

Resolution for Community Policing Advisory Review Board

The Bennington Select Board, through its authority, hereby establishes a Town Board to be known as the Community Policing Advisory Review Board (CPARB). The purpose of this board is to provide meaningful involvement in safety, equity, and community policing efforts through the use of problem-solving and organizational strategies embodied in the philosophy of community policing.

Community Policing is a collaboration between the police and the community that helps identify and solve community problems. It requires that community members voice their concerns, contribute advice, and that they be active participants in the process of problem solving (adapted from the preface at <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles/commpp.pdf>)

Through the creation of the CPARB, the Town of Bennington, its Police Department and the Select Board are committed to working with the entire community to ensure safety, accountability, transparency, and trust and to move Bennington toward achieving its vision of becoming “a welcoming, engaged, inclusive, and resilient community where everyone, regardless of identity, shares in our vitality and benefits from an outstanding quality of life”.

An end goal of this work is to fully realize the mission of the Bennington Police Department which reads:

“The Bennington Police Department is accountable to the Community for providing everyone, regardless of identity, with respectful and equitable law enforcement, protection, and service. The Department and the Community will achieve this through collaborative and positive relationships which contribute to the betterment of our quality of life.”

Goals

In partnership with the Select Board, Town of Bennington, and the Bennington Police Department (BPD), the CPARB has the following goals:

- Recommend-police department and CPARB trainings and community collaboration efforts
- Review and make recommendations to proposed and existing Bennington Police Department (BPD) policies and procedures
- Review anonymized data on complaints and compliments for the purposes of identifying problems, patterns, and positive actions
- Analyze town-wide safety data with a focus on equity and areas of need
- Utilize state and national data to assist in understanding local trends as appropriate
- Foster collaborative efforts within the community that is conducive to hear all voices
- Work with the Select Board and Town staff, including the BPD, to promote learning on community safety and equity issues

Activities

In collaboration with the BPD, the CPARB will:

- Review required training for the BPD and outcomes and make recommendations on additional areas for training such as de-escalation, fair and impartial policing, verbal, and non-verbal communication skills; implicit bias; and officer discretion.
- Review existing collaborations with local organizations and agencies and make recommendations on ways to strengthen and develop additional working relationships between the BPD and the community.
- Review anonymized compliments and complaints to be utilized by the CPARB for the purpose of identifying problems, patterns, and positive actions.
- Actively engage individuals and organizations in the community to encourage and support a culture of inclusion, trust, and accountability through the use of listening sessions, attendance at community events, and other relevant activities consistent with the goals of the CPARB and this resolution as authorized by law.
- Provide an annual summary of CPARB yearly activities, to be submitted to the Town Manager, for inclusion in the Annual Town Report.
- Obtain an update on community-based safety initiatives from relevant parties.

Materials For Review

The BPD shall provide the following materials on a specified or an as-needed basis to the CPARB:

- BPD Training information to include name of training, date, number and rank of attendees, location, in-house or consultant led, state or federally mandated, BPD required or optional
- All traffic stop data that's available
- Complaints and compliments submitted through online portal
- Quarterly summary of complaints against officers and investigation outcomes (names redacted)

Meetings

The CPARB will meet every other month, i.e., six times year, in person, or in a virtual setting. It is expected that each member will contribute and provide input on the topics on the agenda set by the chair. The CPARB may form sub-groups and engage the community in CPARB work, as appropriate. The Chief of Police or designee will attend all CPARB meetings and report on BPD matters as requested by the CPARB Chair. A Select Board or staff liaison will be appointed to provide assistance as needed by the CPARB.

Composition and Eligibility

The CPARB will consist of at least five and as many as seven members from the community. Community is defined as a resident of the Town of Bennington, Old Bennington or North Bennington or someone who works or has demonstrated a significant (8 hours per week or more) commitment to volunteerism in Bennington.

In year one, three CPARB members will be appointed to hold (3) year terms and four members to hold (2) year terms. In year two, two members will be appointed to (3) year terms and two members will be appointed for (2) year terms. Beginning in year three, all terms will be for three

years. No member may serve more than seven consecutive years on the board. Former members are eligible to apply after not serving for one year.

The CPARB will elect a chair, vice chair, and a recording secretary on an annual basis following annual board appointments by the Select Board. The chair and vice chair must be current on all training requirements prior to election.

The CPARB members are expected to demonstrate a:

- high level of objectivity and integrity.
- collaborative working style.
- strong commitment to strengthening community policing efforts.
- willingness to listen and participate in continuous learning.
- ability to maintain confidentiality.
- readiness to attend BPD-sponsored events.

CPARB members will represent a range of interests and experiences, such as non-profits, faith community, business owners, education sector, youth representation, and others. Diversity by age, sexual and/or gender identity, ethnicity, socio-economic status, disability, and other identity is desired.

Familiarity and or knowledge in any of the following areas would be useful but not required:

- Behavioral and/or mental health
- Substance misuse disorder
- Domestic violence
- Statistical analysis
- Mediation and conflict resolution
- Criminal justice system, law, and restorative justice

Police officers are ineligible for three years following the end of their service. Individuals who are under the supervision of the Vermont Department of Corrections are ineligible to serve. Sitting Select Board members are ineligible to serve on the CPARB except as a non-voting liaison.

The Select Board has the authority to both appoint and remove members from the CPARB. Members who are absent and inactive for three months in a row or, demonstrate a pattern of inactivity over a period of six months, or fail to meet the expectations in this resolution will be asked to reconsider their membership on the CPARB. At the discretion of the Select Board, any member may be removed from the CPARB.

Training

Members must complete training authorized by the Bennington Police Department Chief within 9 months of appointment to the CPARB. Prior to Select Board review of the budget each year, the CPARB, working in conjunction with the Bennington Police Department, will provide a list of required trainings for members of CPARB.

No member may serve as Chair or Vice Chair unless they have completed all training. CPARB members shall take additional training on effective practices in civilian review of law enforcement over their term; not less than one additional training every two years. Training costs will be borne by the Town of Bennington.

Further Considerations

The CPARB shall be governed by the same general requirements as other Town Boards and Commissions regarding appointments, conduct, term requirement, Open Meeting Law, and Open Records Law.

Unless changed through the Town of Bennington Charter, the CPARB does not have the power or authority to investigate, review, or otherwise participate in matters involving specific police personnel or specific police-related incidents. The CPARB will not receive, or review complaints initiated against personnel of the police, nor play any role in civil or criminal litigation. The Bennington Select Board will retain the Town Review Board function as required by the Bennington Town Charter and Vermont statutes.

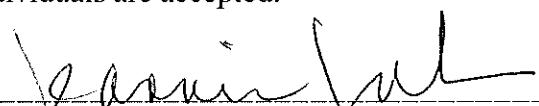
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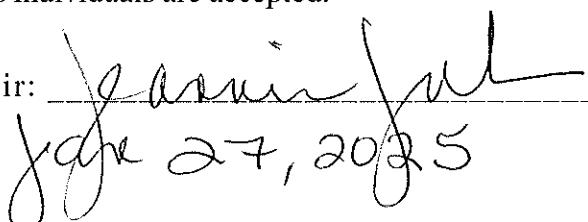
This document will be reviewed as needed but not less than every three years following adoption.

Definitions

Complaint – A complaint documents when a person witnesses or experiences a personal encounter with Bennington Police Department personnel that they believe involves criminal conduct, misconduct, abusive or discriminatory behavior, neglect of duty, corrupt activity, inappropriate conduct or a violation of policy, procedure, rule, or regulation of the Bennington Police Department. Complaints may be made in-person, by phone, letter, or on the web. While more difficult to investigate, anonymous complaints are accepted.

Compliment – A compliment documents when a person witnesses or experiences a personal encounter with Bennington Police Department personnel that they believe warrants special recognition. Compliments may be made in-person, by phone, letter, or on the web. Compliments made by anonymous individuals are accepted.

Select Board Chair: 

Adoption Date: 
July 27, 2025