

April 29, 2021

Dear Mayor Bennett and Salem City Council,

On behalf of the Community Engagement Steering Committee members, I am pleased to present the first Independent Assessment of the Salem Police Department's Policies, Procedures and Operations. From October 2020 through April 2021, we represented the community's voice through informing and overseeing the independent assessment. Key to our work was the commitment to engage citizens from every walk of life and representation of our community in this assessment.

Six key questions formed the basis of our work.

1. Are the Police Department's policies and tactics aligned with City Council and community values and expectations? Including when officers are present or responding to peaceful assemblies, permitted protests and demonstrations, and impromptu crowds?
2. What is the Department's capacity for community policing?
3. How effective are Salem police officers in engaging with all Salem residents, including unsheltered individuals and individuals experiencing behavioral health crises?
4. How effective is the Department's engagement with youth?
5. Are the Department's policies, tactics, or training biased or discriminatory? How effective are Salem police officers in engaging with members of our Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) community?
6. How effective are the Police Department and City's systems, policies, and procedures for officer accountability?

The Steering Committee led the effort to engage with individuals, organized groups, and other, less formal grassroots voices through more than 40 listening sessions with community discussions, including police department staff, reaching hundreds of citizens. We established a process for all voices to have input through the City's website. The community was open, shared personal stories, candor, passion, and advocacy in the conversations. Many individuals expressed concerns about May 2020 protests and differential treatment.

The Steering Committee was intrigued by evolving best practices in community-informed policy development, reducing tension and potential for confrontation through engagement and collaboration in advance of planned events, and redefining desired knowledge, skills, and abilities for officer recruitment. These conversations led us to change the title of our work to Community Engagement.

As Salem addresses the outcomes of the independent assessment, we believe striving forward with an intentional commitment to community policing, community engagement, and community partnerships is paramount to not only addressing any differential treatment, perception of differential treatment, or emerging differential treatment, but to grow the partnership between the citizens and the police department.

We want to ensure the work ahead is intentional and connects with the whole of the community. We remain committed to supporting the work ahead as Salem strives forward. We expect this partnership will become the basis for expectations of the police and citizens working together to tackle any systemic issues that may arise, but also to address any emerging issues in real-time.

We also thank and appreciate the hundreds of community members who stepped forward, and each individual of the Police Department and City staff who participated in the independent assessment.



Jodi Sherwood  
Community Engagement Steering Committee Chair