To the Mayor, Council, Manager and fellow citizens:

We are honored to have served on the Chapel Hill Reimagining Community Safety Task Force. It has been a stimulating and daunting task. In many ways, we feel like we are just beginning to scratch the surface of our understanding of community safety. Thus, we submit our report to the Council with the hope and understanding that it is the beginning of much more study, discussion, and change.

As Council recognized in its Charge to the Task Force, reimagining community safety is not something that can be accomplished in a few months or even a few years, no matter how motivated the actors. It is urgent to start action now, but there will need to be sustained effort from now on. We hope that these recommendations and Council’s follow-through will set Chapel Hill on a path toward greater community justice, more community happiness and thus, greater community safety.

We are convinced that many of the best ways to make Chapel Hill safer in the long run are only tangentially related to the police. Affordable housing, decent jobs for all who are able to work, equitable public education, and access to mental health and drug use treatment are the keys to a safer Chapel Hill.

In all our work, we must continue to grapple honestly and effectively with the still powerful effects of our nation’s and Chapel Hill’s long history of slavery, Jim Crow, exploitation and racism.

Many of the efforts the Task Force has recommended need to be regional. Carrboro, Orange County, the school systems, and UNC need to work together with the Town for our mutual benefit. Additionally, we have many private nonprofit agencies that are doing good work and should be brought in as partners for appropriate projects. The Task Force has identified several current public programs that deserve greater support. Many that are not mentioned are also making crucial contributions. We feel confident that as Council, staff and citizens continue the work of reimagining community safety, new ideas and programs will emerge and neglected existing ideas and programs will be revealed.

The members of the Task Force want to thank: all the citizens who took part in the listening sessions set up to help inform our work; Amplify, Inc., who facilitated the listening sessions and some of our Task Force Meetings; Chapel Hill staff who have assisted us in countless ways -- always with professionalism, patience, and good humor -- and many experts who gave us a very quick education about existing and planned public safety programs.

We stand ready to support the Town in any way we can as Council and staff determine how to go forward. We have made some suggestions as to how the Town can hold itself accountable in the hard, often painful work of change. We also recommend that Council use some existing standing committees -- the Community Policing Advisory Committee and the Justice in Action Committee -- to help with this process.

Thank you for the privilege of working on this project.

Sincerely,