



August 31, 2020

Office of the Mayor of the City of Newton  
Members of the Newton Police Reform Task Force

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On Wednesday, August 19, 2020, an observer from the League of Women Voters of Newton (LWVN) attended the Newton Police Reform Task Force Meeting.

We want to commend the members of the Task Force and the Mayor's office for the professional manner in which they handled this Zoom community meeting, especially for the way in which they managed calls that were clearly intended to be disruptive rather than productive. However, we do have some process concerns regarding the meeting we would like to share with you.

- Members of the public who spoke at the meeting were only identified by the name of the device through which they were participating in the Zoom call. To insure the veracity of the comments, and that the comments are being received from members of the Newton community or members outside the Newton community who have a relationship to the Newton community, participants should be asked to provide their full names and their addresses. This might also help to eliminate unwanted "prank callers".
- It seems that the nature of the meeting – to describe personal experiences with the police – was perhaps not the best kind of meeting to hold publicly. At least one person who, after speaking, regretted talking about personal experiences after understanding that the recording of the meeting would be made public. We suspect that there are many other people who would hesitate to share their personal experiences in such a public matter, and so the Task Force might not have gotten the full breadth of experiences that they should have. We encourage the Task Force to find some other means of collecting stories of personal experiences with the Newton Police and to make sure that that effort is widespread among the community.

On another note, we noticed there are about 15 more meetings to be convened by the Task Force, but only 3 more are indicated as being community open sessions. Given the important nature of this task force and its work, we recommend all these meetings be open to the public for observation and comment, and a phone number is made available for public comment. We believe the task force would do well to follow the same rules and practices of the City Council.

Sincerely,

*Marcia Johnson*

Marcia Johnson

President, League of Women Voters, Newton