

Proposal for Police Oversight in Richmond Vermont

Since 2020, Richmond Racial Equity has worked with the Town of Richmond and its Police Department (RPD) in several areas: training on racial equity/inclusion, creation of a Declaration of Inclusion for the town, and engagement with the Williston Community Justice Center (WCJC). In addition, a community survey about the RPD’s activities, purpose and community vision was completed in 2021. Survey results illustrated that our community has diverse perspectives on RPD activities, purpose, and vision of its future.

Furthermore, we learned that data reported to the state are hard to access and interpret. We turned to data for the state of Vermont and data from the published work of Dr. Stephanie Seguino, Professor in the Department of Economics at UVM, for information on traffic stops between 2015-2020, which show an overall very high rate of stopping drivers in Richmond compared with the national and Vermont averages, higher ticketing and arrest rates compared with White drivers for Latinx drivers, and higher search rates

2016-19 Traffic Stop Rates (per 1000 Residents)	
National average	86
Vermont average	324
Richmond average ¹	367

2015-2020 Richmond Ticketing, Arrests, and Searches (as a percent of Traffic Stops)			
Ethnicity/Race ²	Ticketing	Arrests	Searches
White Drivers	52.5%	1.0%	0.8%
Latinx Drivers	59.6	1.9	0.0
Black Drivers	53.3	0.0	6.5

of Black drivers. These are noteworthy and worrisome racial disparities. If we are to be a community which is fair and equitable to all, with policing that is free of bias in the future, we will need to acknowledge past disparities and address incidents or trends as they arise.

The National Association of Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement (NACOLE)³ offers information about the many potential benefits of community-based oversight of police which include: building bridges between the community and police, ensuring accountability of police to the community they serve, decreasing risk for cities and towns, rewarding good police practices, increasing public confidence and trust in police, and protecting human rights.

Our goals for community oversight of police are:

- A. Reduce/eliminate all bias from police activity.
- B. Reduce the number of people entering the criminal justice system which, in general, disproportionately affects people of color and lower socioeconomic status.
- C. Assure that community expectations about public safety are being met.

We are asking that the Selectboard support the following activities:

- 1. Support the development of a RPD mission statement that reflects community values and expectations, to include racial and social equity values as defined and supported by the Richmond community.

¹ Data on Richmond total stops show that the rate is decreasing over time but is still notably higher than the national average and the average for Vermont.

² The percentage of drivers by race/ethnicity is: 95.5% White, 1.8% black, 2.1% Asian, 0.6% Latinx/Hispanic

³ https://www.nacole.org/past_webinars

2. Support the publication of accessible documentation such as police reports and other data points on key policing activities and outcomes. These data would be reported on the town website in a format that is clear and easy for Richmond residents to understand, including:
 - a. Publication of the Police Log posted on Town Website and in the Times Ink with details about the race of those involved
 - b. Transparent public information about RPD's use of non-policing community services such as the WCJC and other social services
 - c. Traffic stop data reported to the State of Vermont supplied to Richmond citizens in a more accessible format than it is currently
 - d. Race identification for ALL police encounters and social referrals
 - e. Arrest data including number, types
 - f. Interactions our police department has with ICE including types of interactions and outcomes
3. Maintain transparency around the planning, conduct, and evaluation of all Police Trainings (de-escalation, restorative justice, lethality assessment, anti-bias).
4. Promote and conduct quarterly forums at Selectboard sponsored, facilitated meetings to ensure a strong connection between RPD and the community. As a result of these actions, RPD will become and remain an integral part of our community by fostering the development of mutually supportive relationships between RPD and community members.

References:

U.S. Department of Justice. 2018. "Contacts Between Police and the Public, 2015."

<https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/cpp15.pdf>

Seguino, S. and N. Brooks 2017. *Driving While Black and Brown in Vermont*.

https://www.uvm.edu/giee/pdfs/SeguinoBrooks_PoliceRace_2017.pdf

Seguino, S. and N. Brooks (2020). "Driving While Black and Brown in Vermont: Can Race Data Analysis Contribute to Reform?" *Review of Black Political Economy*.

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0034644620969903>