

# Special Policing Subcommittee

## PUBLIC FORUM

Monday | November 14, 2022

# Goals

- Clarify the task of the Special Policing Subcommittee
- Provide information about the role of School Resource Officer and the STEPS program and the history of these programs in Somerville.
- Provide an update on community outreach
- Give community members an opportunity to publicly share their thoughts on these topics

# Who are the subcommittee members?

**Aisha Banda**

**Ellenor Barish\***

**Anuj Bhardwaj**

**Andre Green\***

**Les Lartey**

**Sarah Phillips\***

**Dayshawn Simmons**

**Glenda Soto**

**Johanne Thomas**

# What is the subcommittee considering?

The subcommittee is tasked with making a recommendation to the full School Committee about what the relationship should be between Somerville Public Schools and the Somerville Police Department.

# What is a School Resource Officer or SRO?

- According to the Somerville Public Schools and the Somerville Police Department, the purpose of the School Resource Officer (SRO) Program is to provide a safe, secure, and nurturing school environment by working collaboratively and proactively to prevent violence
- The SRO primarily serves in a non-enforcement role to develop a positive relationship with students and staff

# What special training does an SRO receive?

| <b>Child and Adolescent Development</b>   | <b>Conflict resolution</b>   | <b>Diversion strategies &amp; practices</b>   | <b>Other relevant topics</b>  |
|---|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Understanding common youth behavior and actions</li><li>● Impact of trauma, mental illness, behavioral addictions, developmental disabilities</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Resolving conflict</li><li>● Interacting effectively with school staff, victim, and their family</li><li>● Anti-bias, anti-racism and anti-harassment strategies</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● De-escalation tactics (specific to youth) instead of arrest</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Differences in procedures for juveniles vs. adults</li><li>● Prevent, identify, respond to hate crimes and hate incidents</li><li>● Bullying &amp; cyber bullying</li><li>● Identify youth being sexually exploited</li></ul> |

# SRO at Somerville High School - History

- Somerville High School had an SRO for more than 25 years
- Every public school district in MA was required to have an SRO from 2014 until 2020
- There was an SRO at Somerville High School until March 2020
- In 2021 the Somerville School Committee voted to suspend the SRO program pending further conversations with the community
- **SHS currently does not have an SRO and is otherwise operating under the 2018 Memorandum of Understanding with SPD**

# What is the Memorandum of Understanding?

MOU describes protocols and agreements between law enforcement and schools:

- SRO program: existence, training, policies, and regular evaluations
- Circumstances that allow for police involvement on campus
- Guidance on when an arrest may or may not occur on campus
- Who needs to be present if police are questioning a juvenile
- Rules for sharing information between SPD and SPS
- Clarity around reporting abuse and neglect
- Complaint processes
- Other policies and operating procedures



# What is the STEPS program?

- Started in 2015 in a partnership between SPS, SPD, and the City
- Every year, an officer was assigned to each of the district's sixth grade cohorts; the officer would stay with that group until they finished twelfth grade
- According to SPS and SPD, the program aimed to foster trust and positive relationships between young people and police officers and to help young people grow into responsible and successful adults
- Officers visited their cohorts periodically during class time, lunch, recess and after school time

# Community Outreach

Ongoing – Community feedback link provided on [the subcommittee's web page](#)

September – SHS Community Meeting regarding safety and police in schools; brief survey and recruitment of volunteers for focus groups

October – SHS and NWFC, affinity group, and volunteer focus groups; staff survey

November – Community Forum

# Potential School Safety Models



## Model #1

Reinstate a building-based School Resource Officer at SHS



## Model #2

No building-based SRO; any Somerville Police Department officer on patrol responds



## Model #3

No SRO but partner with Somerville Police Department to have trained, dedicated Community Police Officer(s) available

# Where to find more information

The Special Policing Subcommittee [webpage](#) on the SPS website

[Contact Ellenor Barish](mailto:ebarish@k12.somerville.ma.us), Subcommittee Chair ebarish@k12.somerville.ma.us

# Public Comment

Put your name in the chat if you would like to make a public comment

Share public comment with subcommittee via email to [ebarish@k12.somerville.ma.us](mailto:ebarish@k12.somerville.ma.us)

When you begin public comment, please state your name and address or role in the district if you are a staff member who is not a resident of Somerville.

# THANK YOU!