



**SCHENECTADY POLICE REFORM & REINVENTION COLLABORATIVE  
COMMUNITY & CIVIC ORGANIZATION MEETING AGENDA  
THURSDAY OCTOBER 22, 2020 | 6:00PM – 8:00PM**

**MEETING AGENDA**

Welcome

*Mayor Gary R. McCarthy*

Policy Maker & Steering Committee Role & Responsibility

*Chief Eric S. Clifford*

Conversation Guidelines & Emotional, Spiritual Support – Introduction of Reverend Kathleen Gorman-Coombs

*Jason Benitez*

Moderated Conversation

*Jason Benitez*

**INVITED MEETING PANELISTS**

Jack Falvo, *Jack's Place*

John Roth, *Jack's Place*

Victoria Cooper, *League of Women Voters*

Brian Ledbetter, *My Brother's Keeper*

William Rivas, *Save Our Streets*

Deborah Rembert, *NAACP*

Portia Alston, *NAACP*

Carl Williams, *NAACP*

Maxine Brisport, *SCAP*

Miriam Cajuste, *SCAP*

Kirk Lewis, *Schenectady ARC*

Chad Putman, *Schenectady Pride*

Jamaica Miles, *Schenectady Pride*

Richard Homenick, *SMHA*

Kim Siciliano, *YWCA North Eastern NY*

Lauren Trunko, *YWCA North Eastern NY*

Wendi Gapczynski, *YWCA North Eastern NY*

Cynthia Farmer, *Community Member*

Randy McGough, *Community Member*

Junior Hitlall, *Guyanese Community Member*

Imzak Mohammed, *Guyanese Community Member*

Ravi Ishmael, *Guyanese Community Member*

Jamel Muhmmad, *Youth L.I.F.E. Support Network, Inc.*

**WEBEX LOGIN INTSTRUCTIONS**

**PANELIST INSTRUCTIONS**

You will receive the meeting invitation from [messenger@webex.com](mailto:messenger@webex.com) via email.

Please input the event number and event password – there is also the ability to call-in via phone.

**ATTENDEE INSTRUCTIONS**

On your computer or smartphone, click “register” and input prompted contact information (this must be completed to register). Once your information has been inputted, click “register” at the bottom of the webpage to register for the meeting.



You will then receive another email from [messenger@webex.com](mailto:messenger@webex.com) with the event number (access code). At 6:00pm, click “join meeting” and input the event number. If joining by phone, dial the call-in number listed and input the meeting access code prompts.

Should you have any questions or need assistance logging into the meeting, please contact Carissa Vazzana, [cvazzana@schenectadyny.gov](mailto:cvazzana@schenectadyny.gov); or Lieutenant Michael McLaughlin [mmclaughin@schenectadyny.gov](mailto:mmclaughin@schenectadyny.gov).

Additionally, this meeting will be broadcasted live by Open Stage Media, spectrum channels 1301, 1302, 1303, Verizon FiOs channels, 36, 37, 38 and posted on the OSM YouTube page: [www.youtube.com/openstagemedia](http://www.youtube.com/openstagemedia).

## **MODERATED QUESTIONS FOR THOUGHT & CONVERSATION**

*Authored by Jason Benitez*

### **Conversation Prompts/Questions/Topics**

- Serving a diverse community
- Building trust
- Addressing disparities that affect communities of color
- Can you start by talking a little bit about the community group you are representing tonight? What preliminary info would you like to share today, that you would like the members of the Police Revitalization Task Force to hear?

### **Community Involvement/Building Trust**

- From your perspective, how would you describe the current status of the relationship between the Schenectady Police and the wider community?
- In your opinion, how would you describe and rate the police force’s efforts to develop relationships with members of the community?
- From your perspective, to what extent does your Schenectady Police force make it easy to provide input from members of the community? Comments/suggestions/concerns?
- In your opinion, to what extent does your police force work together with members of the community to address local problems?
- Community Policing involves police officers working with community members to identify the root causes of crime and then working alongside the community to offer a range of activities that seek to reduce crime and address related issues. Given that definition, to what extent do you think your Schenectady Police force practices community policing?
- Schenectady Police invest many hours into community involvement- reading at schools, stopping by parks to interact with the youth, etc. At times, parental or community perspectives can be biased against the police or police interaction is framed ONLY in the negative (when you are in trouble and/or having the police called on you). It can be argued that some of the messages being sent, particularly to youth, can be counter-productive to the positive engagement police engage in. In your opinion, how can the police and community come together to overcome these challenges?



- In your opinion, what can be done to strengthen trust between the police force and the wider community?

### **Safety**

- Over the last 12 months, to what extent have your feelings of safety in your community increased, decreased, or stayed the same?
- From your perspective, what are the 2-3 issues you believe are the greatest problems within your community?
- What input or advice can you provide to this taskforce as to ways these issues can be better addressed by Schenectady Police?
- In what ways has policing helped those in your community?
- In what ways has policing hurt those in your community?

### **Performance**

- In your opinion, how effective is the Schenectady Police force at proactively preventing crime?
- From your perspective, how well would you say the police force is doing to address the problems that really concern the community group you represent?
- From your perspective, how satisfied are you with the overall performance of the Schenectady Police force?

### **Other Questions**

- What do you like best about the Schenectady Police Department?
- How would you improve the Schenectady Police Department?
- Police officers are often called to address issues where, in an ideal situation, another agency or resource in the community could have at times prevented, or at minimum, assisted in bettering the outcome. What would you offer as ways we can expand the conversation around issues facing our communities, beyond just the role the police force plays?
- To what degree do you agree or disagree that community members have a role to play in proactively promoting and working on outcomes we would like to see for our communities? From your perspective, can you speak to some of the actions/changes the community can make alongside the police, in addressing these issues?
- STOP/START/CONTINUE
  - In your opinion, can you please describe one thing you would like the police force to:
    - STOP?
    - START?
    - CONTINUE?
  - We all have biases. To be biased is to be human. Bias in and of itself is not a negative thing. Our challenge is two-fold: One, how aware are we of the particular biases we may hold? Two, to what extent are our implicit biases controlling our overt behaviors/decisions/actions?
  - Often, police officers are asked to respond to or address an incident, where they are asked to make very quick judgments and respond accordingly. This means that at times, officers are asked to “walk the line” between the possible reality of a given situation (hunch), and any biases they may hold. How can we have a robust conversation that both holds police officers accountable for the inaccurate biases they



may hold and the often life-altering outcomes that occur, while also highlighting the utility of being able to rely on an instinct or gut-feeling?

## **COMMUNITY CONVERSATION GUIDELINES**

*Jason Benitez*

- Speak your truth with care – this means that it’s important to be authentic and honest, but to do so knowing that we are all in different places in our learning, and it’s important to be mindful of our impact on those around us.
- Use “I” statements – avoid making generalizations about any group or broad assumptions about “they” or “them” and focus on speaking from your own experiences.
- Assume positive intent – the topics we will focus on and discuss this evening are personal and challenging, and we don’t all share the same language or experience, focus on assuming that everyone is doing the best they can.
- Don’t yuck my yum – do not diminish or make fun of something I like that you don’t. We don’t have to agree.
- One person, one mic. – listen when others are talking, speak one at a time.
- Ouch, oops – if someone hurts your feelings in a conversation, say ouch, they will say oops, and you both are responsible for checking in with one another after the conversation to talk through what happened.
  - Be aware of Impact vs. Intent
  - Inherent power differences exist in the room
- Lean in, lean back – if you don’t speak up often, lean in, if you do, take the time to lean back and let others speak. Also remember to try to not speak twice until everyone has spoken once.
  - 3 Before Me- let three other people speak, before you talk again.
- Listen from the heart – really listen. Don’t formulate what you’re going to say next, tune into who is speaking.
- Take care of yourself – drink water, use the restroom, and take responsibility for yourself and your experience during this session.
- Stay with any discomfort, stay curious about it – the topics we’ll explore bring up discomfort, and often lead us to question or beliefs and experiences. Stay with your discomfort, and get curious about it, examine it and consider what it might be able to teach you.
- Courageous space/brave space and safer space – there has been a lot of talk about safe spaces, but we know too that being in different places in our learning, having different experiences, perspectives and opinions means that we might step on a few toes, and others may step on our toes. Safe space doesn’t mean that you won’t be challenged, that you won’t be uncomfortable. What we hope to create here is courageous space or brave space
  - spaces where we can put ourselves out there, do our best, and continue to learn, grow, make mistakes and learn from them. Respect each other, respect yourself, and speak your truth with care
  - Let’s support each during these sessions.



- Both/And-many of the choices and decisions we make are not binary. Two things can be true at the same time.

**Adapted from: *Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: Strategies for Facilitating Conversations on Race***

- Many of the issues we will discuss tonight are institutional and systemic and as such, are not necessarily the fault of those in this room. However, it is our collective responsibility to actively eradicate the problems within the systems we will be discussing.
- Increasing awareness of one's self (and how and where we plug/fit into the system) is a strategy for change.
- Relationships are the foundation for cultural competence.
- There are no quick fixes. This will take time, dedication and consistency.
  - With that, expect and accept a lack of closure. We will not figure out/solve all these issues in one session/evening.