

- That the BPD and BHA assess whether there is a need for additional Walk and Talk services or other social service support that would focus on supporting the 56% of BHA residents who live in elderly housing, as well as younger residents in handicap units, and to provide services during a longer period of the day.
- The Subcommittee conduct outreach to youth via Teen Center and BHA focus groups to ensure Walk and Talk/ youth interactions are meaningful/wanted and to receive input and suggestions from youth and BHA focus groups.
- A joint mission statement on the goals/objectives of the Walk and Talk Program between BHA/BPD be adopted
- The BPD commit to annual surveys on the program and specific topics to ensure the Walk and Talk program is meeting the needs of residents (BPD to conduct with assistance from BHA and the Town's Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Relations, without overburdening BHA)
- Walk and Talk and BHA management conduct focus groups with residents and increase community meetings (preferably in person, post-COVID) with residents, including youth, staff and Brookline Housing Authority Board members.
- Walk and Talk develop a brochure/handout that BHA can share with residents which introduces the officers, their services, their contact info and the stated mission statement of the program. There can also be a link to the new Civilian Feedback Form being recommended by the Committee.
- Recommend to the Town Administrator that the Town absorb the costs associated with the payment of the \$15,000 annual payment by BHA to the BPD for Walk and Talk programs, events, supplies and other expenses.

IV. SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS

WHAT WE LEARNED:

From the Brookline Police Department SRO Fact Sheet (see appendix):

“The Brookline Police Department has a long history of working with the Public Schools of Brookline to support students and to work collaboratively to ensure positive outcomes for our youth. From the early days of the DARE program to the BHS Citizen Police Academy to coaching sports and teaching in Health classes, the BPD has been an important part of educating students and other youth in Brookline for decades.

“There are eight elementary schools in Brookline and Brookline High School (BHS). Brookline Public Schools report that there are 1,781 students enrolled in the middle school grades for the 2019-2020 school year and 2,083 students enrolled at Brookline High School.

“The Brookline Police Department currently has three school resource officers (SROs) assigned to work with the eight elementary schools in Brookline and one SRO for Brookline High School. The SROs work in conjunction with school administration and guidance staff, including counselors and social workers, to support students and provide

appropriate direction. They often work to connect the school and students (and their families) to services and resources in the community. They do not serve as disciplinarians nor do they enforce school regulations.

“Middle School SROs (formerly referred to as AWARE/DARE officers): Katie McCabe (& Bear, the Comfort Dog), Donal Kerrigan and Joe Amendola

“High School SRO: Kaitlin Conneely”

IMPORTANCE OF SROs

While many of the activities of the SROs in the schools may appear to be activities that can be undertaken by non-uniformed personnel, such as social workers or counselors, there are good reasons for the SROs to be involved.

Some activities are better performed by uniformed officers for the protection of the students and the community because of their training or the unique relationships the police have with other law enforcement agencies and the courts, schools, and social service agencies. Some examples are: (i) relationships with students, parents, schools, and the courts give the police, including the SROs, the ability to divert juveniles involved in minor law-breaking from the criminal justice system; (ii) using the police department’s knowledge of and engagement with criminal activity that targets youth, such as cyber-crime, predatory stalking of students, sales or distribution of illicit drugs and alcohol, gang activities, and other criminal undertakings, is only possible if police are taking the lead role and have relationships with students before problems arise; (iii) police have relationships with social service, mental health, and medical agencies and can identify and respond to minor problems early before they become significant law enforcement problems; (iv) police are uniquely positioned to provide safety and security teachings and trainings in anticipation of possible active shooter or other safety risks in the schools; and (v) police officers at school dances and other activities provide protection to students if there are problems from other students or other persons.

Non-uniform personnel, such as social workers or counselors, may be appropriate for certain other tasks now performed by uniformed officers, but only after careful review of the support needs and resources currently provided to such personnel, including police backup.

Finally, most activities of SRO officers help to develop relationships between schools, students and parents and the police department that serve general Town-wide purposes. It is a benefit to the community for students from the elementary years through high school to know and understand the work of law enforcement and develop relationships with police officers that can provide guidance and support for positive behavior.

SROs IN THE SCHOOLS

All SRO officers are National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO), ALICE (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate Active Shooter Training for Schools) & CIT (Crisis Intervention Team) trained:

- SROs are trained and follow up on juvenile CIT clients
- SROs continue to work with the schools, families and the Brookline Center to offer services and support for their students

School Resource Officers - Enforcement, Diversion and Arrests:

- Middle Schools – NO arrests have been made of elementary/middle school students by the SROs and two middle schoolers have been entered into the Diversion Program in recent years
- BHS – NO arrests, three youth summoned to court and ten youth diverted from the criminal justice system into the Diversion Program since March 2019 when the HS SRO Program began (March 2019)

Like the Walk and Talk Officers, the School Resource Officers have transitioned to “soft uniforms” which are considered more approachable, less intimidating and more functional (for athletics, sitting on small chairs/activity mats in classrooms, and other activities).

MIDDLE SCHOOL SROs

The Middle School SROs taught roughly 210 Aware Classes to middle schoolers last year. These classes consisted of: Cyber-Awareness, Substance Use & Addiction and Healthy Relationships

Other Middle School SRO-School involvement:

- SROs attend the Raft dances that are held once a month during the school year
- SROs participate in gym classes where they interact with students and participate in activities
- SROs attend open houses during and at the beginning of the school year
- SROs assist with the end of the year school graduations
- SROs participate in open discussion groups with families regarding vaping
- SROs have been asked to assist with grief counseling following various tragedies
- SROs are a resource for school guidance counselors and administration who have concerns about students
- SROs coordinated and delivered safety and security trainings (i.e., active shooter) for all BPS schools
- SROs have been instrumental in assisting schools with locating students who have eloped from the school campus
- SROs assist the schools with shelter in place incidents and evacuations (drills and actual)

- SROs staff the morning and afternoon traffic posts for various schools
- SROs are asked to provide assistance and support to families whose students have an aversion to attending school

Out of School Involvement:

- SROs coordinate and run an annual Summer Program
- SROs teach safety classes at daycare centers around Town
- SROs assist with Special Olympics and Recreation Department programs
- SROs have been a part of meet and greets with several programs in town including BEEP, the Rise Program, the therapeutic and adaptive learning centers
- SROs have taught classes at several religious schools in Town
- SROs have assisted staff and students at the Bay Cove Academy with several classes and behavioral issues
- SROs attend out of school events in support of their students, such as the annual Spelling Bee, Brookline Day, sporting events, student rallies, Boy/Girl Scouts, bike parades and school fun runs, etc.
- During COVID, SROs have continued to support students and their families and have worked with school counselors and administrators to address concerns they have about students

BROOKLINE HIGH SCHOOL SRO

SRO Kaitlin Conneely has been assigned to the BHS since March 2019. She has established very close relationships with students and faculty and has continued to support both during COVID. SRO Conneely's role at BHS is to work with students and staff to ensure the most positive outcomes for youth at BHS. The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Public Schools of Brookline and the Brookline Police Department is attached.

BHS SRO-School Involvement:

- Coordinating the annual BHS Citizen Police Academy
- Attending school events and activities in support of students, such as the Powder Puff game, graduation, the Lunar New Year celebration, student rallies, sporting events, etc.
- Morning and afternoon traffic posts
- Participates in regular meetings with Deans and the weekly Roundtable (a meeting of key BHS stakeholders to address emerging issues/concerns)
- Meets with students and parents/guardians to assist with concerns that they or the school may have
- Assisting with the BPD Summer Program
- Assisting with Special Olympics events and supporting athletes
- Assisting with the planning and implementation of the 2020 BHS Graduation Ceremony

STATE LAW RELATED TO SROs

The Police Reform Law replaces the current Chapter 71 Section 37P with a new section 37P. The amended law does not significantly change the status of Brookline SROs or the rules governing them.

There is no longer a requirement that communities have SROs but the “chief of police, at the request of the superintendent and subject to appropriation, shall assign at least 1 school resource officer” to serve a municipality. Once the new school superintendent is in office, the BPD should have discussions with them to go through the required steps to re-authorize the SRO program. Until then, the SRO program should continue as currently operating, but with the adjustments recommended by the Subcommittee.

Brookline’s current SROs are required to be certified by December 31, 2021 and all SROs are required to have in-service training relevant to working with youth.

Substantially all of the training requirements in the law have been a part of the training curriculum of BPD officers for many years. For example, training that addresses child and adolescent cognitive development, de-escalation techniques effective with youth, and appropriate interactions with persons on the autism spectrum and those with other intellectual and developmental disabilities.

The Police Reform Law establishes a commission to develop a model MOU, which is required to have certain provisions, many of which are in the current MOU between the BPD and the schools. For example, provisions such as that the SROs shall not serve as school disciplinarians, as enforcers of school regulations, or in place of licensed school psychologists, psychiatrists or counselors. SROs are also prohibited from using police powers to address traditional school discipline issues, including non-violent disruptive behavior.

There has been some criticism in Brookline of SRO’s carrying service weapons during their time in the schools. In the definition of SROs in the Police Reform Law there is an exemption from the provisions of chapter 269, section 10(j) (carrying a dangerous weapon on school grounds) while the SRO is serving in their official capacity. It should be noted that this exemption was also in Section 37P prior to its amendment by the Police Reform Law.

WHAT WE HEARD:

There was some confusion about the School Resource Officer program and how we have four SROs in Brookline. Three were previously titled “AWARE officers”, and before that “DARE”, and in March 2019 when the HS SRO position was created, the title of SRO was given to all four assigned to work with the schools because that title is more reflective as to the work they were doing - which was far more than teaching occasional classes.

The Subcommittee heard from BHS SRO Kaitlin Conneely at their meeting on November 20th. Officer Kaitlin Conneely talked about her work at Brookline High School.

Members of the committee asked her questions about her work, such as what kind of issues students talked with her about, her role within the school, how she works in collaboration with other programs/administrators, if SROs coordinate with Boston PD. Subcommittee members asked Kaitlin for some examples of her work. She talked about the Diversionary Program with students and families. A copy of the Youth Diversion Contract is attached.

The Brookline Police Department website has a page on the SRO program which contains several testimonials about the work they do. Those testimonials can be found at: <https://www.brooklinepolice.com/207/School-Resource-Officers>

In his statement to the Joint Hearing of the Committee and Task Force on September 30th, Head of Brookline High School Anthony Meyer stated: “I do wish to emphasize that neither my deans nor I have heard a single complaint about Officer Conneely’s work at BHS. She is committed, caring, and also able to help young people understand boundaries and ways to stay safe and out of trouble. Officer Conneely continues to collaborate with high school staff in ways that offer students diversionary paths and avoid police or legal trouble. She builds relationships with kids who don’t trust easily, and that is because she is genuine and awesome. (Let me be real for a moment here: high schools are especially awesome because they see through adult BS – any and all of it – with superhero-like powers.) Our students trust Kaitlin because she is trustworthy.”

The following are excerpts from a PSB Principal and Guidance Counselor as to their experience with the Middle School SROs:

Pierce School Principal Lesley Miller: “...when a child presents significant social-emotional needs that can escalate to unsafe behaviors, both officers have been willing to come to the school to provide support, safety and next steps to ensure students get the help they need from various health and social service providers. This work both fosters positive relationships between the community and the Brookline Police Department as well as provides a sense of safety to our staff and students. Especially in the culture and climate we are faced with now, this is of the utmost importance.”

Lawrence School Guidance Counselor Shania Martinez: “We rely heavily on a team approach, as we all have expertise in different areas. Our classroom teachers work with a number of other adults to help provide the most robust education for the students. The team often consists of specialists within the school, but ALSO include outside providers as well. We consider outside therapists, pediatricians and the SRO’s as members of our school team. For our younger students, they are so excited to have the opportunity to connect to a police officer. For our middle school students, they are happy to have a connection to the police. They are also very curious about the laws and benefit from having someone here who can answer all their questions.”

In listening to comments made at the Public Forum of the SRO Subcommittee of the Task Force to Re-Imagine Policing in Brookline, we heard continued support from the BHS Head of School Anthony Meyer as to the presence of the SRO at BHS and how critical a member of the leadership team that officer has become. A teacher within BHS also

spoke in support of the SRO program and the importance of establishing positive interactions between law enforcement and youth. Unfortunately the hearing was scheduled at 1pm on a weekday and there were no parents or students who spoke.

During the Fall, the Middle School SROs worked with the PSB K-12 Coordinator for Wellness Education, Carlyn Uyenoyama, on the delivery of the AWARE program during remote/hybrid learning. As part of that discussion, the idea to include a conversation around social justice issues was introduced by Ms. Uyenoyama as a way to address the “elephant in the room.” The annual AWARE Intro letter was jointly updated to include that discussion, as well as, include COVID resources for families. It appears that the Schools and the Brookline Police recognized the importance of being sensitive to all that has transpired since last May and show their willingness to answer questions and concerns youth would have about police. That portion of the letter read: “this year AWARE Officers will also discuss issues of racial justice, policing in America and community-police relations in Brookline. We are sure your children have many questions about policing and we are prepared to have some difficult and candid discussions around the events we have all witnessed in America this past year.” These letters were distributed to parents of 6th, 7th and 8th graders, as is done each year prior to the start of AWARE classes, along with a link to a google form where parents could provide feedback and/or ask questions.

WHAT WE RECOMMEND:

The School Resource Officer Program is a multifaceted program which supports healthy, trusting relationships between police and students and supports students making healthy, positive choices. In order to address concerns raised during this process about the SRO program, we recommend the following:

- That the School Resource Officer program remain an important part of the middle and high school programs.
- The development of a general order within the BPD that outlines the School Resource Officer program and formalizes oversight, PSB involvement and requirements/limitations of the program.
- The SROs should be included in the PSB teacher training/professional development that is relevant to student safety, racial justice, bullying and social media/online usage, and additional topics as deemed relevant.
- The SROs shall attend principal meetings at least twice per year, and additionally as requested.
- The supervisor of the SROs (Deputy Superintendent of the Community Service Division or their designee) should meet once per year with the Superintendent of the Public Schools of Brookline at least once per year.
- The Superintendent of the Public Schools of Brookline (of their designee) should participate in the interview/hiring process of SRO positions.
- The SROs should host a forum for 6th grade students entering the AWARE program at the start of the program each year.
- The SRO at the BHS should continue discussions with impacted communities at the BHS regarding the location of the SRO office.