

MAY 1ST LISTENING SESSION REPORT

October 29, 2024, revised November 5, 2024

This report is presented in response to the listening session held on August 20 to gather community feedback regarding the events of May 1. The session and the follow-up online feedback provided valuable insights into community thoughts and concerns, particularly around law enforcement's involvement and response, as well as the broader impact on public perception and trust. This report addresses key issues raised, including the role of state police, operational protocols, response actions, and community sentiments about safety and trust in authorities. Our goal is to ensure transparency and continue working towards building a stronger relationship between law enforcement and the community.

August 20 Listening Session Structure

Jeremy Eggleton moderated the session, while Police Chief Charlie Dennis provided an overview of police preparation and response protocols. The five Selectboard members—Carey Callaghan (Chair), Joanna Whitcomb (Vice Chair), Athas Rassias, Jennie Chamberlain, and Jarett Berke—facilitated the breakout group discussions. Town staff, including Ellen Bullion, Peter Kulbacki, Kerry Osgood, Tracy Walsh, and Jared Jenisch, served as scribes.

The session followed a four-part structure:

1. Welcome and Introduction: Moderator Jeremy Eggleton introduced the purpose of the session and key participants and outlined the structure and rules of engagement.
2. Police Chief's Overview: Police Chief Charlie Dennis presented an overview of the department's standard preparation and response practices.
3. Breakout Groups: Attendees were divided into smaller groups, each led by a facilitator, to discuss and share feedback on the May 1 event.
4. Reporting Out: The session concluded with a reconvening of the full group, where facilitators shared the key points and feedback gathered during the breakout discussions.

Online Feedback

In addition to the listening session, the Selectboard sought feedback online for an additional 40 days. The online format included a video recording in which the Police Chief provides a brief overview and the reporting from each breakout group, highlighting key issues and feedback.

The [PDFs of the breakout group comments are linked here](#).

REPORT FINDINGS

1. Law Enforcement Involvement and Response

State Police Involvement:

The decision to involve the state police on May 1 was based on the scale of the event and the resources required to manage public safety. State police was called in as part of established mutual aid protocols, and their role was to provide additional support to the Hanover Police Department. We understand concerns about the presence of some safety equipment that was present and will continue to review protocols for future events.

Operational Protocols and Planning:

Operational planning for the event involved a comprehensive review and assessment of available information, including but not limited to assessing and reviewing input from local law enforcement and campus security. Specific operational details cannot be disclosed due to the nature of them. We will evaluate how to include key stakeholders in the planning process, however spontaneous events make adding that component challenging.

Response Actions:

We recognize certain community members have expressed concerns about the perceived scale and nature of the response. The goal was to ensure safety for all involved. We are reviewing the events leading up to the response actions to include the decision tree and threat assessment process and continue to explore ways to ensure that our mission statement is a key principle guiding our actions.

2. Public Perception and Community Impact

Safety Concerns:

We hear that some community members feel diminished safety and sadness over the events of May 1. This is not the image we wish to convey, and we remain committed to working with all residents to foster trust in Hanover Police Department, consistent with the Hanover Police Departments overall mission and

objectives. We will continue to balance public safety with community values by ensuring that any responses are lawful and appropriate.

Trust in Authorities:

We understand that some community members' trust in local authorities has been affected. To address concerns about influence from external entities such as Dartmouth College, we have worked to clarify the independence of our law enforcement and prosecutorial processes.

3. Communication and Coordination

Coordination Between Authorities:

Coordination between local law enforcement, campus security, and external agencies is crucial in situations like May 1. We remain committed to further educating the public on the roles and responsibilities of agencies when responding to demonstrations and events.

Public Information:

We aim to provide the public with timely, clear, and accurate information. We will continue to review our public communication strategies in an effort to assess the viability and practicability of alternative communication strategies, including using multiple platforms for public notifications.

4. Legal and Procedural Questions

Arrests and Legal Process:

While we understand there is concern over handling of the arrests and concerns over safety, the arrests on May 1 were carried out in a lawful and appropriate manner and in response to actions that were deemed to violate state law.

Rights and Protests:

We respect the right to free speech and to protest and recognize the community's concern about hate speech and safety. We will continue to work with legal experts and community leaders to establish clearer guidelines for future protests and public demonstrations, ensuring safety, adherence to laws, and the protection of civil liberties.

5. Post-Event Reflections and Future Considerations

Dialogue and Future Planning:

We recognize that fostering dialogue before, during, and after events like May 1 can be beneficial. Moving forward, we will continue to look for ways to create an open dialogue between law enforcement, the College, and the broader community.

Costs and Accountability:

The financial and legal implications of the May 1 event are still being accrued as there are pending cases associated with this event. We have calculated the total cost of salaries for police personnel which totaled \$5,346.52.

6. Next Steps

To address the concerns raised, we propose the following actions:

- 1. Communication Channels:** Assess the viability and practicability of alternative communication channels, including real-time updates during large public events.
- 2. Policy Review:** As a nationally accredited agency, our current policies meet the standards of the Commission on Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA). We will conduct a comprehensive review of police and protest response policies, consistent with Hanover Police Department's continuous improvement by assessing and reviewing its policies and procedures. This review is to better ensure that our policies align with current best practices in law enforcement as well as community values and expectations.

By taking these steps, we aim to maintain and foster a collaborative relationship between law enforcement, the College, and the Hanover community that coincides with Hanover Police Department's overall mission and objectives.

In closing, I would like to extend our sincere gratitude to all community members who participated in the listening session and contributed their valuable feedback. Your input is essential in helping the Town improve its practices and foster a safer, more trusting relationship between law enforcement and the residents of Hanover. Thank you for your engagement and dedication to this important process. I also want to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of the Hanover Police Department throughout this process. Their commitment to ensuring public safety while balancing the concerns of the community has been

vital. We recognize the challenges they face and appreciate their continued efforts to serve Hanover with professionalism and integrity. Moving forward, we will work together to improve communication and build trust, while ensuring that our shared values of safety, transparency, and respect guide every action. Thank you again to everyone involved for your contributions to this important dialogue.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'RH' with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Robert Houseman [\(he, him\)](#)

Town Manager

The following is a categorization by topic to help organize the concerns and questions raised by participants related to law enforcement, public safety, communication, legal procedures, and post-event reflections.

1. Law Enforcement Involvement and Response

- **State Police Involvement:**

- How when and why did state police become involved? (B1, R15, R17, O2, Y4, G4)
- What were the triggers to call in the state police? (R17)
- Did the presence of state police in riot gear exacerbate the student response? (B21)
- Could the state police have been asked to show up in different gear? (B12)
- Could the Hanover police have asked the state police to show compassion? (B13)
- Why was that level of policing amassed? Who requested it and when? (Y21)

- **Operational Protocols and Planning:**

- What was the operational planning for this event and can it be made public? (B2)
- What was the operational protocol for the number of warnings? (B5)
- Incident command – who participates, who are Town reps/selectboard? (O1)
- Who was in charge of response on May 1? (Y10, G4)
- What was different about this protest versus past events? (O9)
- What is decision tree/timeline for threat assessments? (Y13)

- **Response Actions:**

- Were police aware of safety information the public was not aware of? (R3)
- Logic behind escalation (Y9)
- Why was the response scale so large (e.g. militarization, canines, drones, long guns)? (Y4)
- Was the speed and level of escalation out of proportion? (Y20)
- Did the behavior of responders align with the mission statement of compassion? (B3)

2. Public Perception and Community Impact

- **Safety Concerns:**

- Feeling less safe after the arrests (B10)
- Sadness and shock over the heavy-handed response (B11, B9)
- Perceived lack of understanding of Dartmouth student body (Y14)
- Issue of anti-Semitism being used to justify escalation (Y11)

- **Trust in Authorities:**

- How does the Town prosecutor remain independent given Dartmouth's influence? (Y18, G13)
- Public confusion about Green as public vs. private property (Y1, R7)
- Concerns about future handling of protests (R10, Y25)
- Concerns about violence being directed at protesters in general (R5)

3. Communication and Coordination

- **Coordination Between Authorities:**

- Relationship between Hanover police and the College (B22, O4, Y17)
- Communication between police, Dartmouth Safety and Security, and other law enforcement (O4, Y19)
- Dartmouth Safety's role in the event (O4, Y19)
- Was the response coordinated with other campuses like UNH? (Y23)

- **Public Information:**

- Misinformation and lack of understanding of police procedures (R13)
- What was public information and when was it available? (G6, G13)
- Was there clarity in the instructions and warnings during the protest? (B6)
- Best practices for informing the public about events (G8)

4. Legal and Procedural Questions

- **Arrests and Legal Process:**

- Why were people arrested? (R4)
- Who/how were bail conditions established and communicated? (Y6)
- What discretion does Hanover police have when responding on Dartmouth property? (O10)
- Is the Green public space or private Dartmouth property? (R4, R7, R8)
- How many non-Dartmouth affiliated persons were arrested? (O13)

- **Rights and Protests:**

- Is there a procedure for planning protests and displays? (B24)
- Free speech vs. hate speech issues (R6)
- Regular use of the Green for protests (Y2)

5. Post-Event Reflections and Future Considerations

- **Dialogue and Future Planning:**

- Where was the College in creating spaces for dialogue? (B15, B19)
- Provisions for outreach to stakeholders and protesters in advance? (B16)

- What will the response be to future protests? (Y25)
 - Need for education on protest rights and consequences (O7)
- **Costs and Accountability:**
 - How much did this event cost and who pays? (O8)
 - The number of lawsuits filed against Hanover (O11)
 - Can the Town have input to ask Dartmouth to drop charges? (O12)

August 20, 2024
Community Listening Session Feedback

Note: These are all verbatim participant statements

Blue 1

How when and why did state police become involved?

B2

What was the operational planning for this event and can it be made public?

B3

Did behavior of responders accord with the goal of compassion in mission statement?

B4

It seems like state police responded as though it was a riot rather than a protest.

B5

What was the operational protocol for number of warnings? One witness describes patience on the part of responders as important. It went on for hours.

B6

A witness described clarity about instructions and warnings.

B7

A witness described the scene as a less violent than the Valley News account

B8

As a Jewish person in Hanover, I was reassured by police willingness to intervene, feeling of safety.

B9

Sadness at the way the arrests unfolded

B10

Feeling less safe after the arrests and the way they happened. I never imagined this in Hanover.

B11

Recognize that rules were broken, but took my breath away how heavy-handed the response was and I'm deeply saddened by that.

B12

Could the state police have been asked to show up in different gear?

B13

Could the Hanover police have asked the state police to show compassion in their response.

B14

I'm a Dartmouth student. This has been the most productive conversation about May 1 I've experienced so far. Many people on campus are not willing to have this kind of conversation.

B15

Where was the College in all of this in terms of creating spaces for dialogue?

B16

In the operational plan for this event, where were provisions for outreach to stakeholders, including protesters, in advance?

B17

If it was about the encampments more than the protest, they then arrested protesters as well.

B18

As a Jewish Dartmouth student, I noted the experience of a Jewish friend being hectorated by an encampment at another school. I felt safer when this encampment was taken down.

B19

I am sad that there was no space or time for dialogue fostered by the College.

B20

Where did the expectation of riot/violence enter the response plan when it historically hasn't happened at Dartmouth.

B21

Did the presence of state police in riot gear exacerbate the student response?

B22

What exactly was the relationship between Hanover police and the College on May 1?

B23

The Green is a limited public forum.

B24

Is there a procedure for planning protests and displays?

Red 1

Was storm troopers reference appropriate by media as most information comes to residents through media.

R2

Resident was on Green, big show of force, intimidating, but contributed to orderly arrest process.

R3

Were police aware of information regarding safety the public was not aware of?

R4

Why were people arrested? Because College wanted them off the Green? Is the Green a public space?

R5

Concerned that violence gets directed at protesters – not this situation but in other areas.

R6

Free speech isn't the issue – hate speech is more the issue.

R7

Is it trespassing when the location is normally a public place people go?

R8

Dartmouth Green being private property may not be known to all residents and students.

R9

What was the Town responsible for? What was Dartmouth responsible for?

R10

Dartmouth alum upset about what she read. Concerned about future events and how they will be handled. How did Hanover police get involved with Dartmouth College and state police?

R11

Was on the Green 5/1 peaceful, unlike other campuses. Students were aware of Dartmouth policies in advance. I support Dartmouth Review article that students knew of possible consequences. Balanced article in contrast to Valley News.

R12

We have to abide by the rules, we are a community of rules and that has to come first.

R13

Misinformation and lack of understanding of police standard procedures.

R14

Information which cannot be shared currently contributes to unknown.

R15

How does the Hanover police department get called and then the state police show up?

R16

People are scared this situation happened. People feel like they deserve all the information. This is a safe Town.

R17

What were the triggers to call in the state police? Are the state police on stand-by for other events? Protesters knew what to expect. Arrests were orderly.

Orange 1

Incident command – who participates, who are Town reps/selectboard?

O2

Militarization was a disproportionate response.

O3

Hanover police department mission at odds with response. Decision maker to involve state police? What standards guided actions? Are national standards public and sharable?

O4

Communication between Hanover police department, Dartmouth Safety and Security and other law enforcement?

O5

There were many different types of interactions with protesters.

O6

Was is Town's interaction with Dartmouth as a land owner? When can Town say no to Dartmouth?

O7

For the future education on protests and consequences.

O8

How much has this cost and who pays? Mutual aid/MOUs [reference unknown] publicly available.

O9

What was different about this protest versus past events? Why the urgency? College perspective/Town perspective.

O10

What discretion does Hanover police department have when responding on Dartmouth property?

O11

The number of lawsuits filed against Hanover

O12

Does Town have input with Dartmouth to drop charges? Perception is Dartmouth can drop charges.

O13

The number of non-Dartmouth affiliated persons arrested?

O14

Was there reliable information about outside agitators from Dartmouth leadership or others?

Yellow 1

Confusion over Green as public versus private property.

Y2

Regular use of Green for protesting/we can't switch gears.

Y3

Were there multiple events on May 1?

Y4

Scale of response, militarization, canines, drones, long guns, and vehicles.

Y5

Timeline. At who's behest were things escalated? Who were the actors that drove the timeline? State police, other local departments, mutual aid? Who was responsible for timeline? Interaction between campus security and campus police.

Y6

Who/how were bail conditions established and communicated?

Y7

Communication from College – what was the request and timing of request?

Y8

What are series of steps - protection of private property?

Y9

Logic behind escalation

Y10

Who was in charge of response May 1? Was Hanover PD at top of chain? Was governor involved in chain?

Y11

Perceived undertones of addressing anti-Semitism used as justification for escalation of policy response – was this proper.

Y12

How did events on other campuses influence May 1 response?

Y13

Are there standards, criteria for threat assessments? What is decision tree/timeline?

Y14

Response showed lack of understanding/misread of Dartmouth student body and community. Loss in internal control

Y15

No physical clues that had been used in the past e.g. fences/barriers.

Y16

Can we understand the communications chain/coordination timeline

Y17

What is relationship between Dartmouth admin and Hanover PD?

Y18

How does Town prosecutor remain independent in light of power of the College?

Y19

Issue of Dartmouth Safety and Security – what is their role/information sharing?

Y20

Was the speed and level of escalation out of proportion/over-reaction?

Y21

Why was that level of policing amassed? Who requested – when?

Y22

Is there a model for investigation that can be followed?

Y23

Was the response at UNH and Dartmouth coordinated in any way? Planning/scale of response

Y24

What influence does Town have over prosecutor?

Y25

What will response be to future protests?

Green 1

Who called? Who and when?

G2

Who were the community stakeholders? Who had input?

G3

Hanover police department is an excellent police force.

G4

Who was in charge and made the call to bring in other forces?

G5

Was the College invited and did they send reps? Was there a distinction between local and other police?

G6

What is public information and when is it available?

G7

What time of night was the entire Green declared off limits and how were people informed to leave?

G8

Best practice to inform public of an issue that's going on?

G9

Good at providing information on Town website, but not at communicating.

G10

What were the goals of this session tonight?

G11

Over-reaction, situation ramped up disproportionately

G12

Cleared the people but not the problem.

G13

Release what you can as soon as you can.