

From: [Daniel Thorn](#)
To: [City Clerk Contact](#)
Subject: [PERSONALIZE SUBJECT]
Date: Tuesday, January 19, 2021 6:17:53 PM

John Long,

Dear Mayor Curtatone and Somerville City Council members,

My name is Dan Thorn and I am a resident of Ward in Somerville, MA. I am writing to demand that you take specific measures to reduce funding for police in the city of Somerville. The Mayor and the members of the city council have a responsibility to communities of color in Somerville to take immediate steps to decrease funding to the police and systems of criminalization in place while reinvesting those funds into Black and brown communities most directly impacted by police violence and disinvestment.

Our city faces dire crises during the COVID-19 epidemic that can't be solved by policing. Thousands of us have lost wages and face food insecurity due to the economic crisis that is unfolding. We face the risk of forced removal as soon as the eviction ban is lifted and recognize that these conditions only exacerbate the long-standing inequalities in Somerville that have displaced communities of color from this area. For far too long the status quo has forced essential educators to live on starvation wages while overwhelming community demands to right this glaring injustice are ignored. Meanwhile, our Police Department hoards hundreds of thousands of dollars seized from citizens unconvicted of any crime and the City rewards police officers with six-figure salaries. This is unconscionable. Somerville police officers don't just brutalize Somerville residents, but also attack peaceful protestors in other cities through expensive interdepartmental mutual aid agreements. Somerville must end its reliance on lethally armed police to solve community problems and funding our police force at the expense of programs that strengthen our community and reduce crime.

I am heartened by Councilman Lance Davis' leadership on recent motions to create a civilian review board for oversight of the Somerville Police Department. However, I believe that such measures are only helpful as the start of a holistic process of reallocating unnecessary police spending to our education system and other essential community programs. I fail to see how this process can continue if SPD is allowed to continue growing its department and hiring more officers, as the council is voting on this week.

To fix these failings, we must reallocate millions of dollars from the \$17,000,000 Police Department budget, remove officers from Somerville schools, and disarm the police. Our needs must be addressed by the provision of care and not the threat of violence. We must reinvest into public goods like education, public health, jobs, and safe housing. Most importantly, decisions around funding and reinvestment must be done in collaboration with Black and brown community members who are most impacted by the harms of police violence and disinvestment.

While the City of Somerville's adoption of all of the #8CantWait police reform policies is a first step, it cannot be where we stop. We must significantly defund the Somerville police department by cutting bloated salaries, expensive overtime, and militarized budgets to reinvest in our communities. It's time to stop investing in criminalization and surveillance, and fund what Black and Brown communities need to be safe and healthy: COVID19 relief, housing grants, healthcare, youth jobs and services, POC-owned businesses, community centers, trauma-informed first responders, POC-led organizations and projects.

Thank you,

Dan Thorn

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