

Ashland Police Department **Community Engagement Analysis**

August 31, 2020

In the wake of the George Floyd murder Mayor Stromberg joined thousands of Mayors around the country in pledging to engage Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), as well as all other community members, in looking for ways to ensure that our police department best serves all community members, with a focus on how to better serve and build relationships with marginalized community members.

Part of the pledge called for the Ashland Police Department to conduct a four-stage review of its policies and practices. Those four steps are:

- Review your police use of force policies
- Engage your communities by including a diverse range of input, experiences, and stories in your review
- Report the findings of your review to the community to seek feedback
- Reform your community's police use of force policies

During the following weeks the Ashland Police Department was called on to review use of force policies and make adjustments. Part of this review included the "8 Can't Wait" initiative. The "8 Can't Wait" initiative is not something that is specific to APD, but is a national-level request for police departments to adhere to the best policies available. The "8 Can't Wait" initiative provided an eight-step plan to make positive changes to a police department's use of force policy. It should be recognized that APD's policies are not generated in-house. Our policies are generated by a company, Lexipol, which uses national best practices, informed by police experts and legal experts. The changes called for were:

Require De-escalation

- De-escalation, while a long-standing part of the department's culture and practices, was not specifically called out in the use of force policy. As a result of the community feedback we have specifically emphasized de-escalation as being required when the situation allows it.

Duty to intervene

- The duty to intervene has been a well-established part of our policies and practices for several years.

Bans chokeholds and strangleholds

- Anything that restricts the flow of air to a suspect has been banned except in cases of deadly force being necessary. This was already part of our practice and culture, now it has been specifically stated.

Requires warning before shooting

- Requiring a verbal warning when possible is called for in several sections covering use of force.

Ban shooting at moving vehicles

- A prohibition on shooting at or from moving vehicles cannot be put into place as there have been instances (not locally) in which that was the only viable option for an officer to defend against a potentially deadly attack. The policy does states that shooting at or from a moving vehicle is rarely successful and should be avoided if at all possible.

Exhaust other alternatives before shooting

- Prohibiting officers from using deadly force until all other options have been exhausted would leave the officers and the public in increased danger. If an officer sees someone engaging in deadly/life threatening behavior, the officer must be able to respond immediately to that threat level without running through lower level techniques.

Employ a use of force continuum

- The force continuum, while still employed by some agencies, is seen as being outdated. The force continuum was seen as requiring officers to go through lower level options before using the appropriate option. Giving officers the tools and training and having them respond with the appropriate force is the safer option for officers and community members, which is what APD practices.

Require comprehensive reporting

- This has been part of our policies and practices for many years. Each May the Chief prepares a report to the Council which includes an analysis of the department's use of force incidents. In response to the community feedback those reports have been posted in a conspicuous location on the department's web page, and the most recent report was amended to include an examination of how many times force was used against people of color. Future reports to the Council will also include this expanded information.

The Ashland Police Department took advantage of the heightened community engagement surrounding the Mayor's pledge and the "8 Can't Wait" initiative and used that as the "Review" portion of the four-step pledge.

This survey is meant to serve as the "Engage" section of the four-step pledge. Two hundred fifty-eight community members responded to the survey and provided valuable insight into how community members feel concerning their, and others' interaction with the Ashland Police Department

Of the eight questions, four were yes/no and four asked for open feedback. The eight questions can be found on the following pages, along with the percentage answer for the yes/no questions. The open-ended questions have been captured by the Police Department Command Staff. The full results are attached to this report as well.

This report is intended to serve as step three of the pledge, reporting back to the community on the feedback we have received and what the department intends to do with it.

APD welcomes additional feedback now, and always, from all members of the community.

Recurring Comments

Better Representation of the BIPOC Community Within APD

One of the most prevalent comments seen are that APD needs to have more representation of minority/marginalized groups within the sworn police ranks. The department currently has 35 full time staff members. Of the 35 full time staff members, three are African American, with one of those three also identifying as Hispanic American. All three present as Black American. Two of the three are sworn officers, with the third being a non-sworn team member. This information is offered only because many people have inquired about minority representation, not as an indication that we are dismissive of the call for greater representation.

The goal of hiring more people of color, as well as females, can perhaps be best combined with another often-seen goal: having better engagement with SOU students of color, and other marginalized members of the SOU community, such as LGBTQ community members. The police department is committed to bettering its various relationships with SOU for several reasons, including possible recruitment of under-represented community members to join our team.

The APD will also look at participating in other universities' job fairs. Also, the department will commit to advertising job openings in media sources that are more likely to engage BIPOC community members, as well as members of the LGBTQ community members.

More Mental Health Resources/CAHOOTS

The need for greater mental health resources is clear. The police department has recently been working with Jackson County Mental Health to explore how we can better engage them and their services. For the last few weeks crisis intervention workers have been doing "ride-alongs" with APD officers in an attempt to bring direct connections to those in need on the streets. This has been viewed by all involved as a successful outreach effort. The department is exploring how it can partner with JCMH in a more meaningful way and is also exploring how it can use other mental health resources here in Ashland to bring appropriate help to those in need.

The CAHOOTS project, while an excellent model for the Eugene/Springfield area, cannot work here in Ashland. The Eugene/Springfield metro area has a population of about 240,000 people, which is roughly the population of all of Jackson County. The City of Ashland has a population of about 21,000, less than 1/10th the size. A few years ago, JCMH obtained a grant to embed a full-time crisis intervention worker in APD. Even when we included Talent and Phoenix in the outreach area for this worker, and even with doing proactive outreach through various local groups, this mental health professional was still left wanting for work. While more mental health resources are in fact needed for all of Jackson County, including Ashland, it is clear that Ashland cannot stand up and sustain its own independent model, any such offering must be made at a regional level.

APD is exploring possible ways we can work with JCMH and other jurisdictions to bring more robust mental health resources to the county.

Better Engagement with SOU and OSF

SOU and OSF both bring a greater level of diversity to Ashland through their students and company members respectively. Outreach and engagement with both of these organizations must be improved. In the past APD has met with representatives from both organizations and will continue to do so in an effort to build better relationships and foster mutual understanding.

More Foot Patrol/Community Liaison Officers

There were several calls for more Ashland Police Officers to patrol on foot. For years we have had two full time officers assigned to patrol downtown, mostly on foot. These officers are supported by part time cadets, seasonal cadets and park patrol officers (cadets and park patrol are all unarmed and non-sworn). Due to Covid-19 we were not able to hire the seasonal cadets and park patrol officers in 2020. The downtown patrol remains one of the most important functions of the department. Recently we have looked to expand foot patrol to the area around Ashland Street near Tolman Creek Road and Exit 14, this owing to an increased number of complaints we have received.

APD has had in place, for several years, an “area commander” program which connects each part of the city with a particular supervisor in the department. The hope is that problems that arise (or before problems arise) can be brought to the attention of the liaison officer, allowing the problem to be mitigated or avoided. More information on this can be found on the department’s website at www.Ashland.or.us/police.

Questions and Results for Yes/No questions

- #1: What would you like to see the role of a police officer become in our community?
- #2: What practices would you like to see APD change.
- #3: Did you know that APD has trained on implicit bias and procedural justice for several years?
 - Yes: 64.0%
 - No: 36.0%
- #4 Did you know that APD's policy manual is posted online for everyone to review?
 - Yes: 47.3%
 - No: 52.7%
- #5: Would you want to participate in any APD training or assist in training if the opportunity were there?
 - Yes: 14.3%
 - No: 38.4%
 - Possibly, but would need more information on what would be involved: 47.3%
- #6: Does the community feel that APD treats the BIPOC community any differently than other members of the community? Feel free to add any firsthand experiences, observations, etc. you may have.
- #7: Does the BIPOC community feel they can report racial incidents to APD and know that they will be treated seriously and respectfully:
 - Yes: 41.5 %
 - No: 58.5%
- #8: How can APD be a better ally to the community and be more sensitive to the BIPOC community?

Policy Suggestions Pertaining to Police/BIPOC Relationships

- Release data on police involvement on interactions with people of color
- Release data each year on traffic stops by demographics where there was no warning or ticket
- Have a policy that clearly defines Use of Force so that there are clear standards that are being applied and more information in the use of force reports so that there is an accurate window into the APD
- Better transparency of the results of any complaints

- Ban choke holds and other excessive uses of force
- Publicly (online) provide up-to-date information on crime, police stops and complaints about stops
- Provide more courses and training on de-escalation, cultural awareness, and sensitivity
- Release arrest information, demographics, cause, how the situation was handled, and make year to year comparisons available to the public
- Release body cam and other surveillance videos when requested
- Better policy suggestions pertaining to BIPOC
- Community forums
- Better and continuous engagement with members of the BIPOC Community
- Officers wearing body-cams
- Create a standardized process for reporting racial incidents

Suggestions/Actions for Interactions with BIPOC Community

- I think we are a small enough town that making APD an ally to our whole community without having their hands tied is the perfect goal
- I expect APD to treat criminal behavior with approved action despite the race of the lawbreaker
- More police of color
- Isn't just a police issue, it is a community issue that is deep and often unrecognized
- More BIPOC people working here
- APD to become more aware of their bias and treat all citizens equitable and fairly
- Have an officer who is a minority and is assigned to minority issues would be helpful
- Work together with groups for partnerships and continued training events: SOU (Black student union, Native student union, Queer Resource Center), Rogue Action Center, Rogue Climate, Ashland High School, Oregon Shakespeare actors
- APD should hire more officers that are BIPOC
- Invest in social workers and organizations that support our population
- Have body cam and dash cam footage regularly reviewed by a neutral third party.
- Adopt the 8 can't wait principles (<https://8cantwait.org/>)
- More POC on the department
- Hire more POC
- Specifically call out IB training in the training in the policy, policy 340 off duty behavior call out off duty racist behavior be grounds for suspension
- Continue to learn, be open to input
- We should have public database that tracks these stop and question incidents for better transparency and demographic reporting
- More engagement with the BIPOC community. Invite members of that community to events. Invite them to attend listening, brain-storming, and planning meetings, and hard as it might sound, ask the white people to not attend so that their voices don't drown out the voices of BIPOC.

- Let's hire Mexican's and POC APD and give them a raise just for wanting to live here among 95% tall white people. BETTER YET, lets hire Mexican's and POC in the office. So, we can file police reports without feeling like the white people don't understand.
- Hire more black POC officers, hire more women (3 respondents recommended the same suggestion)
- Just leave the BIPOC alone even if you suspect them of a crime... (2 respondents recommended the same suggestion)
- APD does not actively advertise or present various ways that BIPOC individuals or others can reach out to APD to describe such instances. One idea is to place that information on the city council homepage and on the back of every ticket given to an individual who is involved in an incident with the APD.
- BIPOC representation in police leadership
- Talk with them. Meet with them. Listen to them. Do all this without uniforms.
- Volunteer to be re-structured as one part of a multi-modal crisis response framework.
- You're doing a fine job and BIPOC people who have a problem with police typically can't see their own flaws or change their own activities which result in "negative" experiences. (Statement from a member of BIPOC)
- Meet and get to know remarkable families...
- Be more open about how people can make these reports; post a sign downtown, and around the city. Put it in the city newsletter, public announcements, make leaflets that get handed out at the homeless shelters and Uncle Fred's food pantry, at Ashland Food Bank and community center, churches, medical and at other places where black and brown skinned people frequent.
- Create a forum for people to safely speak with an officer on a monthly basis - where people can come and ask questions, demand answers and expect complete accountability.
- Hire police officers with at least a bachelor's degree
- Create a BIPOC community board to advise the police.
- We need a community oversight commission that has leadership from the community (selected BY the community- not the tokenized people the city likes to work with).
- If you care about making Ashland a better place, start with listening to the people, give them the ability to speak their minds, and then understand that you need to change.
- Sensitivity is the problem, people are way too sensitive if we stop calling people white or black and treat people as they should be this would go away. Racism is not only one way anybody can be racist no matter your skin color. People should not be treated any differently, BIPOC should be treated the same as anyone else if they are breaking the law no special treatment for anyone.
- Training regarding BIPOC
- One course in implicit bias training doesn't change bias. It's difficult to alter a person's bias. It takes constant training and immersion in different communities to change bias
- More training in peace keeping and non-violence (both physical and verbal)
- Using best practices in de-escalation and implicit bias training with non-lethal outcomes wherever possible
- Continue bias training, possibly open the training up to the public, especially people working directly with the community
- Continued commitment to de-escalation tactics and reduced use of force

- Develop of Crisis Prevention Programs
- Increase training in conflict management, diversity/equity/inclusion to be a bigger part (larger percentage of time) of police training
- Anti-Bias training is insufficient. All APD personnel should engage in Anti-Racist training yearly
- Training in compassionate conversation and anti-racist training, and the history of revolution
- Expert training from outside the department
- Require reading books on white fragility etc.
- Continued Bias training, with feedback from BIPOC community members that can share firsthand experiences would really help APD to know how their actions come across to minorities.
- Additional training
- Initiate meaningful conversation
- Intensive anti-bias training, utilizing Black and other people of color trainers to help them personally, collectively and administratively.

Positive Responses Concerning Police/BIPOC Relationships

- I would like police roles to stay the same as they have been before BLM
- I think APD is truly doing the best they can for being a small police department in a very white town
- I appreciate APD and also think we live in a racist society and everyone can do better
- I think officers wearing cameras is a great step. The BIPOC community should not expect special treatment. We should strive to not think of ourselves as individual races and should not think of ourselves as individual races and should think of ourselves more as working class people
- As a POC I have always been treated with respect by officers.
- You guys rock. I'm part middle eastern and have been the focus of various law enforcement personnel in other locations... it's all good. Do your job as you have been.
- Just last week I watched an officer engage with a BIPOC who was being asked to leave a location and was screaming at him. His response was calm, measured, respectful and appropriate. (2nd hand)
- My native American heritage has never been an issue in Ashland and any dealings with police have been courteous, fair and reasonable.
- I have first-hand experiences of being targeted, arrested and taken to jail back when the war with Iraq initiated. It was a black mark for Ashland and a tough time for me to defend myself. The case was thrown out of court once a video was made available. It clearly showed the police were out of bounds with their outrageous response to civil disobedience. I'll end my story by making the point that we have many good officers working for APD and I do not hold any prejudice against the force in general.

Issues Concerning Interactions with Unhoused People

- Something along the lines of Eugene's CAHOOTS program to assist the police in working with homeless, travelers, and more minor drug issues
- Policies pertaining to homelessness
- More compassion to homeless people and more help with mental health
- Their activities and approach to the homeless
- Suggestion/Interactions with homeless
- We need to get the mentally ill help and off the streets. It is also tied into the homeless problem we face. The PD can help but need further community support
- Need mental health and social service personnel on call to help police
- Stop homes sweeps and stop harassing homeless people
- More social service people employed to help with homeless people, domestic problems, crowd control
- I would like to see a response mental health and addiction
- Let the community solve its homeless problem and not ask the police to deal with homeless people
- If there is a community call for assistance with individuals with mental health challenges, houselessness, civil disagreements, or other need for first responders, these calls be answered by professionals with stronger training in social work, psychology, conflict resolution, etc.
- Mental health and social service folk to be increased as part of our response to crime and social disturbance
- Less aggressive behavior towards the homeless and transient community
- Less tolerance for homeless causing disruptions on the streets
- Gross mishandling of people experiencing mental health crisis. Rogue Valley has a wonderful behavioral health unit
- I'd like to see a social agency, not APD, respond to mental health issues or homeless needs.
- The role of LEO's should be accompanied by a social worker, both trained in mental health crisis, homelessness, drug abuse, sexual assault and abuse, and many other things
- Social workers to address homelessness, addiction mental health
- Suggestion/Interactions with homeless
- other social services would be better funded to address other issues like mental health or social workers separately (9 respondents recommended the same suggestion)
- I would prefer other professionals (social workers, for ex) take the lead on most other issues, like ordinance violations, drugs & alcohol, domestic violence,
- mental health breaks.
- Additional training
- Find ways to decrease your budget
- Harassing homeless people because they look bad for the tourists.
- CAHOOTS
- Interact with homelessness with non-uniformed personnel

Positive Responses Concerning Homeless Community

- I have seen police work carefully and respectfully with homeless on the plaza. (2nd hand)
- Working in the right direction
- I have witnessed APD be very empathic, supportive, and try to find solutions to challenging situations where the unsheltered individuals and individuals that were overwhelmed by drugs or alcohol
- I've been quite impressed with past instances of how they treated travelers with calm, respectful demeanor
- I do think APD is a good department just doing more than its share of the work
- When I've seen the police interact with the travelers, I've been impressed with their patience
- Pg112 q2-APD seen as being kind to homeless people

Positive Feedback

- Doing a great job
- I have witnessed interactions between police officers and homes and rude teens. The police have always been polite, understanding and friendly but firm. Our community would not change anything
- I have felt good with APD. I appreciate them
- I have always felt that the APD was quite a fair and even-handed police presence
- Our police force has been fantastic
- For the most part Ashland police are very friendly and make good decisions
- Being approached by APD should (and does!) make me feel more safe'
- I think APD is doing a good job already
- I have never seen APD act in any way that would make me feel less safe. I would be shocked to hear that APD has treated anyone badly
- Even though when I'm in the wrong I know I'm going to be treated with respect and dignity
- I do think APD is a good department just doing more than its share of the work
- I am new to Ashland from Portland and I love what I have seen
- More concerned with police in other regions. Believes Chief Tighe has good practices in his command
- The APD is great and we need to have more of them. There are too many transients and drug issues and they are needed. I don't want to feel less protected, I want to feel more protected
- They are good at community policing and doing their jobs
- I envision the role of the police as protecting in our community. I think APD is generally in touch with our community, and we have a community responsive chief. So it's a matter of fine-tuning and training
- APD uses very modern policing techniques and have a proven track record for years
- Very impressed with APD
- Impressed with You Have Options Program
- The leadership of APD has been responsive and receptive and continue to strive to improve their service. May they keep this up

- I have found the police to be understanding especially when my husband had dementia
- I think the police department does a pretty good job. I've spoken to several of the officers and usually they are very nice and polite
- Overall APD does a good job
- Very appreciative of APD
- Satisfied with the work APD is doing, being kind to homeless etc.
- Praise for APD for IB and PJ training
- Positive comments about how we have dealt with homeless people
- Thank you APD, I grew up here and it's always been peaceful and awesome.
- Ashland already respects all people "period"
- I think that as a department, APD treats all community members similarly.
- I am constantly impressed by APD leadership, and am proud of our Peace Officers.
- I love Ashland PD. They are our friends and neighbors, we go to school with their children and they service our school. In the unlikely event of a school shooting, they actually know where to help.
- I think APD does a great job.
- I have no criticisms of the APD. I think they are doing a great job.
- Our police are awesome.
- Yes. I think that APD probably does better than many areas of the country (including neighboring Medford), and I think that puts us in an even better place to reform police work to be a model for others.
- The officers do an excellent job
- Every officer I have encounters is excellent, bar none. Thank you.
- I think the Ashland police are doing a wonderful job and I think they should continue doing what they're doing we need to get the transients out of Ashland, is really what they need to do so that the visitors and tourists will eventually come back
- I have had mostly good interaction with local officers. I support the Ashland Police Department.
- APD is way ahead of the curve with current policies and practices.
- Ashland PD has always been ahead of their time in helping the community.
- I think the APD is doing great.
- I think the APD is doing a good job right now. I appreciate the APD dedication to being keepers of the peace.
- They have been doing a good job now of responding to my noise complaints in my neighborhood.
- I'd like to see APD continue its great work as ambassadors for the City and the community, and continue to maintain peace.
- I think APD does a great job
- I'm a big supporter of Community Policing and it seems to me that our APD has done a pretty good job of that approach.
- APD tried to establish a Mental Health presence through a grant. It seemed to be a good idea, but unfortunately the grant funding expired.
- My sense from what I read is that the leadership of Chief O'Meara is very much on the right track.

Other Suggestions or Other Issues for Community/Police Interactions

- More active in community outreach to help those in need instead of issuing citations to meet an unspoken quota
- More public relations and volunteering with schools and community programs
- More community engagement. Be present in our neighborhoods. More like a beat cop of years back where citizens can have friendly interaction
- Have officers be more accessible and more human to the people they serve. In all the times that I've smiled or said hello to an officer, likely, to ballpark it, thirty times per year, perhaps three times I've received a response. Their behavior projects an arrogant façade
- I feel they do a good job now, especially the downtown walking officers. I work downtown and appreciate the presence. Downtown is much more comfortable than it used to be
- Back off on radar timing of cars entering Ashland from Talent
- End the practice of hourly tandem foot patrols through alleys, bars, and crowds on sidewalks for show of force and intimidation.
- End harassment of the unhoused and poor in general, harassment of teens and college age students, profiling in general, and favorable treatment of wealthy white people
- End asking for personal information
- Require wear face coverings during COVID
- Make everything transparent
- I'd prefer that police not be sent out for minor transgressions where there is no dispute
- Unarmed police
- Should be a separation of roles and police officers who carry guns and use Tasers and are trained in shooting, ground fighting, and defensive tactics only attend those situations where there is a danger to the public
- Little less "trolling for drunks" by pulling over driver's late at night for minor, or imagined, offenses
- Educating youth/young adults on what police officers do
- Through community police, a peace officers know the community members of their beat
- Establishing better relationships in the community—getting, for example, to meet students at SOU and the high school. Getting to know folks on your beat. Continue implicit bias training. These can go a long way in strengthening relationships
- More foot patrols so officers can get to the know the neighborhood, play ball with kids so they learn to see officers as friendly instead of threatening. Car patrols don't build relationships
- Be a very visible and sustained presence in downtown and Lithia Park. Be present (in an interactive manner) at outdoor community events. Invite, seek, conversations with people
- Have more of a presence downtown at the little substation
- Have a veterans' affair officer available to see special individuals with a special need
- Community events where the department is able to interact with the community. For example: MPD does café and donuts with the Latino Community

- Other than situations of active danger, a police officer should be more of a keep the peace officer, guiding residents towards a solution
- I would like to see police officers that knew the people on their beat, and that were called when crimes were occurring. I'd like for the people of Ashland to know the police officers. Trust is built from familiarity
- APD doesn't need firearms
- Neighborhood liaisons
- More mentoring of younger officers
- Repeal 3176, CAHOOTS
- More time on foot, less time in cars
- More bike patrols
- Trauma informed de-escalation techniques
- Increase CE training requirements for officers
- Take an active role in tribal rights
- Police officers who are a part of the community (living and policing in the City of Ashland) (2 respondents recommended the same suggestion)
- Some officers utilize racial profiling (2nd hand info)
- It would be nice to see them be active in community events
- De-escalate conflicts to reduce or eliminate violence to citizens (3 respondents recommended the same suggestion)
- They should get more K9 units. People in Ashland like Dogs. And Dogs could help protect the Police from harassment. Also, dogs could help sniff out COVID19 if trained.
- Stop carrying guns (5 respondents recommended the same suggestion)
- I would like to APD to remove the line "During a deadly use of force application officers may use any means necessary as described in policy 300.4" removed from the APD Use of Force Policy related to the chokeholds.
- Adopt at least one use of force continuum measure
- Mandate a two to one ratio of De-Escalation training to firearms training. APD officers should spend more time on De-Escalating situations than firing their weapons.
- Officers walking the "beat" (2 respondents recommended the same suggestion)
- More officers and better resources
- Looks can make a big impression maker with the public. Neat, clean, professional goes a long way. Beards, gang tats, cat naps in the car, not so much.
- Mediators should help with disputes between neighbors or family members.
- My only suggestion is a more aggressive policing strategy...
- Less emphasis on mental health issues more on crime prevention.
- Get rid of the black uniforms - very intimidating and unnecessary. What happened to 'men and women in blue'.....more easily seen.
- Be more friendly
- More extensive training
- Qualified immunity should be stopped immediately.
- I think people should also know they took the training with Jackson county mental health. And that some of them have been trained in FETI. I think more of them should be trained in FETI.

- Advise the public how many members of the BIPOC community work for APD
- More training specifically in disabilities and mental illness
- More training in dealing with what resources our community has to offer
- Stop targeting individuals who look or act differently; seek to understand and improve community resources for these individuals.
- Redirect policing funds to housing, counseling and mental health services to deal with most of the problems that police have been ill-equipped to handle.
- Have empathy
- Number of officers responding to incidence is excessive.
- I would like the hug and release program in Ashland to stop.
- Ban choke holds
- Need minority social services with experience in diversity and recruitment
- Officers should live in Ashland
- Ban choke holds
- Require De-escalation