

Instruction to the Select Board

I, John Lippitt, Precinct 7, do hereby move that the Select Board establish an Ad Hoc Committee on Taser Use (AHCTU) to research and make a recommendation on the purchase of tasers for the Reading Police Department (RPD). As part of this research, at a minimum, the following topics are to be considered and reported on at the April 2022 Town Meeting:

- The RPD's policies and procedures for the use of tasers
- Data on the typical situation and the typical target of taser use
- Effectiveness and benefits of tasers when deployed and used
- The effect of the availability of tasers on use of firearms
- The training necessary to effectively deploy tasers
- Appropriate oversight of the use of tasers
- On-going costs of taser deployment including maintenance, liability, risks, etc.
- The use of tasers in similar Massachusetts communities including their frequency and effectiveness

As part of the AHCTU's research:

- A survey shall be conducted and widely distributed to ascertain the community's support for and concerns with providing tasers to the RPD.
- At least two public hearings shall be held and widely announced to provide the community with information on the RPD's development of policies and procedures for taser use and to obtain public input on those policies and procedures.

Background

- Given the recent enactment of the state's Police Reform Bill and its intent to provide greater civilian oversight of and transparency into police department functioning, the decision to purchase tasers should be made with broad community input and understanding.
- To this end, community engagement and research should occur into the policies and procedures for the use of tasers, their effectiveness, their proper deployment and oversight, and their ongoing costs as called for in this Instructional Motion.
- The recent incident where an experienced police officer mistook a firearm for a taser with a fatal result underscores the importance clear policies and procedures and effective training for the deployment of tasers.

