



Town of Lexington

Police Department

MEMORANDUM

To: Lexington Select Board & James Malloy, Town Manager
From: Michael A. McLean, Chief of Police
Subject: Response to the Proposal for a Citizens Advisory Board (CAB)
Date: December 3, 2023

Dear Members of the Select Board and Town Manager,

I am writing regarding the proposal for a study committee for Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) for the Lexington Police Department. While I respect the community's involvement and intent behind this proposal, after careful consideration, the department has decided not to support this request at this time. I would like to reinforce our department's commitment to community engagement and address some of the concerns raised by a proposed CAB.

1. Existing Effective Community Engagement:

Our department's commitment to community engagement and transparency is unwavering. We actively engage with various community groups, host "coffee chats," and conduct meetings with cultural and affinity groups, reflecting our dedication to building trust and enhancing police-community relations. We have begun to document and track all of our community engagement events through our records management system. It has been suggested that a CAB could meet with these groups instead of the Police Chief to save time. A centralized communication approach through a CAB might inadvertently diminish the direct relationships that have been cultivated over time.

2. Established Channels for Communication and Oversight:

The Lexington Police Department is actively involved in several community boards and committees, ensuring direct communication and interaction with the community. These include:

- Collaborative Reform Group
- Commission on Disability
- Community Crisis Intervention Team (CCIT)
- Development Review Team
- Human Rights Commission
- Lexington Center Committee
- Lexington Youth Commission
- Transportation Safety Group
- Town's Diversity Advisory Committee

This involvement ensures that we have a comprehensive approach to addressing community concerns and are held accountable through multiple layers of oversight.

3. Transparency and Data Sharing:

Transparency is a cornerstone of our operations. We share detailed policies, procedures, and statistics on our website, including public call and arrest logs, traffic arrest data, and use of force statistics, to maintain openness and accountability to the community. In the spirit of collaboration, members of the department met with proponents of the CAB on numerous occasions to share information and discuss department policy and procedures as well as motor vehicle stop data and information.

4. Nationally Recognized Policing Standards:

Our practices align with nationally recognized standards, and we undergo regular evaluations to maintain accreditation. The introduction of a CAB without specific expertise in these areas might result in misaligned recommendations that may not align with our current professional standards.

5. Comprehensive Oversight and Policy Review: The Lexington Police Department operates under strict oversight by various bodies, including the Town Manager, the Select Board, and Massachusetts Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) Commission through the Police Reform Act of 2020. The Lexington Police Department became the 17th Accredited Police Department in Massachusetts in 2015. Our commitment to best practices in policing is evidenced by our adherence to the standards set by the Massachusetts Police Accreditation Commission and the Massachusetts Police Training Committee. The suggestion that a CAB could review and recommend policies is well-intentioned, but overlooks the specialized and accredited nature of our existing policy review processes.

6. Continued Commitment to Community Needs: We are devoted to continuing our engagement efforts, sharing relevant data, and consulting the community on their preferences. As an accredited agency, we follow the best practices in policy and procedure. With POST's establishment, our department has been subjected to an unprecedented level of oversight and accountability. While we agree with the community's desire for data sharing, improved communication, and stronger relationships, we believe that the establishment of a CAB is unnecessary for these objectives to be realized. Our current practices and collaborations are more than capable of addressing these goals.

7. Concerns About Resource Allocation and Redundancy:

The establishment of a CAB risks duplicating our existing efforts and could lead to inefficient use of resources. We believe these resources could be better utilized in enhancing our direct community policing initiatives.

8. Potential Impact on Police Morale and Operational Autonomy:

While oversight is crucial, it is also essential to maintain a balance that supports our officers in making informed decisions. Excessive external scrutiny could potentially affect police morale and the department's ability to operate autonomously.

9. Legal and Confidentiality Issues:

The involvement of a CAB in reviewing sensitive police matters could pose legal and confidentiality challenges, which are crucial to our operation's integrity.

In closing, the Lexington Police Department remains dedicated to expanding our current community engagement efforts. We believe this approach, rather than the establishment of a new advisory board, will more effectively meet the community's needs.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,



Michael A. McLean
Chief of Police
Lexington Police Department