

**Community-First Public Safety Commission  
Summary of Public Town Hall meetings  
Series 2: April 14 and 17, 2021**

Approximately 60 people attended this series of meetings.

The following list of “emerging recommendations” was shared with attendees:

*Examples of some of the ideas being considered:*

- *Culturally relevant ambassador program in neighborhoods responding to truancy and curfew violations.*
- *Mobile mental health team/other resources available 24/7.*
- *New or paired responder models: peer-responder, mental health intervention specialist, and situational awareness expert on the phone – for things like welfare checks, disorderly conduct, child abuse, etc.*
- *Decrease/minimize police response to vehicles and parking situations.*
- *Increased access to virtual/video consultation.*
- *De-escalation training, tools and mindset.*

***What are you excited about, or pleased to hear?***

Attendees expressed their appreciation for the general proceedings of the commission: individuals identified positive aspects such as the diversity of commissioners, the use of expertise, the width of the commission’s scope, and the commission’s ability to move quickly and impactfully.

The most common theme was a broad approval for the commission’s investigations into alternative, non-police, situation-specific emergency responders. Attendees cited specific examples including mental health specialists for crisis situations, parking enforcement for vehicle-related calls, unarmed transit officers for fare enforcement, and social workers for truancy and curfew issues. Many attendees supported the commission’s consideration of greatly expanding virtual and phone reporting for minor incidents as an alternative to an in-person interactions with police.

There was an additional expression of support for the commission’s consideration of expanding de-escalation training.

***What is missing? What would you add?***

The most popular criticism of the commission’s work was that the commission had not sufficiently addressed mental health crises. Attendees suggested three model programs for addressing mental health: COAST, the Block Nurse Program, and the SPFD’s Basic Life Support program. Attendees were very concerned by the limited schedule of Saint Paul’s mental health services and stressed the importance of increasing its funding so that Saint Paul could offer substantive 24/7 mental health care.

Another common theme was a lack of specific solutions for important topics. Attendees highlighted that the commission was not moving toward making recommendations to specifically address substance abuse, the needs of unhoused people, and *particularly* traffic stops.

Some attendees were concerned about the implementation of a co-responder model for some of call-types suggested by the commission: a group of attendees expressed their concern that the presence of an armed officer would hinder the work of the other professional and would make situations more dangerous. They suggested that the commission support a response model in which alternative responders could easily and quickly summon police backup if a situation were to escalate.

Other comments concerned the lack of data available to the commission: attendees noted that there was no information from hospital emergency departments, no analysis of officer-initiated calls, and no demographic data for emergency calls for service.

Additional comments reflected that attendees supported the involvement of communities and community resources in violence-prevention efforts. Suggestions included using existing “eyes and ears” like mail carriers; requiring officers to live in the communities they serve; creating geographically oriented programs in the ONS that are run by members of those communities; and improving housing and youth programs in underserved communities.

A number of attendees were also concerned that the commission was not adequately addressing systemic racism within policing. One suggestion was to expand automatic ticketing for vehicle-related infractions; another was to attempt to reduce the number of racially-motivated calls to 911. One individual worried that changes to the enforcement of moving violations could present a threat to pedestrians and cyclists.

***Could you support these recommendations? If not, what would you want to see (within our Commission’s charge)?***

Attendees overwhelmingly supported the commission’s emerging recommendations as presented. Some stipulated that the plan would have to reallocate funding from law enforcement to violence-prevention entities and some suggested that the scope of plan would have to expand beyond Priorities 4 and 5.

Many attendees had questions about the recommendations, including:

- What are the logistics of recruiting mental health professionals to serve in an emergency-response capacity? How soon could this be implemented?
- How will the City of Saint Paul support manage the impact of these changes on their workforce?
- How would co-responder or alternative-response models differ across different situations?
- Where would the money be allocated from?

- What preventative models were discussed?
- Are there any ideas that the commission has already discarded?

One individual felt that they could not support these recommendations due to their brevity.