

CONVERSATION PROMPTS, QUESTIONS & TOPICS

Jason Benitez

*Vice President of Talent and Inclusion, The Capital Region Chamber of Commerce
Moderator, Schenectady Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative*

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?

Procedural Justice

- From your perspective, to what extent do police officers treat people in your community fairly?
- In your opinion how well does the police force show concern for and attempt to respond to, the concerns of members of your community?
- Please describe to what extent you feel your police officers are respectful and professional to members of your community?
- From your perspective, in what ways do you feel that police interact differently with the community you are representing tonight, as compared to members of other communities in Schenectady?
- If you had any contact with a police officer in the past 12 months, to what extent would you say the officer sufficiently explained his/her actions and procedures?

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