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For Immediate Release

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Town of Bennington Community Policing Work Moves Forward

Curtiss Reed, Executive Director of the Vermont Partnership for Fairness & Diversity, facilitated a recent training for the Town of Bennington Select Board, Town Manager, Assistant Town Manager, Community Development Director, Police Chief, and Police Lieutenant. The training covered the topic of Understanding Implicit Bias, both in personal encounters and within larger systems such as police departments and corporations. An overview of the training can be found on the Town's [website](#). Participants reviewed the following articles and TED talks ahead of the training: [Privileged](#), [The Youngest American Generation Is 48% Non-White. Yes, It Matters.](#), [A Brief History of Slavery and the Origins of American Policing](#), [Explaining White Privilege to a Broke White Person](#), [Why Do Millennials Not Understand Racism?](#), [Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life](#), [Color Blind or Color Brave?](#), [How to Raise A Black Son in America](#), [My Descent into America's Neo-Nazi Movement](#).

The training began with an exploration of participants' personal experiences with race and then shifted to a larger discussion about tackling racism and bias within the Town of Bennington. Town Manager Stuart Hurd described the training as "valuable because these discussions helped us expand our thinking and become more united in our message and our mission". Police Chief Paul Doucette added, "working with Curtiss Reed and the Vermont Partnership for Fairness and Diversity is helping the Town of Bennington and the Bennington Police Department move forward following the review conducted by the IACP. Attending training with Mr. Reed and improving our vision and mission for the Town of Bennington is instrumental in our future. I look forward to our continued partnership and working toward achieving common goals."

In addition to discussing issues of implicit bias, the Select Board and Town staff identified shared values for the Town of Bennington: "Bennington is an engaged, diverse, and resilient community where all contribute to our shared vitality and benefit from an outstanding quality of life." Donald Campbell, Select Board Chair, explained, "These aspirational values will guide us in our work to make the town more inclusive. We need to examine our practices not only in the police department, but in all town departments. That means hiring a more diverse work force, reaching out to minority owned business owners to support their growth, and attracting more people of color to our community. We invite community members to get involved and make Bennington a place where everyone is welcomed and people are thriving".

The Town has also hired two teams of local residents to research best practices in community policing and civilian oversight of law enforcement. Members of the research teams are Katie Berger, Robert Ebert, Alana Harte, Joe Holt, Jeson Li, and Kara Lusa. They were chosen from a

pool of 15 applicants for the positions. During their first meeting with Curtiss Reed, they discussed the IACP report and recommendations, which are the impetus for the research they will be doing. Mr. Reed explained, "The IACP recommendations provide the perfect opportunity to help the Bennington Police Department move into 21st century policing. The quality of the bibliography that this team collectively puts together can be a model for other police departments across the state." The research teams began by sharing key words that will guide their work, such as transparency, trust, respect, cooperation, public communication, accountability, and sustainability. The next steps will be the teams conducting online research and interviewing staff in towns that have some form of civilian oversight or community policing initiatives. The research teams' final work products will be completed by mid-August and will include a bibliography of several hundred resources and a summary of their conversations.