

# Task Force to Reimagine Police in Brookline

## School Resource Officer Subcommittee Report (Draft)

### I. Introduction

#### A. Mission

This subcommittee will specifically examine the role of the School Resource Officers (SRO) within the Brookline Police Department (BPD) and Brookline Public Schools (PSB). It will analyze what function the SROs serve; if the function meets the criteria set forth in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) as signed as well as put forth by the Office of the Attorney General of Massachusetts; the balance the benefit SROs provide in relation to community policing, BPD and PSB students and families; methods and measures of accountability for SROs, BPD and PSB; and, the presence of SROs presenting lessons to PSB students.

#### B. Members

Malcolm Cawthorne  
Kimberley Richardson  
Kristan Singleton  
Alexander Weinstein, subcommittee chair

#### C. Acknowledgements

As a subcommittee we would like to acknowledge the following individuals and groups:

**BDP Officer Kaitlin Conneely**, BHS SRO who came to explain her role at BHS and field questions from the committee

**Suzanne Federspiel**, Chair of the School Committee learned about the SRO and explained the role of School Committee in placing an SRO at BHS and knowledge of the curriculum used in PSB Middle Schools

**Rahsaan Hall**, Lawyer for the Massachusetts ACLU helped explain the MA law around SROs, the Police Reform Bill in front of the MA Legislature and national research by ACLU on SROs

**BDP Sergeant Casey Hatchett**, a leader with the Community Police Division who came to help explain the role of SROs in BPD and PSB

**Katie Goldring**, Gr 6-7 Health & Wellness educator for helping us to develop a more in-depth understanding of the AWARE program and how it is implemented in the elementary schools.

**Dr. Maria Letasz Ed. D**, PSB Director of School Counseling and Clinical Services who gave explanations for the district perspective of BPD officers in PSB schools with a focus on the Middle Schools

**Anthony Meyer**, Head of School at Brookline High School who has helped explain the history of SROs at BHS and his role in bringing an SRO to BHS

**Lesley Ryan Miller**, Principal of the John Pierce Elementary School who helped explain the connection between BPD and her school

**Dr. Robert Weintraub Ed. D**, former BHS Headmaster who helped with the history of Brookline Police liaisons and collaboration with BHS Administration

**Pat Savage-Williams**, School Committee President of Evanston (IL) Township Public Schools who helped with understanding of how School Resource Officers are used in similar districts

**Carlyn Zaniboni Uyenoyama**, PSB Health and Wellness Coordinator K-12 who helped explain the role of BPD with the AWARE program with PSB Middle School students

**David Youkilis**, Interim Principal of the Michael Driscoll Elementary School who helped explain the connection between BPD and his school

## **D. Initial Questions**

What is the history of the SRO position in Brookline? What was the initial thinking behind instituting the position?

What are the statutory requirements for the SRO position?

To what extent is the SRO involved with school discipline, or with initiating criminal cases for students?

What are the costs and benefits for having an SRO? Who bears those costs, and who receives those benefits?

## **E. Research Process**

### 1. Historical and Institutional Research

Brookline Public Schools (PSB) and the Brookline Police Department (BPD) have had a long relationship as two institutional pillars of Brookline. For both, it is important to remember that these institutions have helped shape the Town for all of its attractiveness to those who reside here, attend school here and work here. Brookline High School (1843) was created 35 years before the Town saw a need for a police department (1878). There are many reasons for this; while I won't share the details, I do mention it because towns often adjust or create their institutions because of the things that are happening within the nation, the state and local communities.

While it is uncertain when BPD and PSB began their relationship with BPD officers making school visits to speak with PSB students, we know this has been happening for quite some time. The issue of an SRO is not about BPD having no role or connection to each of the schools within PSB. The historical issue is what brought the need for SROs into PSB schools and expanded the responsibilities for BPD as opposed to PSB.

In 1986, BHS began a program within its Social Studies Department known as the Legal Studies Program. This was a three year program where students learned about the legal process. This brought then BPD officer, now Town of Brookline Associate Legal Counsel, Joslin Murphy to be a guest speaker for the senior class who also helped connect BHS students with internships that sometimes led students to further connect with BPD officers. This program continues but not in its original conception because the Education Reforms in the 1990s changed the scope and sequence of BHS Social Studies course offerings. Since 1996, Legal Studies became an senior elective exclusively and it still has guest speakers throughout the legal process as well as an internship that includes the High School Citizens Police Academy during the 3rd quarter. In 1991, Brookline began the DARE program in PSB Middle Schools which included 9th grade Health and Wellness classes at BHS. After decades in the national spotlight, The DARE program was deemed a failed program and both PSB and BPD ended the program. This program officially ended in the Spring of 2008 and there was the creation of the AWARE program. These programs changed the role of BPD in PSB but maintained a relationship between them.

Nationally, the 1980s saw the continuance of late 1960s terms from the Nixon Era like “Law and Order” combined with “The War on Drugs” and “School Resource Officer”. However, it is still unclear why these terms would affect the Town of Brookline or BHS when drugs weren’t rampant here during that time. Former Headmaster, Dr. Robert Weintraub Ed. D., felt that there was a negative perception of the Brookline Police when he arrived in 1989 as Assistant Headmaster. When he became Interim Headmaster in 1992, he worked to change that perception by meeting monthly with then BPD Chief Daniel O’Leary which led to having the weekly “Round Table” with BHS Administrators, Community and Juvenile Officers of both BPD and Brookline Municipal Court. The weekly Round Table continues today.

After the Columbine [CO] School Shooting (April 1999), a Brookline Police car and Officer was located in front of BHS before and after school to provide a greater sense of security for students, faculty, staff members and community members. As there have been more school shootings, there have been times where there was suggestions for, some would say pressure applied to, BHS Administrators to do things differently to maintain safety. In particular, the addition of more security by reducing the large number of BHS entry ways and exits. These suggestions or this applied pressure came to BHS Administrators from some BHS Administrators, School Committee (SC), PSB Central Office Administrators and BPD. Currently, none of those security steps have been enforced at BHS.

In 2013, the Massachusetts Legislature passed a Bill that required each municipality to have a SRO beginning January 1, 2014. The statute was amended by a criminal justice reform bill in 2018 and provided a new template for the MOU by the MA Attorney General’s Office. The statute is [M.G.L c. 71, § 37P](#). Brookline entered into an MOU in October of 2019.

## 2. Interviews

11/23/20: Associate Town Legal Counsel, Michael Downey.

11/30/20: BPD Officer Kaitlin Conneely, SRO at Brookline High School; and BPD Sergeant Casey Hatchett.

01/11/21: Katie Goldring, health and wellness educator at the Runkle School; and Suzanne Federspiel, chair of the School Committee.

## 3. Survey

Data analysis from the 2020-2021 Task Force Departmental Analysis subcommittee survey of 25,000 Brookline residents showed that a significant percentage of respondents did not know that there are police stationed in schools.

The report states:

“Of parents with children in schools, 14% report that law enforcement officers are stationed in the school, 47% say officers are not stationed at the school, and 39% are not sure. Of those reporting that officers are stationed in their child’s school, 79% report being comfortable with the officer’s presence, 13% report being uncomfortable, and 7% are neither comfortable nor uncomfortable. Of respondents with children, only 2% report the child involved in a disciplinary action involving the police.”

([https://www.brooklinema.gov/DocumentCenter/View/23435/hersh\\_survey\\_report](https://www.brooklinema.gov/DocumentCenter/View/23435/hersh_survey_report), page 8)

The Tufts survey does not address the SRO position in particular. It’s clear from the survey that the community wants police to be there to focus on crime, and doesn’t want police to take the lead on any other issue. They wanted to limit the scope of police duties, and to limit their power within those duties.

## II. Findings: History and Current Status of the SRO Position

Since the 2000s, a number of BPD Officers have served in essence as Community Officers or Liaisons because of their consistent work with BHS and the school community; Officers Deb Hatzieleftheriadis, Tim Stephenson, Prentice Pilot and Sean Williams are just a few. It is clear that there is a need for BPD Liaisons to PSB schools for specific instances around mandatory reporting and juvenile, criminal activity that can and will occur at school or with PSB students in Brookline but outside of school. Whether it is The Round Table at BHS or similarly appointed BDP to work with specific, elementary school administrations, the difference is the role of BPD in relation to schools and SROs.

It is unclear when negotiations to bring an SRO to PSB, particularly Brookline High School (BHS), began. The Interim Superintendent, Ben Lummis, who signed the MOU, does not seem to have been involved in the initial talks around an SRO being placed at BHS. The former Brookline Police Chief, Andrew Lipson, was at the helm for a little more than one year when he signed the MOU and he is no longer chief because the job was untenable. This is problematic. When leaders make decisions for arguably the two biggest institutions in our Town and aren’t present to evaluate them, monitor them or oversee them; that is problematic. Neither of these two leaders had much contact or communication with PSB or BHS outside of each other during a period of transition for both institutions.

When this committee’s work began, there was one SRO who was regularly stationed at the high school. Officer Kaitlin Conneely began her work at BHS in the fall of 2018 before the MOU was signed and near the beginning of both Lummis and Lipson’s terms. BHS went through a process to choose the current SRO. There were three candidates put forth by BPD, the Head of School and other BHS Administrators interviewed them, and the school chose Officer Conneely. The lack of transparency around this issue had led people to think that the police department chose her. Instead, it was a collaborative process. [The MOU, creating the standards for the SRO position, was signed in 2019.](#) This occurred just after the state law about SROs was

amended to require an MOU. We have not yet been able to uncover prior MOUs or discover how long MOUs have been used to define the expectations of the position.

In the Fall of 2018 the SRO at BHS moved into an office across from METCO's designated space at BHS which is also located near the Steps to Success (STS) and African American/Latinx Scholars Program (AALSP) spaces at BHS. There was no communication about this decision in advance of her office placement; no one communicated to the BHS staff; no one communicated to the BHS student body, and no one communicated to the BHS caretaker, guardian or parent community that an SRO was placed in the building nor where her office would be. When SRO Conneely became aware that she was being placed near to the METCO space, she promptly talked with the BHS METCO Coordinator on her own initiative. She was upfront and said that if this is a bad place for her, she would move. That productive conversation was never directed toward STS or AALSP. It became clear that no BHS or PSB Administrators spoke with METCO, STS, or AALSP staff, students or families about this strategic location. In mid-September 2020, shortly after mocking a "chokehold" while commenting during a meeting of the Task Force to Reform Policing, Select Board member Bernard Greene called the current, Interim PSB Superintendent, Dr. Jim Marini Ed.D., and asked for the SRO to be moved from her current office location. He made this call without discussing it with any other school personnel, the elected School Committee members or either Task Forces and without specifying where the SRO office should move.

In our committee meeting on November 23, 2020, Associate Town Legal Counsel, Michael Downey made this committee aware of the [SRO Fact Sheet](#) produced by BPD. In that document, there are three more BPD officers who are titled as SROs who work in each of the K-8 schools throughout the year. It is not clear when the fact sheet was written nor published on the BPD website; however, all BPD interaction as well as having Sergeant Hatchett and former Chief O'Leary in attendance at Task Force meetings, there was no mention of more than one SRO before encountering this fact sheet. On November 30, 2020, Sergeant Hatchett responded to a question about this new information commenting that these three officers who work with PSB Middle Schools and beyond were doing the same job as an SRO and their titles were changed. Unfortunately, the November 30 meeting was zoom bombed and there was not another meeting to follow up on that statement.

These findings led the committee to reach out to K-12 Health and Wellness Coordinator, Carlyn Uyenoyama, PSB elementary school personnel and leadership as well as School Committee Chair Suzanne Federspiel. It has become clear that there isn't a transparent nor consistent understanding of the SRO role at the eight elementary schools. As we spoke with Health and Wellness teacher Kate Goldring (Runkle), Interim Principal David Youkilis (Driscoll), Principal Lesley Ryan Miller (Pierce) and Dr. Maria Letasz Ed. D. (PSB Director for School Counseling and Clinical Services) that the presence and consistent connection as outlined in the SRO MOU isn't happening the same way at the eight elementary schools. In addition, the School Committee had no idea SROs are in the PSB buildings, let alone "teaching lessons" in a program for PSB Middle School students. Furthermore, this committee questions the lessons to be taught by SROs in the Middle Schools.

The committee reviewed letters that went to PSB 7th and 8th grade families written on BDP letterhead and sent electronically as well as postal mail in January of 2021. These letters notified parents that SROs will teach students about racial justice. With the information in those letters as well as information gleaned from conversations with Middle School Leaders, District Leaders, SC Members, this committee has struggled to find answers as to why PSB students

need or want SROs to teach about the following topics: Mental Wellness, Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships, Cyber Bullying, Safety During COVID, Substance Awareness, and Issues of Racial Justice and Community Policing. After addressing this issue at a meeting of the full Task Force on January 29, 2021, the committee received a forwarded email from former Chief O'Leary that was originally written by Lieutenant Jennifer Paster of the BPD Community Division in the afternoon of the same day. This email outlines a total of nine lessons over three years; two for 6th graders, three for 7th graders, and four with 8th graders. The curriculum does not mention the SROs teaching about racial justice. The email stated that SROs are present in the classroom for discussions of bullying and sexual assault at least in part because they had witnessed information being presented incorrectly under current law; it is not clear why an SRO would be more suited to do this task than a lawyer, or why checking the accuracy of the curriculum could not be done in advance rather than in real time. The email also places the driving force behind any curriculum changes as coming from Brookline K-12 Health and Wellness Coordinator Carlyn Uynemoyama. This is odd because of its timing. Malcolm Cawthorne had been speaking with Ms. Uynemoyama since the revelations of Middle School SROs and none of the changes made were mentioned by her. The letters went out to PSB Middle School families on BPD letterhead the week of January 17-23. Chief O'Leary was in our weekly Task Force meeting at 8am on January 29 and then left the meeting before 8:15am. Lieutenant Paster, Sergeant Hatchett or O'Leary could have sent the email to the two Task Forces earlier since the notes on the documents were (up)dated on January 26, 2021.

This history leads this committee to challenge the need and even the titling of SROs according to the MOU. What caused the BDP and PSB to place an SRO in BHS after 175 years of existence? The 2013 Bill did not mandate that the SRO be permanently located within a school building. This committee believes that the relationship with BPD Liaisons would and should have satisfied the school and the Town. With the context of the SRO MOU, it is hard to understand how Middle School SROs in Brookline can meet the expectations of the MOU. Moreover, this committee challenges the idea that BPD is more apt or qualified than trained teachers, counselors, trained peer counselors from BHS and the Town Victim Advocate to provide the nine lessons presented by armed, BPD officers who were not vetted by any PSB Middle School personnel. Normally, when courses are altered or modified, that needs to be presented to the School Committee ahead of implementation; this has never happened.

We recognize that officers working with students is consistent with BPD's community policing model and may also be consistent with aims to build relationships with students so that they feel comfortable reporting crime within the Brookline community. But we do not believe there is wide community endorsement of this work. In addition, we believe that despite the writing produced by BPD about parent partnerships, there is no evidence that there were any attempts of public or community outreach.

Finally, Governor Charlie Baker signed into law a Police Reform Bill in December 2020. The law no longer mandates that municipalities have an SRO. This bill made several other significant changes to the statute governing SROs. An SRO may only be assigned at the request of the school superintendent. The superintendent must, every year, make a public presentation to the School Committee on the SRO. A new commission will review the model MOU and create a new one for mandatory at-minimum implementation in the 2022 school year. [See Appendix A for a full summary of the changes in the law.] Since there is no longer a legal requirement that Brookline have SROs, we need to seriously consider whether we want them.

## II. Recommendations

### **Remove SROs from schools.**

After months of debate, our position is clear: SROs should not be in schools. SROs are not educators, they do not make the requisite investments to educate students well, and the Town's using them in service of educational purposes undermines the pillars of safety and community that are needed for students to thrive in our schools.

This position was established very nearly under cover of night. The MOU was signed by an interim superintendent and a short-term police chief. The School Committee was not consulted. Parents are not aware of its existence. There was no public process around its implementation. There was no public process around the much-discussed move of the high school SRO across from the METCO office, or even notice given within the high school itself. There was no public process, nor the routine presentation to the School Committee, around the January 2021 changes to the middle school curriculum which will now have armed, uniformed officers teaching about racial justice. And, as of December 2020, Massachusetts law no longer requires an SRO. The law prior to that was never clear that an SRO had to be stationed in the BHS building at all. Police officers are not better qualified than trained teachers to teach middle school students about health and wellness. It is deeply important to reference the previous section of this report for a full and nuanced accounting of these findings; still, the evidence is overwhelming.

We have received some public comment which is thinking about this issue in terms of loss rather than gain. They are thinking of the loss of a person who they know, or with whom they have a relationship. We are thinking about gain. We can gain different ways to get what our kids need. We want to put more and better things in place.

We are not saying that we should ban police associations with schools, or police liaisons to schools. None of what we're suggesting precludes, for instance, the senior Legal Studies class being run the way it currently is, with police officers as occasional guest speakers.

**If Brookline is determined to keep the SRO position, it must be after engaging in an authentic reauthorization process prior to the start of the 2021-22 School Year.**

We must land the plane so we can see whether we even need it to take off.

If the town insists upon the SRO position, that insistence must be done through a rigorous public process. It cannot come solely from the Select Board--not after the profound lack of transparency surrounding the implementation of this position. And, crucially, the SRO position should not exist until such time as that process has concluded.

The point here is not so much transparency--which should be a given, especially after the clouded history surrounding the creation of the position--as having a true public discussion about whether we need an SRO, why, and what form the position should take.

In legislative bodies, a reauthorization process is one that provides an opportunity to create, extend, or make changes to the terms under which a program operates. While we as a subcommittee believe that the social and emotional needs of students can be met through other

partnerships beyond those with the BPD, we acknowledge that there are students, families, and educators who do have positive regard for the presence of SROs and who do value their participation in the school community. We believe that an authentic reauthorization process -- one using the mechanisms of discussion, data collection, and identified accountability -- is the correct path for the Town because it will allow us to achieve a better balance between the recently updated regulations, the perspectives of those who support school-police partnerships, and those who have legitimate and important concerns about the partnerships. This reauthorization process is absolutely necessary if Brookline is to keep SROs, because parts of this position's initial implementation did not receive public scrutiny through discussion by the School Committee.

As a subcommittee, we also believe that the Town must also use a racial equity lens as part of its SRO reauthorization process. We define the use of a racial equity lens as "[paying specific attention to race and ethnicity while analyzing problems, looking for solutions, and defining success](#)". We do not believe that any reauthorization process should be reduced to a simple "numbers game" where the group that is able to bring the largest number of voices to the table has the final say on the design and implementation of a proposed program or initiative. This approach will continue to marginalize the perspectives of those in the demographic minority. Of critical importance is that the Town not view the decision of whether to continue SROs as a school-police partnership as an *isolated programmatic decision* and instead consider its school-police partnerships in the context of how some community members experience the *cumulative effects of policing*: this includes prioritized placement of police in their neighborhoods; the increased likelihood of encountering police while walking or driving in the town; as well as the presence of police officers in their school communities.

***Prior to SROs returning to any PSB school***, we recommend that the Town and School Committee commit to the following:

- A full audit and accounting of the places where it is currently using SROs or anticipates that it might use SROs in its curriculum (e.g., the Health & Wellness AWARE curriculum)
- Convening with parent support and advocacy groups (e.g., METCO, the Brookline Parents Organization, the Brookline Parent Education Network, the Brookline Asian American Family Network, Steps to Success) to discuss the anticipated design of its school-police partnerships and to obtain parent and family feedback on the design and anticipated benefits of those partnerships with groups representing and supporting communities experiencing disproportionate and adverse impact of policing (e.g., Brookline for Racial Justice and Equity, Unitarian Universalist First Parish in Brookline) to discuss their perspectives on and concerns about the anticipated design of proposed school-police partnerships
- Convenings both with student groups and student counselors to discuss their perspectives on and concerns about the anticipated design of the school-police partnership and their anticipated benefits
- Develop a method for evaluation of SROs and their effectiveness in schools that will be presented to the School Committee
- Increased participation within the faculty and staff communities at the assigned schools. This will mean attending Faculty meetings, attending Professional Development days and times as well as being involved in School equity trainings and planning

- The School Committee and Superintendent devoting at least one summer session to sharing the findings of its convenings on potential school-police partnerships with opportunities for written and public comment from the community

To complete an authentic reauthorization process, some of the steps above need to begin as soon as spring 2021. For example, it will be far easier and more credible for the town to make investments to obtain the input and perspectives of students and counselors during the academic year than it would be to attempt to obtain similar types of input during the summer.

In employing a racial equity lens to the reauthorization, it is particularly important that the Town structure conversations in ways that can overcome the climate of fear and concerns about retribution in response to feedback that exists in communities that experience adverse effects of policing. This may require assurances of confidentiality or establishing new partnerships that allow the Town to leverage expertise or relationships that it does not currently have.

As a subcommittee we recognize that the significant effort and time commitment required to complete the work above. Optimally, the Town would have an established history of doing this work prior to the implementation of any its school-police partnerships. We also recognize the role that inertia often plays in program implementation and we specially call upon the Town not to implement a “business as usual” approach whereby design of the school-police partnerships remain intact and implemented according to their historical patterns.

*Should the reauthorization outcome result in the Town’s continuing its school-police partnerships*, the Town of Brookline must more clearly adhere to the “[model memorandum of understanding](#)” (MOU) process for formalizing and framing the partnership. In addition to the terms set forth in the model MOU, we recommend that any MOU established between the School Committee and the chief of police must:

- Identify what other educator and community resources were considered to support the educational, social, and emotional needs of students and why the services of the town police department are a better choice to meet those student needs
- Identify what the budget implications are of continuing the partnership
- Identify the types of data that will be collected to evaluate the efficacy of the partnership
- Identify the types of data and what data collection methods (with appropriate permissions from affected students and their families) are needed to determine which student groups and which segments of the Brookline community are brought in contact with the BPD through the partnership
- Identify how the BPD plans to use a racial equity lens to analyze the program data, including what training and support will be provided in the BPD for data analysis
- Identify what the communication plan will be for sharing program outcomes with parents and the larger Brookline community

The bare minimum, the floor for this public process, is the new set of legal requirements. [See Appendix A.]

# Appendix A: Changes to the SRO Statute

This is an account of the changes made to the SRO statute (G.L. c. 71, § 37) by the policing reform bill, which Governor Baker signed in December 2020.

Thank you to Associate Town Legal Counsel Michael Downey for reviewing and editing this summary.

## I. Highlights

- The legislature created a special commission. This commission will "develop and review the model memorandum of understanding [MOU]" between police departments and schools, and make recommendations for changes to it. The commission must convene no later than March 31, 2021 and shall develop the first MOU no later than February 1, 2022 for implementation starting in the 2022 school year.
- **The police may only assign an SRO at the request of the school superintendent.**
  - This is in contrast to the prior language ("Every chief of police, in consultation with the superintendent...shall assign at least 1 SRO") which required the Chief to assign an SRO.
  - Text: "(d) For the purpose of fostering a safe and healthy environment for all students through strategic and appropriate use of law enforcement resources and to achieve positive outcomes for youth and public safety, a chief of police, at the request of the superintendent and subject to appropriation, shall assign at least 1 school resource officer..."
  - Section (f)—language which appeared in the previous statute as well—does not override the requirement for the superintendent's request. It indicates that if 1) the superintendent has requested an SRO, and 2) the police and superintendent together decide there isn't enough money for one, then the police will request that a state trooper stand in as an SRO.
    - Text: "(f) Notwithstanding subsection (d), if the chief of police, in consultation with the superintendent, determines that there are not sufficient resources to assign a school resource officer to serve the . . . school, the chief of police shall consult with the department of state police to ensure that a school resource officer is assigned..."
- The superintendent must, every year, 1) report to the dept of elementary and secondary education and 2) **make a public presentation to the school committee.**
  - This must include "(i) the cost to the school district of assigning a school resource officer; (ii) a description of the proposed budget for mental, social or emotional health support personnel for the school; and (iii) the number of school-based arrests, citations and court referrals made in the previous year disaggregated as required by the department of elementary and secondary education."
- The superintendent and police chief must review the SRO's performance every year.
- The superintendent and police chief must adopt, "at minimum," the MOU developed by the commission; they may add additional requirements; and **the final MOU must "be made public and placed on file annually** with the dept of elementary and secondary education and in the offices of the school superintendent and the chief of police."
- The dept of elementary and secondary education will "collect and publish disaggregated data regarding school-based arrests, citations and court referrals of students to the department and shall make such report available for public review."

## II. Further Changes

- **Committee on Police Training and Certification**
  - Delegated Responsibility to “develop an in-service training program designed to train SROs,” as defined in MGL c71, §37P
  - Training shall include:
    - Differences in legal standards regarding police interaction and arrest procedures for juveniles compared to adults;
    - Child and adolescent cognitive development, including instruction on common child and adolescent behaviors, actions and reactions as well as impact of trauma, mental illness, behavior addictions, and developmental disabilities on child and adolescent development and behavior;
    - Engagement and de-escalation tactics, specifically effective with youth;
    - Strategies for resolving conflict and diverting youth in lieu of arrest
    - Hate crime identification and prevention training curriculum including acquisition of practical skills to prevent, respond to and investigate hate crimes/incidents and their impacts on victim communities;
    - Anti-bias, anti-racism and anti-harassment strategies;
    - Bullying and cyberbullying;
    - SRO interaction with school personnel, victim communities and build public cooperation with law enforcement agencies.
  
- **Peace Officer Standards and Training Commission**
  - Police Officer must possess special certification to be eligible for SRO appointment – Current SROs have until December 31, 2021 to receive said certification.
  - Strangely, I do not see any description of the standards necessary, if any, to obtain the special certification.
  
- **MGL c71, §37L** – This section sets forth notice requirements to school personnel regarding their reporting requirements regarding child abuse and neglect, and a student’s possession or use of a dangerous weapon on school premises.
  - **New Paragraph Added**, Prohibiting school department personnel and SRO to disclose the following information to law enforcement (subject to exceptions):
    - Immigration status
    - Citizenship
    - Neighborhood of residence
    - Religion
    - National origin
    - Ethnicity
    - Suspected, alleged, or confirmed gang affiliation, unless it is germane to a specific unlawful incident or to a specific prospect of unlawful activity the school is otherwise required to report.

# Appendix B: Preliminary Report

## Task Force to Reimagine Police in Brookline School Resource Officer Subcommittee Preliminary Report 11/13/20

### Introduction

In preparing this preliminary report to the Reimagining Policing Task Force, the discussion of the School Resource Officers Subcommittee has built on the following themes, some introduced in discussions of the larger Task Force, others specific to the discussion of SROs:

#### **Nobody wants their safety taken away.**

As an SRO subcommittee, we explored this in more depth anchored on the ideas that continuing to do the things we've been doing is not necessarily making people feel safe, or feel that their safety was checked on.

#### **Whose feelings of safety are we supporting through the presence of SROs?**

Do the officers present make the students feel safe? The teachers? Does the community feel whole and well? To what degree does the presence of the police invoke bias related to METCO students and students of color? Communities in Brookline who may feel they are being policed at higher rates than other communities?

#### **What is the perception of the policies that are being implemented and how are the policies communicated?**

Sometimes we assume that everybody looks at the police in the same way. That's not true. If you don't put information out front, you leave it open to suspicion; at some schools, there's a police dog out sniffing for drugs. So your mind might go there. Brookline Police has a therapy dog named Bear who occasionally visits the high school. And part of the reason why Bear is so well-loved is because there was messaging in advance that he was there as a therapy dog; everybody knew why he was there and embraced it.

### Members

- Malcolm Cawthorne
- Kimberley Richardson
- Kristan Singleton
- Alexander Weinstein

### History of the SRO Position

- The subcommittee has come to a preliminary understanding of the history behind the SRO position. We will update this summary as our investigation continues.
- **Early history -**
  - The history which led to having an SRO in Brookline is somewhat cloudy, lending itself to inference based on available facts.
  - Brookline High School is 177 years old. What changed such that we needed an SRO beginning in 2018?
  - When Malcolm Cawthorne investigated that question, he found that the answer was the war on drugs and police-heavy movements in the late 1980s. However, that was not the case in Brookline nor at BHS.
    - It is important to note here that the term “school resource officer” has not always been used. The term fits into the narrative of “law and order,” a phrase coined by President Nixon in 1968.
  - Former Headmaster, Dr. Robert Weintraub Ed. D., felt that there was a negative perception of the Brookline Police when he arrived in 1991 as Associate Headmaster. When he became Interim Headmaster in 1992, he worked to change that perception by meeting monthly with then BPD Chief Daniel O’Leary which led to having the weekly “Round Table” with BHS Administrators, Community and Juvenile Officers of both BPD and Brookline Municipal Court.
  - After the Columbine [CO] School Shooting (April 1999), a Brookline Police car and Officer was located in front of BHS before and after school to provide a greater sense of security for students, faculty, staff members and community members.
  - Since that time, a number of BPD Officers have served in essence as Community Officers because of their consistent work with BHS and the school community; Officers Deb Hatzieleftheriadis, Tim Stephenson, Prentice Pilot and Sean Williams to name a few.
  - There have also been times where there was suggestions for, some would say pressure applied to, BHS Administrators to do things differently to maintain safety in light of school shootings. In particular, the addition of more secure by reducing the number of entry ways and exits to BHS. These suggestions or this applied pressure came to BHS Administrators from both Brookline Public School (PSB) Administrators and BPD.
  - SROs are required by a law passed by the Massachusetts legislature.
    - The statute is [M.G.L c. 71, § 37P](#).
    - The statute appears to have first become effective in July 2015.
- **Recent history -**
  - Currently, there is one SRO regularly stationed at the high school. Her name is Officer Kaitlin Conneely. There are three other officers who move along the K-8 schools throughout the year.
  - The most recent memorandum of understanding (MOU), creating the standards for the SRO position, was signed in 2019. We have not yet been able to uncover prior MOUs or discover how long MOUs have been used to define the boundaries of the position. It is unclear what process was used to outline the first SRO position.
  - The high school went through a process to choose the current SRO. There were three candidates, the school interviewed them, and the school chose Officer Conneely. The lack of transparency around this issue had led people to think that the police department chose her. Instead, it was a collaborative process.
  - The SRO at Brookline High recently (Fall of 2018) moved to an office across from METCO’s designated space at BHS which is also closely located near STEPS to

Success (STS) and African American/Latinx Scholars Program (AALSP) spaces. There was no messaging about this move in advance of her office placement, and no one communicated to the BHS staff that it was happening. As soon as SRO Kaitlin Conneely became aware that she was being placed next to the METCO space, she promptly talked with the BHS METCO Coordinator on her own initiative. She was upfront and said that if this is a bad place for her, she would move. That productive conversation was never directed toward STS or AALSP. It became clear that no BHS of Brookline Public School (PSB) Administrators spoke with METCO, STS, or AALSP about this new location.

- In mid-September 2020, shortly after his “chokehold” comments during a meeting of the Task Force to Reform Policing, Bernard Greene called the Interim PSB Superintendent and asked for the SRO to be moved. He made this call without discussing it with any other school personnel, and without specifying that the SRO office should move to a particular strategic place.

## Subcommittee History

The subcommittee has met three times (10/22, 10/26, and 11/09).

## School Committee Policy Manual

### *Section E p. 45 “Support Services”*

“Public Safety Officers, including the school resource officer: Subject to current law or regulation, the superintendent shall report to the School Committee any changes in status of the school resource officer(s).”

### *Section J “Students”, Subsection 8 “Student Code of Conduct” p. 63*

#### Role of Brookline Police Department

“Our schools strive to only involve law enforcement for educational and supportive purposes. The Brookline Police Department (BPD), through its School Resource Officers (SROs), offers educational programming to our students as well as behavioral health and de-escalation support for students in crisis. At times, situations may necessitate the involvement of the Brookline Police Department for other purposes. At any point after receiving a report of an incident, the Principal shall immediately notify the BPD if there is a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued or if the conduct is reasonably believed to put persons at risk of harm, including the student in question. Such notification will be made after consultation with the Superintendent. The Principal shall document the reasons for the decision to notify law enforcement if such notification is made. This District seeks to avoid the unnecessary criminalization of our students; as such, police will be involved in situations when it is reasonably believed to be necessary to protect the physical safety of students, staff, or other persons in the community, or appropriate to address criminal behavior of persons other than students.”

## Issues Raised

- **Placement of the SRO at BHS** - The town has likely underestimated the impact and optics of the placement of the SRO at BHS, near the AALSP, STS and METCO resources for students. Comments from Anthony Meyer and subsequent research into

the issues by Malcolm Cawthorne suggest a number of unfortunate coincidences (e.g., the central location offers important access for a public safety officer) but lack of communication to the Brookline community and external communities must be addressed.

- **Long-term approach to the SRO position** - We should be cautious of concluding that an institutional position is working because the *person* currently in the position is doing a good job. Officer Kaitlin Conneely has brought many positive things to the SRO position. She builds real relationships. She has created trust with some students who didn't trust adults. This raises the question of whether, to the extent that the SRO position is successful, it is successful solely because of the person who is in it. What happens when someone else comes in? The test that we might apply is whether the community feels whole and well through the ways that the school resource officers have been deployed or used.

## Recommendations for Continued Work

- **Continuing to unearth the community history of SROs** - Continued discovery of the climate and circumstances under which SRO agreements were entered into to help us have clarity into community needs. It has been possible to obtain copies of the current memorandum of understanding (MOU) for SROs in Brookline's schools; however the subcommittee feels it is important for the town to have a nuanced understanding of needs and expectations that informed what we see as the current MOU. Further investigation into the history of how the SRO position began will provide necessary context.
- **Discussion with the current SRO at Brookline High School (BHS)** - Currently there is positive regard for the work that Office Kaitlin Conneely is doing at BHS, both within and outside the school community. The subcommittee seeks to continue to understand more about the type of work performed as well as solicit input from the broader Brookline community about potential adjustments and alternatives that are consistent with the statutes for the [role of SROs in Massachusetts](#).
- **School discipline** - The SRO does not participate in school discipline, and doesn't sit in school meetings about school discipline. She doesn't carry a school walkie-talkie. The subcommittee seeks to discover the line between school discipline and a criminal action where the police would become involved.
- **Continued clarification of statutes for deploying SROs** - The subcommittee seeks to understand the range of options that are available for consideration in deployment of SROs that still abide by Massachusetts statute. We have asked the town counsel for advice on this matter.

**What is the role of the School Committee and PSB Policy on Police presence, education and SROs** - There is very little in the way of notes and acknowledgement of Brookline Police presence within its schools. Without system-wide policy, it is difficult to know where the impetus for BPS presence is. In addition, there seems to be no clear leader within PSB who drives or accesses the curricula. Lastly, did the School Committee grant permission for an SRO to be at BHS? Was there a vote? Did they do anything to shape the current policy and Memorandum of Understanding?