**COMMUNITY POLICE BOARD**

**CITY OF ITHACA**108 East Green Street, Ithaca, New York 14850-6590
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To : City of Ithaca Common Council

From : Ithaca Community Police Board

Re : Plan for Reimagining Public Safety

Date : April 6, 2022

The Community Police Board (CPB) is a City chartered commission. We are tasked by that charter to assist in resolving complaints made by citizens regarding police services, and to make recommendations on any matter affecting policy or performance of the Police Department including finances and budget. We are to act as a community liaison to the Police Department to foster positive communication between the police and the community.

We have closely observed and discussed the progress of a City initiative intending to improve public safety delivery which began about two years ago. While two members of our Board have been appointed as technical advisors, we have not been a part of shaping the proposal that you are currently considering. We do agree with the broad assertion that Ithaca can improve the delivery of public safety for all stakeholders, but there is a growing concern among all our members that the proposal presented by the Reimagining Public Safety Collaborative (RPSC) to Common Council requires further thought before approval.

This letter is not intended to serve as a comprehensive review of the reimagining plan, but some of our concerns are captured in the following questions:

**Goals & Plan**

* What is the goal of the plan? Is there a shared understanding of a goal within the Common Council and in the Ithaca community?
* What specific local concerns were identified in the impetus of creating this plan?
* How will success or lack of success be measured?
* What data from the Ithaca community informed the plan’s development?
	+ What data were used to determine how and which marginalized members of the Ithaca community were affected by the Ithaca Police Department (IPD)?
* Which existing models were used when developing the plans in the working group’s proposals?
	+ How closely matched are these municipalities with the demographics/size of Ithaca?
* Was consideration given to supporting or strengthening the current public safety model to address the concerns that serve as the basis for this plan?
* If the plan were adopted today, how would the current roles of IPD officers and leadership be affected immediately and within the first year of implementation?

**Process**

* What was the selection process for naming leaders and members of the working groups?
* Which perspectives have been left out of this process? How confident are you that this process has been inclusive/representative of all stakeholders of the Ithaca community, including:
	+ Ithaca Police Department
	+ IPD leadership
	+ City Attorney and Tompkins County District Attorney
	+ Local businesses
	+ Emergency agencies/services (e.g., EMTs, Social Services, Mental Health)
	+ Community-based organizations
	+ Local law enforcement agencies (i.e., Sheriff, NYS Police, Campus Police, etc.)
	+ Local faith groups
* Would the development process of the plan have looked different had there not been a pandemic?
* Were organizers of this plan or lead role players made aware of any intentional or direct efforts by the IPD to partner in this plan?
* What operational or position/role changes or modifications did the IPD recommend specifically?
* Has there been a survey of IPD Officers for questions or concerns in the same manner as the surveys that were provided to the public to provide their opinions?

**Operations & Logistics**

* Is the proposed supervision structure Mayor → Commissioner of Community Safety → Chief/Director of Police & Director of Community Solutions? **OR** is it Mayor → *City Manager* → Commissioner of Community Safety → Chief/Director of Police & Director of Community Solutions?
	+ Are the added layers to administration
		- necessary?
		- efficient?
		- an effective model?
		- sustainable/fiscally prudent?
* Was it ever considered to have unarmed responders to be under the chief of police’s supervision?
* Does the City currently deploy unarmed responders? For example, in the past there have been units, including the Gorge Rangers, which were discontinued.
* Is there a possibility of inter-agency (Department of Community Solutions & Police) confusion with regard to roles and what measures will be taken to minimize this?
* What is the difference between the proposed new department of Community Solutions and supplementing the public safety services that already exist?
* Will the job entry requirements of the unarmed responders be comparable to those of the current police officers?
* If this plan should be approved, will the new department be under the same negotiated plan as the PBA? If not, will this be a separate bargaining unit?
* Should this plan include job descriptions of planned and current positions?
* Was there a request made to IPD to provide its job descriptions of positions in IPD?

**Communication & Outreach**

* The published plan cites 1000 subscribers to an email list, 50+ meetings, and 35+ members and advisors. Are you comfortable with this as an indication of adequate communication of the plans?
* Were organizers of the plan made aware of any offer by IPD to co-host or take lead in hosting for the public?
* How many town hall meetings were held with focus on understanding the jobs/positions in IPD or explaining its department structure and/or operations?
* How has this plan been communicated/explained directly to our current police force?

The Community Police Board cannot help but note an atmosphere of hostility and divisiveness which has accompanied the planning process from the beginning. In our view, this environment stifles honest differences of opinion and impedes the communication necessary to make the improvement of public safety actually happen. We appreciate any efforts to improve the delivery of public safety, but we urge the Common Council to take a step back from immediate adoption of this reimagining plan and consider, first, how best to delineate our common goal and address any identified problems or deficiencies.