

FALL 2020 WARRANT ARTICLE CITIZEN'S PETITION:

Article __: To see if the Town will adopt the following resolution, or take any other action related thereto:

RESOLUTION TO REQUEST A STUDY OF THE EFFECTS OF SYSTEMIC RACISM IN NEEDHAM, PARTICULARLY IN REGARD TO THE CORE ISSUES OF RACIAL PROFILING, PUBLIC SAFETY, AND HOUSING, WITH AN UPDATE ON PROGRESS MADE TOWARD COMPLETION OF THE STUDY TO BE PROVIDED PRIOR TO THE 2021 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING INCLUDING, IF WARRANTED, RECOMMENDATIONS OF ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN BY THE TOWN OF NEEDHAM TO ADDRESS THESE CONCERNS, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO, THE POSSIBLE APPROPRIATION OF FUNDS AT A FUTURE TOWN MEETING AND ADDITIONAL RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO BE COMPILED AND PROVIDED IN A TIMELY FASHION TO FUTURE TOWN MEETINGS.

WHEREAS, since the murder of George Floyd there have been demonstrations and other public activity in the Town of Needham in support of police reform and in support of the victims of police violence, leading to the initiation of the town's Unite Against Racism Initiative;

WHEREAS, Town Meeting believes incidents of racism have occurred and continue to occur in Needham;

WHEREAS, the Town of Needham should thoughtfully consider the testimony of those who have been affected by racism;

WHEREAS Town Meeting wishes to study actions that may be taken to improve the life experience of Black, Indigenous, and all People of Color (BIPOC) in Needham;

WHEREAS, Town Meeting understands law enforcement has historically been directly or indirectly tied to the perpetuation of discrimination and systemic racism;

WHEREAS, reimagining public safety has become a focus for our surrounding communities;

WHEREAS, the oversight of Needham Police, including but not limited to policies and practices concerning the use of force, hiring, firing and arbitration and discipline, as well as activity tracking, performance measurement, and ease of accessing information may require revision and clarification;

WHEREAS, alternative and more effective and appropriate approaches to the current police use of force policy are available;

WHEREAS, qualified immunity provides public safety officers nationally with such broad protections that they are rarely punished for unconscionable and apparently illegal actions;

WHEREAS, the Equal Justice Placard Program has been adopted by businesses throughout Needham and is affixed in the Town Hall;

WHEREAS, Needham housing and zoning policies have historically been directly or indirectly tied to perpetuation of discrimination and systemic racism;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT town officials and staff, perhaps through a new Citizens Committee, a newly-empowered Human Rights Committee, or a new working group, to be determined in whole or in part by the Select Board of the Town of Needham, Massachusetts, conduct a review of the effects of systemic racism in Needham and, if warranted, present to the 2021 Annual Town Meeting and subsequent Annual and Special Town Meetings specific warrant articles aimed at improvement. The review shall include evaluation of:

- Racism experienced by people in Needham;
- Discussions with the Town Committee Chairs to understand the role of racism within their areas of responsibility;
- Police oversight and accountability, including but not limited to qualified immunity, use of force policies, training (de-escalation, crisis intervention, legal education, diversity/inclusion), hiring and firing, arbitration and discipline, activity tracking, performance measurement, and ease of publicly accessing information;
- Evaluation of alternative police policies such as those offered by Campaign Zero;
- Racial profiling in public spaces;
- Expansion of the Equal Justice Placard Program through all Needham Town buildings; and
- Housing and zoning policies.