

S.A.F.E. Policing Plan

S.A.F.E. (standing for “Sensible Alternatives to Fatal Escalation”) Policing refers to the following set of local policing reforms, with the general goal of eliminating firearms from routine patrols and most classes (codes) of police activity.

1. Eliminate the Weapons Effect as a factor in escalations between the police and civilians.
 - a. Task the Police Reform Committee with taking up the question as to whether to remove police firearms entirely (creating a special armed backup/response force to assist in dangerous situations) or simply lock them in police cruisers. Both options are designed to replace the current “Constant Carry” practice that BPD officers currently engage in with their firearms.
 - i. The committee should consider both practices with an understanding that nonlethal patrols are generally more efficient in densely-populated areas where armed backup can be easily dispatched, while vehicle-secured firearms are more efficient in rural areas where the need for immediate self-defense may be higher.
 1. The United Kingdom is a prominent example of firearm-free patrols, and is a densely-populated urban country. With that said, it is worth noting that even small British communities employ the same system.
 2. New Zealand is a prominent example of the vehicle-secured system, and is a mostly-rural country with low population density. In many ways, the country is quite similar to Vermont.
 - ii. The committee should also make additions to officer training requirements, such as including implicit bias training or de-escalation.
 1. Training should prioritize officer, civilian, and public safety above law enforcement.
 2. Training should reflect a potential lack of access to body-carried firearms.
 - iii. The BPD Use of Force protocols must be revised to reflect the increased emphasis on deterrence, de-escalation, and nonlethal force implied by the removal of most officer firearms.
 - b. Make removing the visual cues to violence and escalation the stated police reform goal of the Brattleboro Selectboard and BPD.
 - i. Lethal weapons of any kind, when it is necessary for an officer to carry them, should be concealed. This can include positioning or fabric coverings that obscure the weapon from the civilian, and other similar tactics.

- ii. Non-lethal weapons should be carried in a way that does not attract the eye to them; the holstering devices that hold them should match the color of the uniform, and should be positioned away from the civilian line of sight.
 - iii. Visual emphasis should be intentionally drawn to factors that convey the authority of the officer in a nonviolent sense; handcuffs, badges, name plates, and other aspects of the police uniform that canote legitimate authority to enforce the law should be made as apparent as possible, positioned clearly within the line of sight of the civilian.
- c. Require BPD Officers to remove firearms before attending public events
 - i. This can be effected immediately, and will improve the tone of conversations between officers and the public at events where frank discussion without fear is advantageous to both parties.
- d. Officer training will include policing discussions between BPD officers and those willing to discuss their jobs from countries where firearms are not routinely carried by officers, including the UK, New Zealand, Switzerland, and Norway.
 - i. A Brattleboro Common Sense researcher in Scotland will set up discussions with Scottish and other foreign officers to answer practical questions BPD has about policing without recourse to firearms.
- e. Immediately begin a six-month pilot program requiring BPD Officers to each acquire an average of at least 30 hours of experience, over the course of six months, policing the community while armed only with nonlethal weapons, and to report their experiences.
 - i. Officers can be sent out in pairs (with neither officer carrying a firearm), both for the improved safety of numbers and to increase the speed at which officers can acquire the necessary hours.
 - ii. Officers should emphasize positive community interactions and non-escalatory resolutions to conflicts during these firearm-free patrols.
 - iii. BPD officers currently patrol the community on foot regularly as a public relations-building effort. Those patrols are to be subsumed under the umbrella of the pilot program for its duration.
 - iv. Officers are to log their experiences and reflect upon them; did the public feel friendlier or more hostile? Did situations arise that were affected by the absence of a firearm?
- f. Eliminate the carrying of firearms by BPD officers on routine patrols over time, as quickly as is publicly responsible.
 - i. Following the completion of 30 hours of nonlethal policing by each BPD officer, the Selectboard should hold a public hearing, assessing the success of the pilot program and the benefits of removing firearms from routine

- patrols. This should include the presentation of the findings of the Public Safety Committee,.
- ii. If successful, the program should be followed by the implementation of S.A.F.E. Policing by removing firearms from all officers other than those assigned to be Emergency Armed Response (EAR) officers. This could be implemented with a phased-in approach, allowing for maximum officer safety through the transition.
 - g. Institute mandatory de-escalatory use-of-force training that assumes no firearms will be available to the officer involved at any stage of escalation, to promote non-lethal solutions to dangerous situations.
 - i. Require a minimum of 5 hours of training annually per officer, to be completed within 6 months of the formal adoption of S.A.F.E. Policing.
2. Compile data from the pilot reports, to be used for assessing their success and for discussing other reforms.
- a. Conduct initial surveys/interviews of each BPD officer, assessing their sense of what their job is and what tools are necessary in successfully carrying that job out.
 - b. Collect data on use of force incidents, violence against officers, and self-reported levels of security/insecurity among officers who have been out in the field without firearms during the trial program.
 - i. Make this data freely and publicly accessible through the town's website.
 - c. Collect data on the response of the community to officers without firearms during the trial program, and assess both the popularity of the program itself and the relative feelings of safety versus threat that community members hear.
 - d. Hold annual hearings after the start of the pilot program to assess its successes, failures, and insights, and to decide whether to continue, expand, or disband said program.

Chronology of Implementation

1. Immediately ban, through a selectboard vote, police officers from carrying firearms at public meetings, barring an explicit request from town officials that they do so.
2. Immediately begin the S.A.F.E. Policing pilot program as described above, either through a vote by the selectboard or a public vote.
3. Begin pre-pilot officer surveys and interviews.
4. Set up and carry out international conversations between non-carrying officers and BPD.
5. Begin the pilot. At this point, officers who have completed the international conversations can begin to accrue their 30 hours of S.A.F.E. Policing experience.
6. Actively collect direct officer and civilian feedback throughout this process through surveys, and compile use of force data to compare the results of the program to those of the status quo.

7. After six months, at which time all BPD officers should have garnered the necessary S.A.F.E. Policing experience, there will be a public hearing on the results of the pilot program. At this time, following feedback from officers and the public, the Public Safety Committee will recommend a system of S.A.F.E. Policing without body-carried firearms which they deem to best comport with the needs of Brattleboro. This system is to be instituted without delay, directly replacing the pilot program.
8. Observe BPD's implementation of S.A.F.E. Policing protocols, continuing to collect use-of-force data and facilitate the above reforms over the long term.