

# **Potential Recommendations for Rockland City Council**

*From the Rockland Police Review Committee  
prepared for the Public Forum on Proposed Recommendations*

**Monday, October 24th, 5:00-7:00 pm**

**Rockland City Hall**

270 Pleasant Street, Rockland

City Council Chambers

In-person participation encouraged, hybrid option available:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/5040315241?pwd=eFhHaWJ4ZmhNakRmQ0VlQko4VmlKUT09>

The Rockland Police Review Committee has been meeting for a year and exploring the relationship between our city's police department and public safety of Rockland. Members of the committee have drafted recommendations for Rockland City Council and are now seeking public feedback. Your voice matters! If you cannot attend the meeting, but would like to share your thoughts, please e-mail the committee at [rocklandprc@googlegroups.com](mailto:rocklandprc@googlegroups.com)

This report contains the recommendations written by various members of the Rockland Police Review Committee. These are not finalized, and we are open to feedback and ideas.

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## INTRODUCTION OF THE COMMITTEE

Voting members of the committee include: Emily Emmott, Joe Steinberger, Jan Morrill, Angela McIntyre, Dana Crane, and Brian Messing. Non-voting participants include City Counselor Nate Davis, Police Chief Tim Carroll, and Fire Chief Chris Whytock. Members who participated in the past include Interim Chief Joel Neal, Pinny Beebe-Center and Russell Beauchemin. This committee chose to rotate the responsibilities of creating agendas, notetaking and facilitating rather than choosing a Chair.

The Rockland Police Review Committee has been meeting for over a year to discuss Rockland's Police Department and public safety. A wide range of topics were discussed, and not all topics became formal recommendations. In June 2021, a community forum was held to hear concerns and ideas regarding a potential committee formation. A report can be found [here](#). The committee was established by an order from the City Council in July 2021 (see text below for further details). The committee began meeting in September 2021. Committee meetings are always open to the public. These [rolling notes](#) include past agendas and meeting notes.

Order from City Council:

*THAT there is hereby established an ad-hoc committee to investigate ways to improve community policing in Rockland and to report recommendations to the City Council on any actions necessary to facilitate such improvements; and The committee shall be comprised of seven (7) residents, representing as many different opinions as possible. Once formed, the committee shall elect a Chair from among its voting membership, and shall determine the procedures that the committee shall follow in the completion of its assigned tasks. The committee may have consultants representing various partner agencies and other users serving as non-voting members, and the Mayor or their designee shall serve as a non-voting ex-officio member. Additionally the Police Chief (or designee) and the Fire Chief (or designee) shall serve as non-voting members. The committee shall work closely with the city administration on all recommendations. If necessary the committee may hire a facilitator to help with research and to moderate meetings. It is expected that 12 months may be needed to accomplish the review. If more time is needed, the council may grant it. Once the work of the committee is completed, it shall be dissolved. The committee is tasked with the hard work of reviewing the city policing policies and practices to investigate possible improvements. Issues to tackle include (but are not limited to):*

- *Department hiring practices - Recruitment, qualifications, wages and compensation;*
- *Training - Types offered/required;*
- *Officer wellness - Physical and mental health for RPD staff, ensuring a positive working environment;*
- *Service center- What size and scope of services are right for Rockland?*
- *Should there be a standing police committee, and if so, what roles should it have?*
- *Mental Health – How to best provide services, specialized training, partner agencies, resources;*
- *Anonymous input – Protect vulnerable communities, encourage important feedback, minimize potential for false reports;*
- *Data – Minorities, biases, arrest data, crime rates, use-of-force data, time of day statistics, etc. How has policing in Rockland changed in 20 years;*
- *Duplications in local services - Possible collaborative or alternate providers for various community needs, cost/benefit of overlap (i.e., County Sheriff and RPD);*
- *Transparency - Data collection and sharing with the public, including crime and call stats, complaints and disciplinary proceedings, body camera footage, interactions with the public, etc.;*
- *Substance abuse and addiction - Specialized training, partner agencies, local resources;*
- *Use of force - clarity of policy, disengagement or de-escalation policy; and*
- *Traffic enforcement - Strategies and frequency of enforcement, speeding, pedestrian safety, dangerous intersections, noisy vehicles.*

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

*These links will bring you the google doc that contains the full report for each proposal. It should be noted that during a preliminary vote, some recommendations did not receive unanimous support from all voting members. Committee members will have an opportunity to write dissenting viewpoints that will be included in the final report submitted to the City Council.*

- I. **Community Policing**  
*City Council would encourage police to engage in public interaction, especially with youth, as much as possible.*
- II. [Citizen Police Review Committee](#)  
*A standing police review committee would be established by City Council*
- III. [Feedback Mechanisms](#)  
*An outline of current mechanisms available to the public to voice feedback regarding Rockland's Police Department and suggested improvements*
- IV. [Arrest Diversion](#)  
*The City Council would establish a law enforcement assisted diversion program. Policy and training would be established so that law enforcement would be empowered to refer some mental health and substance-use related calls to programs outside of the criminal-legal system.*
- V. [Mobile Crisis Response](#)  
*The City Council would establish a task force to examine alternative responses to mental health crises, including substance use. Research and recommendations would be made to improve current response mechanisms and create mobile crisis responses appropriate for our community.*
- VI. [Community Liaison](#)  
*City Council would create a Community Liaison position. This city employee would work with police and EMS to "co-respond" to emergencies with mental health components.*

## COMMUNITY POLICING

*This statement reflects the full proposal. There is no additional report. This proposal received a unanimous vote of support from voting members of the committee.*

Mutual trust and respect between our police officers and our community is essential for effective law enforcement, regular, friendly, and respectful face-to-face contact between the police and the public is a key means to that end. This is especially important for young people growing up in Rockland, in order that they will develop a positive relationship with law enforcement and feel that they are a part of a just community in which they are respected and can count on help from the police when it is needed. Therefore, the RPRC recommends that regular, face-to-face contact with the public, especially with young people, be a top priority for our police department.

## **CITIZEN POLICE REVIEW COMMITTEE**

### [Full Citizen Police Review Committee Proposal](#)

**Objective:** Ensuring the public is engaged in the oversight of RPF will strengthen the relationship between the community and its police force. A community oversight committee for the town of Rockland can be an additional resource to look for solutions to community-wide public safety issues, solicit public feedback, and ultimately work together with the RPF to improve policing in Rockland.

**Background:** Many cities and towns across the country have established some form of citizen oversight committees for police departments. These committees have a broad range of scope and responsibilities from reviewing policy policies and procedures, soliciting public feedback on the police force, to receiving and investigating complaints filed by citizens against the police. They also have a number of different sizes and formats.

A list of cities with police oversight committees and their websites can be found [here](#). Notably, Portland Maine has had a police oversight committee since 2001. More information on the mandate and operations of the committee [here](#) and [here](#).

**Recommendation:** The RPRC recommends the City Council establish through statute or ordinance a standing citizen oversight committee to meet at least on a quarterly basis. The mandate of the committee should be to:

1. Develop programs and strategies to promote positive police/community relations and to provide opportunities for expanded discussions, improved understanding, and innovative ways of resolving differences, by
  - a. Holding public meetings, at least yearly, to solicit feedback around police matters and to report on progress made towards improving policing, and
  - b. Convening other stakeholders (ex: mental health service providers, substance use treatment and support programs, housing programs, etc) and city officials to identify areas of improved coordination with the RPD.
2. Collect and analyze data on policing in Rockland as well as the policies, practices, and customs of the RPD and make suggestions to the City Council for areas of improvement.
3. Review reports of positive feedback and complaints regarding the RPD, as well the measures taken to address the complaints. Look for trends and make recommendations that can help improve policing in Rockland.

The citizen oversight committee will likely need advisory, research and compliance support and resources from the City to be able to fulfill its mandate. The statute or ordinance that establishes the committee may want to require law enforcement officials to cooperate with the committee to ensure the appropriate flow of information and collaboration.

Additional guidance and resources can be found at the National [Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement](#).

Examples of Mandates from other Citizen Oversight Committees can be found in the recommendation's [full proposal](#).

## FEEDBACK MECHANISM

### [Full Feedback Mechanism Proposal](#)

**Objective:** The Rockland Police Review Committee (RPRC) has heard from the public, committee members and a Rockland Council member that the current system for complaints concerning Rockland PD members is not always effective in creating the trust needed between the community and the City for members of the public to feel comfortable reporting complaints.

The proposal below builds on the system currently in place in Rockland as well as international best practices for non-judicial grievance mechanisms. There should be a way for citizens to provide both positive and negative feedback about police officers.

An independent system for filing complaints should be based on international best practices for grievance mechanisms, like those established in the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights ([see page 34](#), or view [full proposal](#) for a summary and commentary).

### Recommended Structure for Police Feedback Mechanism

\*Note some of these points are already in place in Rockland. The outline below includes both current practice and new recommendations. **The text in red would be in addition to the system already in place.** See below for the current feedback mechanism.

- The City of Rockland should have an avenue for complaints that is functionally independent from the Rockland Police Department. This could be through a **Citizen's Oversight Committee** or a system established within the City Manager's Office, or both.
- The already established internal system for feedback on the RPD should continue to be available for citizens that feel comfortable reporting positive or negative feedback directly to the RPD.
- **The City should hold a public forum to solicit input from the community on the current feedback mechanism and how it might be revised. Once the mechanism is developed, the City should undergo an outreach and education strategy to ensure citizens are aware of the feedback mechanism and how to use it.**
- The feedback mechanism and how to use it should be clearly posted and easily accessible on the City website and at the Town Office. **There should be a yearly education and outreach campaign carried out by the City to inform citizens about the feedback mechanism.**
- There should be clearly established policies and protocols for how to respond to complaints, including response times to complainants, when a complaint warrants further investigation, when an investigation is done internally versus when an outside agency is called in, and an overview of what information can be made public. **These policies and protocols should be made public and published on the City website and provided to anyone filing a complaint against the RPD.**
- The City should establish and publicize a system for filing anonymous complaints.
- There should be yearly de-identified reporting on the number, types and responses to complaints received about the RPD. Trends in complaints should be tracked by the City Manager and/or Citizen Oversight Committee and made publicly available on a yearly basis, or upon request. Yearly reporting should include lawsuits filed through the legal system against the RPD, complaints filed internally through the RPD and complaints filed through the City Manager's Office or other independent avenues.
- The City should research whether there are mechanisms for investigations of complaints that use alternative methods to relying on law enforcement from other jurisdictions. A

question to examine could be: does law enforcement officers investigating law enforcement offices lead to bias in investigations and recommendations?

## Current Feedback Mechanisms

### [From Rockland website:](#)

Everyone appreciates recognition when they do a good job. Rockland Police Officers are no different. Each year the Police Department receives many thank you letters, notes, or cards from members of the community. However, there are probably many more commendable acts or deeds that go unnoticed. When you receive service from the Rockland Police Department that you feel is worthy of recognition, we would like to hear from you. You may mail, call or send email to:

- Chief of Police  
Rockland Police Department  
1 Police Plaza  
Rockland, Maine 04841  
Phone: (207) 594-0316  
E-Mail: [police@rocklandmaine.gov](mailto:police@rocklandmaine.gov)


Please include all the information you can remember such as the officer's name, date, time, and brief explanation of the event. The officer will be notified of your acknowledgment and/or gratitude and it will be recorded in his/her personnel file.

### **If you wish to make a complaint about the action of a police officer or about any aspect of police operations, please:**

Come to the Police department and tell any employee that you wish to make a complaint; or Call the Police department or the City Manager's office and tell the person answering the phone that you wish to make a complaint; Or Using the "Police/Citizen Complaint" form (attached below), write your complaint and mail it to the Chief of Police [see address above]

A supervisory officer can assist you in filling out the form. This document asks you to identify yourself and then to give specific details about your complaint.

- Your complaint will then be investigated. You may be contacted and asked additional questions about your complaint.
- If it is going to take a long time to investigate your complaint, you will receive a letter telling you approximately when you may expect a reply.
- When your complaint has been investigated, the Chief of Police will review the investigation and will write you a letter explaining what has been found out about the matter.

 [Complaint\\_on\\_an\\_officer\\_form.pdf](#)

## ARREST DIVERSION

### [Full Arrest Diversion Proposal](#)

**Recommendation:** The Rockland Police Review Committee recommends the development and implementation of a Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion policy for the Rockland PD. The LEAD pilot program developed in 2019 by the Waldo and Knox County Sheriff's departments was effective and that model could be followed. This would ensure officers are trained in available addiction and recovery support and conflict resolution resources, and reduce the strain of substance use-related issues off the criminal justice system.

#### **Objectives:**

- Reduce drug-related arrests
- Establish Diversion Policy for Rockland PD
- Train all officer to be empowered and encouraged to utilize diversion program
- Reduce recidivism
- Promote victim/offender reconciliation through restorative practices when appropriate
- Meet the acute needs of people in Rockland dealing with substance use disorder

**Background:** Key points Waldo-Knox County Drug Offense Diversion and Deflection Program. See [full report](#) for this program's original proposal.

- This program originated in Seattle, a 2017 review found that the program:
  - Reduced criminal/legal system utilization, therefore saving public funds
  - Reduced participant recidivism, participants were 60% less likely to be arrested within the first 6 months of receiving services
  - Improved participant stability and functioning
- "The Waldo-Knox Drug Offense Diversion and Deflection Program will wrap around the criminal justice pipeline, providing opportunities to support recovery, reduce reliance on the criminal justice system in addressing substance use issues, and reduce recidivism at multiple points throughout."
- Pre-arrest diversion referral made by individual officers who have cause to engage a person around a perceived drug offense and/or offense in which substance use is felt to be a contributing factor. As this is the officer's discretion, appropriate training is required for all officers. Law Enforcement Officers will be empowered to refer the individual into the program in accordance with the established diversion policy. Under such circumstances the individual is not arrested or booked at point of contact.
- Emphasis on intervening to support recovery and prevent further criminal justice interaction through social contact referrals and pre-arrest diversion referrals
- Intensive case managements services contracted with local organizations
- Restorative Justice implemented to support reconciliation between victims and offenders
- When victims are involved, they must consent to the diversion and will have opportunity for reconciliation via a restorative justice program.
- Community Liaison provides intervention, referral, advocacy and facilitation in partnership with law enforcement
- See full report for examples of measurable objectives including: regarding decreasing arrests, training, participation in various aspects of the program, and recidivism, and decreasing acuity of need among participants.
- Funded through Substance Use Disorder Assistance Program with a plan for modest growth and ensured sustainability of core services. Cost savings of jail utilization may be redirected toward diversion programming.

## **MOBILE CRISIS RESPONSE**

### [Full Mobile Crisis Response Proposal](#)

#### **Objective**

- Slowly and sustainably redirect emergency calls that do not require police presence to a Mobile Crisis Response Program
- Offer quick response and specialized support for people experiencing mental health crisis in Rockland (this includes substance use)
- Reduce volume of Rockland's PD incoming mental health/substance use related calls
- Free up Rockland PD's time to work on calls they are best trained to respond to
- Collaborate and strengthen response from existing behavioral health providers

#### **Recommendation**

The committee recommends the City of Rockland pursues the formation of a Mobile Crisis Response Program. More research, outreach, and collaboration need to be done before a formal proposal can be made. The city would form a Mental Health Crisis Response Task Force, which would include people directly impacted by behavioral health crises and professionals who provide services. The Mental Health Crisis Response Task Force would:

- Research existing mobile crisis response programs and propose a models appropriate for Rockland
- Gather public input, including people who have been directly impacted by behavioral health crisis
- Collaborate with Rockland Police, Fire and EMS departments to deepen understanding of the nature and volume of mental health and substance use related calls
- Collaborate with organizations that provide mental health services for Rockland and Knox County
  - Understand current service and response times for people in Rockland experiencing behavioral health crisis
  - Gain an understanding of services provided
  - Identify gaps in services
  - Examine the behavioral health needs for people in Rockland
- Find an organization that could host a Mobile Crisis Response Program
- Consider launching mobile crisis response program on county level, or collaborating with state programs
- Research grants and other funding options
- Promote the use of 988 (Maine's Crisis Hotline) for individuals, health care providers, and law enforcement in Rockland.
- Create a timeline for the program including measurable goals and means for collecting data.
- Ensure public safety is prioritized when considering how and when to utilize a Mobile Crisis Response Program. The Task Force would collaborate with the leadership from the Rockland's Police Department, Fire and EMS, dispatchers, and other service providers to create best practices for Mobile Crisis Response. Not all emergency calls with behavioral health components are appropriate for a Mobile Crisis Response. The types of calls directed toward this program would be carefully evaluated on a continuing basis.
- Outline a plan for sustainable growth over the course of 5 and 10 years



There is no singular program that can “fix” behavioral health issues in Rockland. Mobile Crisis Response Programs are one component of many that could best serve the people of Rockland. The Task Force, in its research, may find additional ways to strengthen response to behavioral health crises. These ideas are welcome as additional recommendations.

## **Background**

While overall call volume directed to Rockland’s PD has decreased in the last two years, there is a continued increase in calls related to behavioral health issues. These issues include, but are not limited to, people dealing with mental illness, substance use disorder, or homelessness. Call volume indicates that many people in Rockland need immediate assistance related to these issues. Police response is timely, officers do have some training for these situations, and people know that calling 911 is available when a crisis arises.

However, there is a growing movement in cities, counties and states in the country to create and utilize “Mobile Crisis Response Teams” in lieu of dispatching police officers. This team, often a social worker and medic, are trained to deal with a wide range of mental health-related crises, including conflict resolution, welfare checks, substance abuse, suicide threats, and more. Dispatchers, trained to recognize non-violent situations with behavioral health components, route calls to the crisis response team. The team is dispatched to the scene, stabilizes the crisis, assesses the needs of people in crisis, makes appropriate referrals, and transports people to best possible care when needed. Police response is always available if deemed appropriate. CAHOOTS does not respond to calls deemed unsafe for unarmed/non-emergency response. These calls include, but are not limited to: a violent scene or weapons are involved, a criminal or dangerous situation, a request for law enforcement, emergency medical problems, a call outside of City limits.

The CAHOOTS program launched in Eugene, Oregon in 1989 is indicative to the successes Rockland could experience. “Crisis Assistance Helping Out in the Streets” has grown over the last 32 years and now handles 17% of the call volume that would have been previously directed to the Eugene PD. This program is operated by a health clinic that collaborates with the police department. In addition to providing more appropriate care for those in crisis, the city saves approximately \$8.5 millions annually. Of 24,000 calls directed to CAHOOTS, only 15 calls required police back up - less than 1%! Similar programs have been launched in many cities including Denver, Oakland and Portland, Maine.

Sweetser provides mobile crisis response for Knox and Waldo County. This response is mobilized by calling the Mobile Crisis Hotline (soon to be 988). This call can be made by the person experiencing a crisis, healthcare providers, law enforcement, or anyone who needs help assessing a mental health crisis. Whether this crisis response has the capacity to respond to Rockland’s population in a timely manner requires more assessment.

OPTIONS has county-wide liaisons for co-responding initiatives to prevent overdoses. These initiatives can be embedded in law enforcement and EMS services. See [full report](#) for additional resources.

## **COMMUNITY LIAISON**

### [Full Community Liaison Proposal](#)

#### **Objective**

- Decrease mental health and substance use related workload of Rockland Police, EMS, and Fire Departments by providing follow-up care, referrals, and co-responding when appropriate
- Improve mental health support for Rockland's Police Department, EMS, Fire and other public-facing municipal staff through education, training, and referrals for staff needing mental health support
- Coordinate and improve comprehensive care in Rockland with the network of organizations and programs that serve people dealing with issues such as mental illness, substance use disorder, and housing insecurities
- Ensure continued research, assessment, and exploration of how to better serve people experiencing behavioral health issues in Rockland

#### **Recommendation**

The Rockland Police Review Committee recommends that the City of Rockland create a full-time Community Liaison position. A task force may be formed to research funding opportunities and tailor the job description and qualification to best suit the city of Rockland. This city employee would collaborate with the Town Manager, Rockland Police Department, Fire and EMS, and other public-facing municipal employees to assess and better serve people in Rockland dealing with behavioral health related crises and issues. Job functions may include:

- Provides intervention, referral, advocacy and facilitation services, in partnership with the members of law enforcement, through referrals and direct contacts with individuals known to have drug or alcohol addiction and mental illness.
- Works closely with other health and mental health professionals to access and facilitate best care for an individual's needs.
- Coordinates the management of existing services and follow-up with treatment care plans.
- Educates members of the law enforcement, and the community, about related recovery resources available in the community.
- Provide mental health support, training, and referrals for Rockland's Police Department, Fire, EMS and other public-facing employees
- Establish strong working relationships with community providers.
- Maintain statistics and records of client contacts.
- Other duties as assigned.
- Develops new behavioral health programs for Rockland

Should this position be successful, the City would consider expanding the Community Liaison to include additional staff.

#### **Background**

Job responsibility descriptions were taken from the Community Liaison Job Description posted for Volunteers of America. See [full report](#) for VoA job description.

Overall emergency call volume directed toward the Rockland Police Department has decreased in the last two years, but the department has seen an increasing demand in calls relating to mental health and substance use. As this demand continues to increase, alternative responses and support for these types of calls should be considered. One such alternative is providing a “community liaison” that can correspond with the police, EMS, and Fire Department.

A “community liaison” serves the public in many ways, and the job description can be tailored to match the needs of the community served. Waldo County has seen success implementing a community liaison program. The Waldo County Recovery Committee explored ways to better respond to substance use and mental health calls. In 2019, a \$1 million grant was secured from Health Resources and Federal Services Administration. This funding allowed for the creation of a community liaison position in Waldo County. The nature of this position was inspired by the Portland Police Department, which has used community liaisons for over 20 years.

This “crisis co-responder” is not a police officer. They respond with the police or sheriff’s department for non-criminal calls. Their mission is to build rapport and support for the people involved with non-criminal calls. A key component is that the liaison can do more follow-up work that law enforcement may not have the capacity to perform. The community liaison also responds to requests from the community to assist with navigating MaineCare, paperwork, phone calls, and general support for non-criminal matters.

VoA’s job description: “The Community Liaison is a hands-on position of considerable responsibility and complexity working collaboratively and directly in the area of police operations who will provide education, outreach and case management in the area of OUD, SUD and Mental Illness.”