted with HPD, the majority (69%) rated the interaction as positive.
- For those who did not report having interacted with the HPD, nearly 62% of respondents reported having a positive impression of the HPD.
- A majority of respondents (74%) feel it would be a good idea for the City of Hoboken to institute a Public Safety Review Board to provide oversight of hiring practices and complaints.

Summary of Community Survey Results (3 of 3)

In addition to the data points from the aggregated results, there were a number of comments provided in the open-ended comment field. Here is a summary of those comments:

- 40% (294) of comments addressed a negative experience and advocated for reform
- 36% (262) of comments were supportive of or described a positive interaction with the Hoboken Police Department
- 24% (176) of comments suggested specific improvements but stopped short of supporting the policing reform task force

The most common criticisms of the HPD were that they did not wear masks, they appeared to not take incidents seriously, and that they spend too much time patrolling Hoboken from their squad car (in other words, people repeatedly requested more patrols by foot or bike).

The HPD received significant praise for their professionalism and accessibility via events such as Coffee with a Cop or volunteer programs and the Chief's Twitter updates.

Recommended Follow Up Actions

- Hiring Focus -- hold Career Fair for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color).
- Expand advertising of hiring timelines.
- Provide study groups for Civil Service exams.
 - Explore option for City funding for Entry Level exam fees.
- Expand community policing approach to have regular officers in certain areas on a recurring basis to develop stronger relationships.
- Review options for creation of a Public Safety Review Board per the overwhelming support from survey respondents (74%), including outreach to Jersey City since they are in the process of discussing.

Recommendations for Use of Force

- Initial recommendation to request additional information on current Use of Force Report has already been met by new Use of Force Portal.
- Request body cameras for the Hoboken Police Department.
 - NOTE: Since this group initially met, body cameras are now legislatively mandated for use in New Jersey. HPD is in the process of acquiring all required equipment.
- Implement mandatory advanced training in de-escalation techniques and crisis intervention for ALL members of the HPD.
- Create new hybrid unit utilizing social workers, medical personnel, and police officers
- Incorporate community leaders in the recruiting process prior to the police hiring process to achieve a more diverse department.
- Provide Law Enforcement Officer taught classes to juveniles regarding appropriate police interactions (Include the complaint process for reporting negative interactions).

Recommendations for Reports on Use of Force

- Under the Type of Incident section on the Use of Force Reports, “Other Dispute” should be elaborated in more detail when officers are filling out the reports.
- The charges brought against the suspect should state the code for the charges, as well as the title/subject of the charge on the Use of Force Reports.
 - This will help authorized personnel reviewing the reports have a better understanding of what types of crimes were being committed and possibly why the incident took place based on other information stated on the report (i.e. time, day of week, race, location, etc.)
- For certain police calls/incidents, police officers should be accompanied by other health or social services officials depending on the type of incident taking place (especially for emotional distress calls, crimes or incidents committed by the youth, etc.)