

A year ago, people in Albany, as across the country and world, took to the streets in horror and anger to protest the killing of George Floyd by Minneapolis police officers, and the broader brutality against people of color, especially Black people, in the nation's history. The Albany City Council responded to the many people who called for action by appointing a Community Task Force on Policing to examine the city's own practices and to consider ways to reimagine public safety. Albany residents submitted applications in the winter, and a committee appointed by council selected 12 participants of widely ranging demographics and life experiences. The task force began to meet this May and has met monthly since in public meetings.

The Council asked the task force to examine policing "policy and practices especially those that have negatively impacted community members and relationships," to "identify key racial equity challenges," to research "best practices in other jurisdictions and examine possible alternatives," to define "communication pathways," and to ensure "an environment where members of the public feel safe calling on and interacting with the police." The task force does not make policy but is charged with making "recommendations of key action steps for the City Council to consider."

In its first three meetings, the task force has accumulated research and models from other cities and counties, heard from subject area experts, been briefed by the city police chief, and created subcommittees to focus on accountability, the police budget, police policies, alternative ways of public safety, and other issues.

At the July meeting, the task force unanimously approved a resolution from the accountability subcommittee asking Council to create a permanent Public Safety Accountability Commission appointed by Council to review the policies, budgets, and complaints regarding the Albany Police Department, based upon models from many other California cities and jurisdictions that incorporate public oversight and accountability into their public safety plans. That proposal now goes to Council for consideration. Other subcommittees will present their recommendations at future task force meetings.

The task force meetings, like all public meetings, are open to anyone and are currently conducted on zoom and broadcast on YouTube. Comments from the public are welcome, both those submitted beforehand by email and those made during the meeting itself. The next meetings at September 21 and October 19 at 7 p.m.

For a record of the prior meetings and information on attending future meetings, please visit the city's website for the task force at <https://www.albanyca.org/government/boards-commissions-committees/community-task-force-on-policing>.