

As our nation grapples with incidents of police brutality and police violence perpetrated on black and brown communities, millions of Americans have come together in support of Black Lives Matter to demand police accountability. In fact, Black Lives Matter may be the largest movement in history.¹ Hamden is no stranger to segregated neighborhoods, police violence in our black neighborhoods, over-policing of Southern Hamden, and protests resulting from the police shooting of Stephanie Washington and Paul Witherspoon. Equipping the police department with a drone will not help to build trust between the police department and residents in Southern Hamden. A drone will further encourage the over-policing of our black communities.

Calls for police accountability will go unanswered without an active police commission to review and change police policy. While most other commissions have managed to hold electronic meetings during the pandemic, the Police Commission had not met for 4 months.

When Hamden residents are appointed to a commission, most are appointed to a 2 to 3-year term. The language provided in the charter is intended to give independence and autonomy from the administration. All five commission members on the police commission are on expired terms. The most recent appointment was confirmed with an already expired commission term. The police commission does not have independence from the administration if a replacement could be appointed at any time.

Several community members have witnessed police officers interacting with the public without masks. We are over 4 months into quarantine from a global pandemic and the police commission has not developed a policy on wearing masks. The police commission needs to develop a policy on wearing masks.

We are requesting that the mayor make police commission appointments of residents that will hold the police department accountable and make decisions for the greater good of Hamden. A select group of friends of the police is not acceptable. The Police Commission needs to hold monthly meetings to change the “use of force policy” and “chase policy” as has been promised. It’s time to stand up for our black and brown residents and repair one of the systems upholding white supremacy.

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/07/03/us/george-floyd-protests-crowd-size.html>