

Somerville PD: Brief History of **Attempted** Reforms



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Outline

1. About Us
2. History of Somerville Police Reform:
2000–present
3. Conclusions

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About Defund SPD

Who We Are & Our Mission



About the Defund SPD Research Team

30 residents collaborating
on public safety research

Defund SPD has **98 active**
resident members total and an
email list of **2,655** residents





Research Team Mission Statement

To create data-supported narratives to inform and convince a majority of Somerville residents, all city council members, and the Mayor that reallocating a significant portion of the SPD budget to high priority areas will have an overwhelmingly positive effect on the health, safety, and well-being of all Somerville residents.

2

History

Attempted Reforms Since 2000

2001

Management Study of Somerville Police Department

2004

Harshbarger Memo

2005

Police Advisory Group Report

2019

Boston "Straight Pride Parade" Incident & Response

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FY 2021 Budget and Commitments to "Re-Imagining Policing"



2001 Management Study

- Conducted by MMA Consulting Group, Inc. between June – November 2000, released in January 2001
- Examined the Police Department's organization, staffing, management functions, field operations, support services, and related functions
- Focus was to enable the Somerville PD to “[take] those steps which are needed to bring the Department to the level of operational readiness and customer service which the public deserves”



2001 Management Study Recommendations:



Civilianize Roles Not Requiring Police Training

II-2: Develop a new Police Department staffing model to revise the rank structure and use civilian personnel to perform non-sworn functions (Priority 2)



More Effective Use of Resources

V-2: The position of “inside man” should be eliminated (Priority 1)

Note: “inside man” is also referred to as Station Officer.



Better Management to Increase Efficiency

V-3: The Department should consider alternative scheduling arrangements to make the most efficient and effective use of available personnel (Priority 3)



Civilianization

“There are several examples of commissioned officers performing basic office, or clerical, duties that should be performed by civilian personnel. For example, there are officers assigned to the Traffic Division, the Criminal Investigations Division, and the Records Unit who are performing clerical duties which do not require the attention of a commissioned officer.” -p. 13

As of the FY21 org chart, the positions in the Traffic Division and Criminal Investigations Division are still both filled by sworn officers.



More Effective Use of Resources

“There are also several examples of positions assigned to posts with questionable utility... [one example] is the two “inside officers” who are assigned to an office adjacent to the 911 center. There are two uniformed officers on each shift assigned to this function; the purpose of the assignment is unclear. There is no justification for this assignment and it should be eliminated.” -p. 13

As of the FY21 org chart, there are now three uniformed officers on each shift assigned to this function, costing the City \$477,000-\$720,000 a year.



More Effective Use of Resources

“Three officers are assigned to City Hall details... These positions include Inspectional services..., one sergeant assigned to liquor licensing,... and a lieutenant assigned to the City Solicitor’s office.... The duties performed by these three positions do not require the assignment of a person who has the powers of arrest.” -p. 14

As of the FY21 org chart, the Licensing Sergeant and ISD Officer positions are still filled by sworn officers.

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November 2004 Harshbarger Memo

- April 2004: Former MA AG Scott Harshbarger hired by Mayor Curtatone to evaluate SPD progress on the 2001 Police Management Study recommendations
- Focus on management side of SPD: “A lot of the issues the Management Study dealt with are still present. Now, there is obviously ever less money to go around, so making sure the police department is running efficiently is crucial”
- VP of the Patrolmen’s Union expressed support: “I’m sure [Harshbarger is] going to do a good job. There needs to be improvement in the police department.”

Source: “Harshbarger appointed to improve SPD management.” Tufts Daily, April 22, 2004.



November 2004 Harshbarger Memo

*"It is my view that the Department **has not adequately responded to any of these general findings.** While some steps have been taken, and some responses provided, I believe that in general, **little real progress has been made.**"*

*"While the Department has suffered its share of cutbacks in recent years and nearly everyone in city leadership positions -- including [Mayor Curtatone] -- would like to put more officers on the streets, **the Department still does not give priority to evaluating shifting trends in criminal activity and therefore fails to target its resources wisely and effectively** to address these trends."*

-page 4, italicized text redacted by the City but publicly available on the Internet Archive

“To me, Harshbarger’s report is a call for action by the city to follow-up on the 2000 study... And I think the recommendations made in the review represent a very practical way to get to the heart of the matter.”

- William A. White, Jr., alderman at large (Nov. 2004)



Police Response

Chief McLean wrote in a counter-memo:

“I strongly disagree that the Police Department does not utilize its existing resources effectively. In fact, the resources of our department have been stretched so thinly, that each officer has had to make significant personal and professional efforts to support the daily operations of the department.”

–page 4, redacted by the City but publicly available on the Internet Archive

Scott Harshbarger responded:

“I was sort of sad that the chief had chosen to make that kind of response. The response is almost identical to six months ago.”

–source: “Police chief rebuts critical report.” Boston Globe, December 19, 2004.

Harshbarger Proposes an Advisory Group

“I suggest you consider appointing a small, independent, expert, and community public safety advisory group of City residents to review my observations and recommendations and to oversee the next phase of implementation with you and the Chief.”

– page 5

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2005 Police Advisory Group

- Convened April 2005 by Mayor Joe Curtatone, to review several critical issues outlined in the Harshbarger Memo:

"Charged with overseeing the reform and reorganization of the police department ... which will consider recommendations made in Harshbarger's recent review of the department, among other changes"

- City of Somerville

- Supported by SPD and City of Somerville staff
- Reported its initial findings on September 8, 2005



Group Members



Scott Harshbarger (Chair)

Former Massachusetts Attorney General
Former District AG of Middlesex County



Kevin P. O'Malley

Former Middlesex County Assistant District Attorney
Chair of Somerville Human Rights Commission



Thomas Robbins

Colonel, Massachusetts State Police



Edward F. Davis III

Superintendent, Lowell Police Department

Aru Manrique

City of Somerville Multicultural Director

Jack Connolly

Somerville Board of Aldermen Representative

Jacques A. Dessin

Attorney, Member of SPD Gang Advisory Committee



Law Enforcement Affiliation



2005 Advisory Group Recommendations:



Civilianize Roles Not Requiring Police Training

“The hiring plan must include hiring qualified civilians for positions that do not require expensive, specialized police training.”
(p. 3)



More Efficient Staffing

“The SPD should “scrub” the whole department once again to determine if there is anyone carrying out administrative or in-station duties who could be redeployed.”
(p. 6)



Increasing Staffing Not Necessary

“The SPD should prioritize the professional and support needs of existing staff, rather than focusing primarily on increasing staffing.”
(p. 8)



Further Advisory Group Reports

- 2005 Police Advisory Group report recommended reconvening at the end of FY06 to evaluate progress
- The City Records Office stated they could find no material from the Police Advisory Group after 2005 in response to multiple document requests from our team
- A press release found on the old city website indicates the Advisory Group did meet again in 2006 and issued a second report with additional recommendations
- MA Municipal Records Schedule Regulation 01.159 requires historically significant project documentation files (such as reports) to be permanently retained



2008: The Mayor Declares Victory

- After BoA voted to remove two Deputy Chief positions from civil service, Curtatone wrote the change “has to be seen as the finishing touch on a long series of interlocking changes that has fundamentally transformed the department and prepared it for the 21st Century.”
source: “Police reorganization: Many individual steps add up to one big change.” Somerville Times, August 4, 2008.
- While the Chief was taken out of civil service and some positions were civilianized, many were not.
- Curtatone highlighted that he had “added 12 net new officers” despite the Advisory Group’s recommendation not to increase staffing.

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Straight Pride Parade: August 2019

Event:

- SPD provides support to BPD for “Straight Pride Parade”
- On-the-ground reports & video lead to public outcry over use of force on counter-protestors by SPD

Response:

- “After Action Report” – SPD self-review of actions found no fault
- Public hearings, petitions from residents
- Memos and commitments from Administration

"We must work to ensure that these individuals – and all in our community – feel protected and safe. It is my belief that we can achieve this through continuing and ongoing dialogue."

*Mayor Joe Curtatone and
Chief of Police David Fallon*



Jan 2020 Community Feedback Meeting

- More civilian workers in place of armed police
- Defunding of SPD and transparency in police funds
- Civilian-elected officials with direct control of SPD, including enforcement authority, authority over police funding, and disciplinary authority
- “Some participants expressed concern that the City is ‘slow walking’ its reforms following the event in order to prevent them from gaining momentum”

Beyond this single community forum, there has been **no further follow-up** directly related to these events.

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Petition to Fund Public Services Before Police

Signed by over 4,000 residents

"We demand that our city allocate much less money to policing and much more to nonviolent public services."

And subsequent comments at Public Hearing



Reallocation of \$700k

City Council reduced SPD budget by over \$700k.

Most was re-allocated for public services, including:

- \$162k towards Housing
- \$225k towards Health and Human Services
- \$250k towards Civilian Oversight research/outreach



Mayor's Timeline

DRAFT Timeline for Racial and Social Justice (RSJ) Project FY21 Budget Proposal			
	RSJ Director	RSJ Project on Reimagining Policing: Civilian Oversight Committee	RSJ Project on Reimagining Policing: A New Public Safety Model
Jul 2020	Hiring process		
Aug			
Sept	Defines detailed plan for achieving goals of RSJ Project; procures resources necessary to support work		
Oct		Community process (4 months)	Community process (6 months)
Nov			
Dec			
Jan 2021			
Feb	Presents project update to City Council and business plan for establishing Racial and Social Justice Office	Draft findings and recommendations released for public comment	
Mar		Final report released	
Apr	Hiring process for additional staff for RSJ Office	Civilian Oversight Committee established	Draft findings and recommendations released for public comment
May			Final report released
Jun			Funding to implement recommendations included in FY22 budget proposal
Jul			



"Slow Walking" Reforms

DRAFT Timeline for Racial and Social Justice (RSJ) Project FY21 Budget Proposal			
	RSJ Director	RSJ Project on Reimagining Policing:	RSJ Project on Reimagining Policing: A New Public Safety Model
Jul 2020	Hiring process	Establish Civilian Oversight Target: April 2021	
Aug			
Sept			
	Defines detailed plan for achieving goals of RSJ Project; procures resources necessary to		
		Community process (4 months)	
	update to City Council and business plan for establishing Racial and Social Justice Office	Draft findings and recommendations released for public comment	
Mar		Final report released	
Apr	Hiring process for additional staff for RSJ Office	Civilian Oversight Committee established	Draft findings and recommendations released for public comment
May			Final report released
Jun			Funding to implement recommendations included in FY22 budget proposal
Jul			

Hire RSJ Director

Target: September 2020
Job Posted: November 2020
Hired March 2021

New Public Safety Model

Target: Include funding requests in FY22 *based on a community process*.



"Trotter Report", Jan. 2021

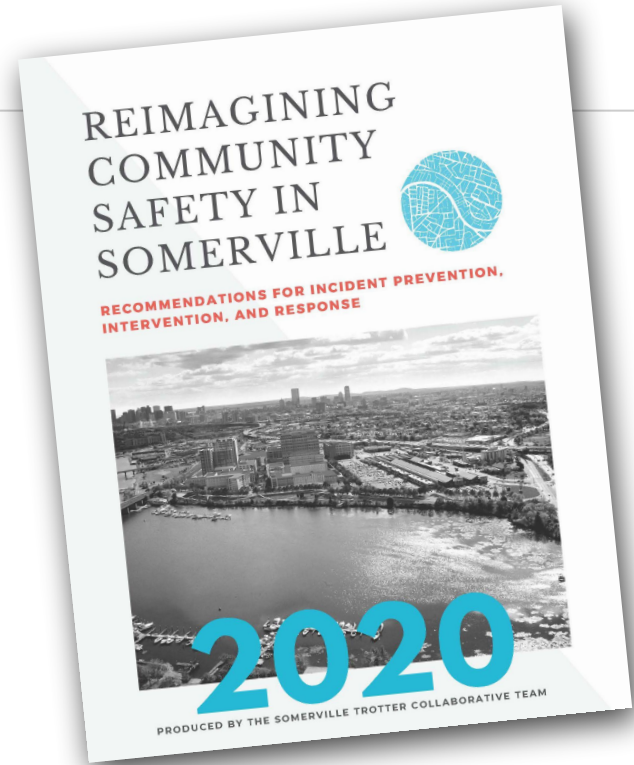
Recommendation 2

The City should dedicate sufficient resources to entities fostering community safety. The funding for these investments can come from multiple areas – including SPD.

Recommendation 5

The City of Somerville should adopt alternative intervention programs that go beyond the expertise and training of current law enforcement

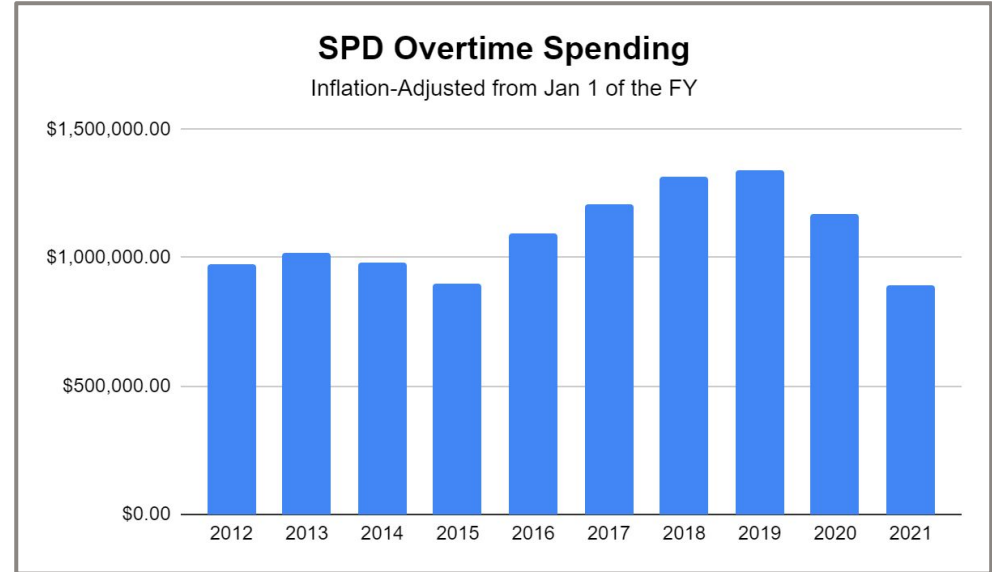
"By replacing armed law enforcement with trained health professionals, the City can protect civilians, save money, and grow as a leader in reimagining safety"





SPD Response: Understaffed

Mayor's memo and SPD Chief claim a critical shortage of personnel and excessive forced holdovers.



But SPD OT spending is on track for the lowest in 10 years.

From FY Actuals. FY21 is projected from end-of-April Actuals.

3

Conclusions

Why Civilianization and Force Reduction?



Civilianization is an Adaptive Use of Police Staffing



Reduces Costs

Civilians have been found to be a source of lower costs primarily through lower pay, reduced training, and smaller overhead requirements



Improves Service

Civilians tend to perform certain specialized roles more effectively than sworn officers, who are trained as generalists and then rotated through assignments



Protects Residents

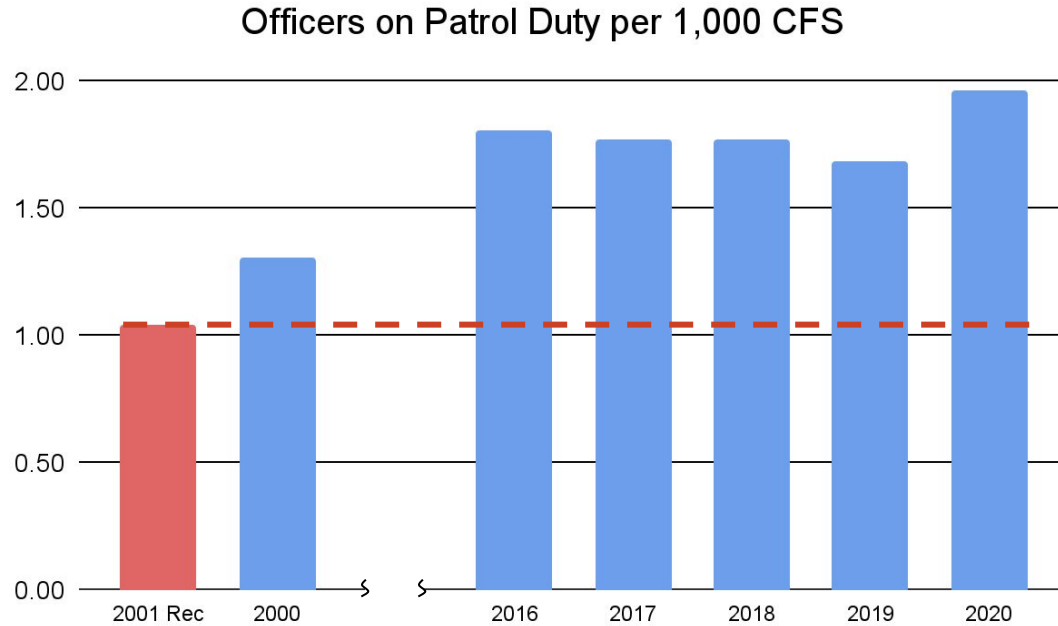
Civilianization can protect residents in crisis from the threat of an unnecessary armed response and better connect them with the resources they need to prevent future incidents

Civilianization May Improve Police Effectiveness In Face Of Budget Crisis by Envisage Technologies, March 2016

Reimagining Community Safety in Somerville, Somerville Trotter Collaborative Team, January 2021



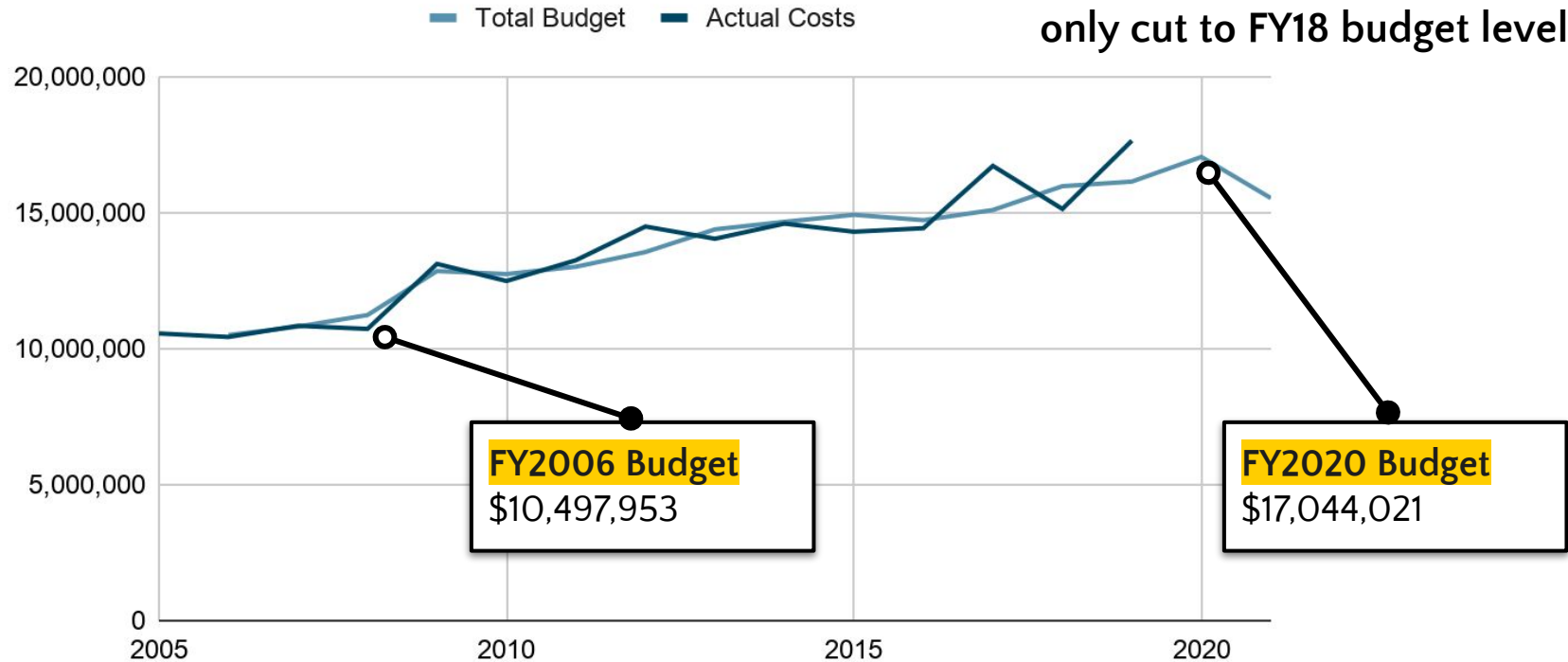
Patrol Officer Staffing based on CFS





Police "Reform" = Increased Funding

Despite FY21 of 7.7% reduction to budget, FY21 budget was only cut to FY18 budget levels.



“The proposed staffing would reduce the Department by a total of four persons, but would increase the civilian staffing... The actual police budget would be decreased, since the increase in civilian personnel would be more than offset by a reduction in the number of commissioned personnel. The result would be higher productivity and efficiency with no decrease in service.”

– *2001 Management Study, MMA Consulting*



Repeated Calls for Reform

Reform Suggested:	2001 Management Study	2005 Police Advisory Report	2019 Public Suggestions - Straight Pride Parade	Reaction to George Floyd Murder	Status of Actions Taken by City of Somerville
Reduction of Number of Sworn Officers	✓	×	✓	✓	●
Civilian Oversight of Police Department	✓	×	✓	✓	●
Civilianization of Police Force	✓	✓	✓	✓	●
Taking Police Chief out of Civil Service	✓	✓	N/A	N/A	●



Conclusions

- Multiple reputable groups that have examined the Somerville PD's staffing have concluded they do not need the number of sworn officers they have today
- These are not our recommendations, they are the city's recommendations
- These recommendations have been consistently made by both the city and the public over the past 20 years, without meaningful progress.



**Choosing not to civilianize and
reduce SPD sworn personnel will
prevent funds from going to
services that directly support
residents**