WE ARE AMHERST

POLICE REFORM COLLABORATIVE

ORGANIZATION AND POLICY POSITION

APRIL 2021

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1. WE ARE AMHERST POLICE REFORM COLLABORATIVE CONTRIBUTING MEMBERS

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2. WE ARE AMHERST COLLABORATIVE POLICY STATEMENT

As a result of a statewide mandate and the desire of the Town of Amherst and the Amherst Police Department, this policy position has been drafted to commence and navigate the process of policy reform and adaptation.

In August of 2020, the Town of Amherst, in partnership with the Amherst Police Department, formed the "We Are Amherst" Police Reform Collaborative in order to begin the processes of policy review, outreach, analysis and action.

The policy position that follows has been drafted to acknowledge the existing police policies, and to build on and adapt future policies, as required by state mandate, and to meet the needs of the Amherst community.

3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Town of Amherst, incorporated in 1818, celebrates its century old police force by maintaining active engagement within the community it serves. Engagement throughout the Town with residents and guests continues to be a cornerstone of the Amherst Police Department; with a focus on bringing residents, businesses and visitors together in the spirit of love for community. The Amherst Police Department prides itself on their motto, "big enough to serve you, small enough to know you", and this is evidenced in the daily dedication to maintain a proactive approach to resolve all public safety concerns and quality of life issues that may arise in order to maintain a status as one of the safest communities in the country. In the same spirit of pride in community and active engagement, the Amherst Police Department, in partnership with the Town of Amherst, formed the "We Are Amherst" Police Reform Collaborative in response to Governor Andrew Cuomo's Executive Order No. 203, and began the processes laid out, in order to address the issues resulting from data collected throughout the outreach process.

In 2020, a new degree of racial divide, bias and community alienation from law enforcement, boldly defined by use of force policies and existing inequalities in minority communities, became a larger national crisis; resulting in the eagerness of many communities to look to community engaged, data driven solutions to address surface and underlying issues which may be solved through the policy reform process. As such, the Collaborative began the process of community outreach to complete a thorough investigation of local findings and concerns among the community in which the Amherst Police Department serves.

Community engagement, as a hands-on approach to collection of data and input, was conducted through small in-person, community events, following all COVID-19 safety protocols and guidance. In addition to these events, the Amherst Police Department and Town of Amherst conducted several virtual community stakeholder group meetings. These groups were comprised of community leaders within their specific topic area. A community facilitator group was also identified and asked to participate as community ambassadors of the "We Are Amherst" campaign and took part in several police organized workshops. Data was collected via a paper survey, as well as an online survey and in-person conversations notated by members of the "We Are Reform" campaign.

For the purposes of this study, and to drive meaningful and genuine discussion, a concentric circle survey was developed and distributed throughout the community. Data analysis included sorting over 450 surveys for identification of common topic areas of concern. At data collection conclusion, analysis included a breakdown of demographic information, as well as grouping commonalities as they relate to topic areas.

Major topic areas of concern identified during the analysis process include: Hiring Practices, Community Policing, Racial Profiling/Bias, Training (as it relates to mental health advocacy and cultural awareness) and Town Court Access. These important topic areas have been further analyzed in the following policy position and have become the foundation for the Amherst Police Department Policy Reform Action Plan.

It should be noted that the Collaboration, along with public input, has considered all of the Governor's recommendations outlined in the Resources & Guide For Public Officials and Citizens workbook that was issued along with the Governor's directive.

Overall, the resulting analysis of data collected throughout the “We Are Amherst” campaign, has helped to clearly define surface and underlying issues and have provided an important foundation of which future policy position will be developed. Such a foundation will assist both the Amherst Police Department and Town of Amherst in advancing current and future policy to meet or exceed the expectations of residents and visitors, further providing a model upon which other municipalities may choose to adopt and amend.

4. NEW YORK STATE POLICE REFORM AND REINVENTION COLLABORATIVE MANDATE

In May of 2020, New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo called for the New York State Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative. Cited below, Executive Order No. 203, outlines the issues for the order, as well as the process requirements.

E X E C U T I V E O R D E R

NEW YORK STATE POLICE REFORM AND REINVENTION COLLABORATIVE

WHEREAS, the Constitution of the State of New York obliges the Governor to take care that the laws of New York are faithfully executed; and

WHEREAS, I have solemnly sworn, pursuant to Article 13, Section 1 of the Constitution, to support the Constitution and faithfully discharge the duties of the Office of Governor; and

WHEREAS, beginning on May 25, 2020, following the police-involved death of George Floyd in Minnesota, protests have taken place daily throughout the nation and in communities across New York State in response to police-involved deaths and racially-biased law enforcement to demand change, action, and accountability; and

WHEREAS, there is a long and painful history in New York State of discrimination and mistreatment of black and African-American citizens dating back to the arrival of the first enslaved Africans in America; and

WHEREAS, this recent history includes a number of incidents involving the police that have resulted in the deaths of unarmed civilians, predominantly black and African-American men, that have undermined the public's confidence and trust in our system of law enforcement and criminal justice, and such condition is ongoing and urgently needs to be rectified; and

WHEREAS, these deaths in New York State include those of Anthony Baez, Amadou Diallo, Ousmane Zango, Sean Bell, Ramarley Graham, Patrick Dorismond, Akai Gurley, and Eric Garner, amongst others, and, in other states, include Oscar Grant, Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Tamir Rice, Laquan McDonald, Walter Scott, Freddie Gray, Philando Castile, Antwon Rose Jr., Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd, amongst others,

WHEREAS, these needless deaths have led me to sign into law the Say Their Name Agenda which reforms aspects of policing in New York State; and

WHEREAS, government has a responsibility to ensure that all of its citizens are treated equally, fairly, and justly before the law; and

WHEREAS, recent outpouring of protests and demonstrations which have been manifested in every area of the state have illustrated the depth and breadth of the concern; and

WHEREAS, black lives matter; and

WHEREAS, the foregoing compels me to conclude that urgent and immediate action is needed to eliminate racial inequities in policing, to modify and modernize policing strategies, policies, procedures, and practices, and to develop practices to better address the particular needs of communities of color to promote public safety, improve community engagement, and foster trust; and

WHEREAS, the Division of the Budget is empowered to determine the appropriate use of funds in furtherance of the state laws and New York State Constitution; and

WHEREAS, in coordination with the resources of the Division of Criminal Justice Services, the Division of the Budget can increase the effectiveness of the criminal justice system by ensuring that the local police agencies within the state have been actively engaged with stakeholders in the local community and have locally-approved plans for the strategies, policies and procedures of local police agencies; and

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor of the State of New York, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the Laws of the State of New York, in particular Article IV, section one, I do hereby order and direct as follows:

The director of the Division of the Budget, in consultation with the Division of Criminal Justice Services, shall promulgate guidance to be sent to all local governments directing that:

Each local government entity which has a police agency operating with police officers as defined under 1.20 of the criminal procedure law must perform a comprehensive review of current police force deployments, strategies, policies, procedures, and practices, and develop a plan to improve such deployments, strategies, policies, procedures, and practices, for the purposes of addressing the particular needs of the communities served by such police agency and promote community engagement to foster trust, fairness, and legitimacy, and to address any racial bias and disproportionate policing of communities of color.

Each chief executive of such local government shall convene the head of the local police agency, and stakeholders in the community to develop such plan, which shall consider evidence-based policing strategies, including but not limited to, use of force policies, procedural justice; any studies addressing systemic racial bias or racial justice in policing; implicit bias awareness training; de-escalation training and practices; law enforcement assisted diversion programs; restorative justice practices; community-based outreach and conflict resolution; problem-oriented policing; hot spots policing; focused deterrence; crime prevention through environmental design; violence prevention and reduction interventions; model policies and guidelines promulgated by the New York State Municipal Police Training Council; and standards promulgated by the New York State Law Enforcement Accreditation Program.

The political subdivision, in coordination with its police agency, must consult with stakeholders, including but not limited to membership and leadership of the local police force; members of the community, with emphasis in areas with high numbers of police and community interactions; interested non-profit and faith-based community groups; the local

office of the district attorney; the local public defender; and local elected officials, and create a plan to adopt and implement the recommendations resulting from its review and consultation, including any modifications, modernizations, and innovations to its policing deployments, strategies, policies, procedures, and practices, tailored to the specific needs of the community and general promotion of improved police agency and community relationships based on trust, fairness, accountability, and transparency, and which seek to reduce any racial disparities in policing.

Such plan shall be offered for public comment to all citizens in the locality, and after consideration of such comments, shall be presented to the local legislative body in such political subdivision, which shall ratify or adopt such plan by local law or resolution, as appropriate, no later than April 1, 2021; and

Such local government shall transmit a certification to the Director of the Division of the Budget to affirm that such process has been complied with and such local law or resolution has been adopted; and

The Director of the Division of the Budget shall be authorized to condition receipt of future appropriated state or federal funds upon filing of such certification for which such local government would otherwise be eligible; and

The Director is authorized to seek the support and assistance of any state agency in order to effectuate these purposes.

G I V E N under my hand and the Privy Seal of the State in the City of Albany this twelfth day of June in the year two thousand twenty.

BY THE GOVERNOR

5. AMHERST POLICE DEPARTMENT ACCREDITATION AND POLICIES

Before introducing the formal process used to drive the "We Are Amherst" Collaborative and reach the goals set forth by Executive Order No. 203, it is helpful to have a working understanding and knowledge of current practices and policies employed by the Amherst Police Department.

The Town of Amherst Police Department has been in existence since 1923 and has been a New York State Law Enforcement Accredited Agency since 1992. The Town of Amherst Police Department completes yearly compliance forms and is inspected by the New York State Department of Criminal Justice Services every five (5) years. In 2017, the Town of Amherst was once again deemed to be an accredited agency. The next accreditation inspection will take place in the Spring of 2022.

The New York State Law Enforcement Accreditation Program provides formal recognition that an agency meets or exceeds general expectations of quality in the field. The cornerstone of the accreditation program lies in established standards that contain a clear statement of professional requirements. Agencies participating in the program conduct a thorough analysis of their organization to determine how existing operations can be adapted to meet established standards. When an agency adopts policies and procedures that meet the standards, a team of independent professionals conducts an on-site assessment to verify that all applicable standards have been successfully implemented. This process culminates with a decision by the New York State Law Enforcement Accreditation Council that the agency is worthy of accreditation. In essence, accreditation is a progressive and contemporary way of supporting police agencies to evaluate and improve overall performance, including standard and specialized policy analysis, adaption,

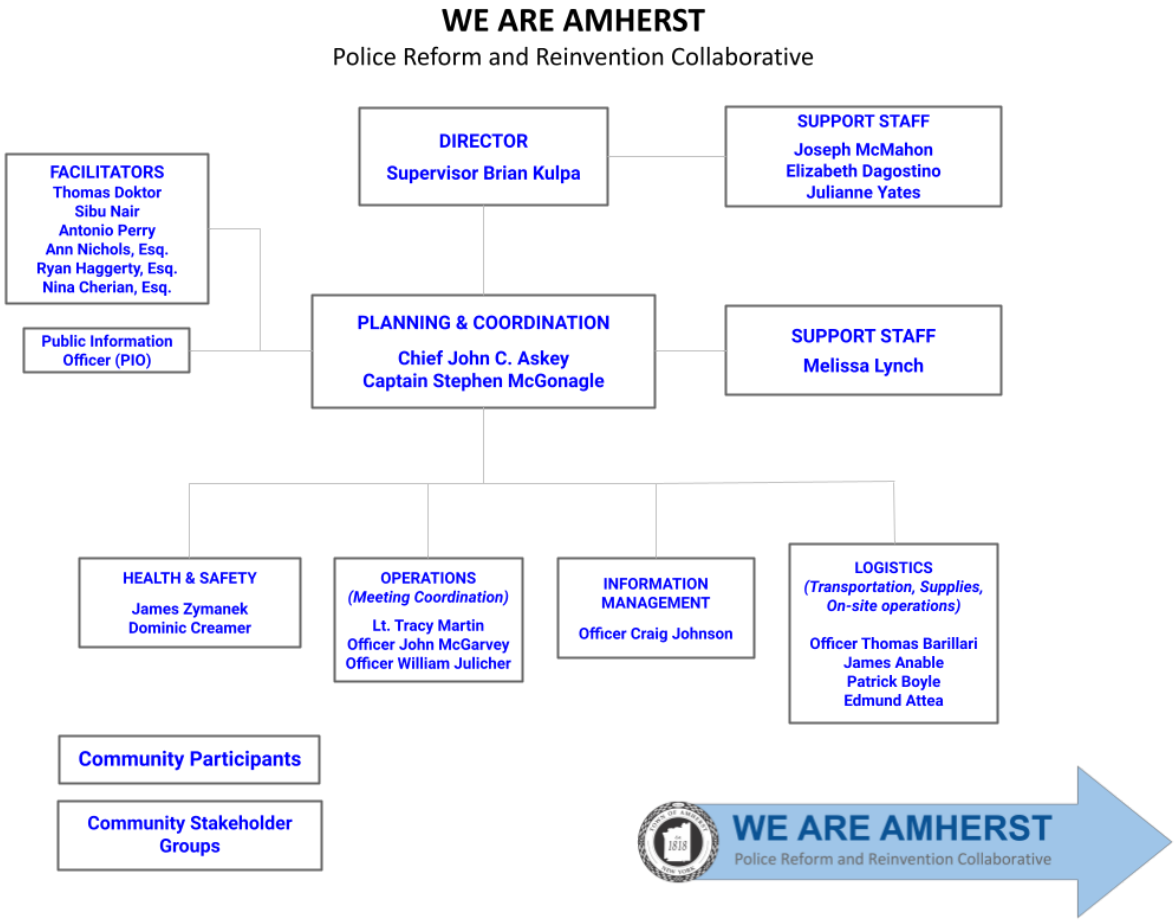
review and updating.

As a result of the Amherst Police Department's participation in the New York State Law Enforcement Accreditation program, all police policies are subject to review and analysis prior to the re-accreditation process and as needed or required otherwise. Policies pertaining to key issues relevant to this text, and as cited in Executive Order No. 203, are provided in the Policy Position Supplemental packet.

6. OUTREACH ORGANIZATION

At the onset of the organizational process, the "We Are Amherst" Collaborative formed an organizational chart to define the Collaborative campaign and roles played by both the Town of Amherst and the Amherst Police Department. Chart 1.0 shows the formal organizational chart used by the Collaborative.

Chart 1.0



Additionally, a comprehensive structure for which all data would be collected was established. For the purposes of this policy position, data includes written surveys (sample provided in supplemental packet, D.1), electronic surveys and any in-person or virtual

discussions attended by any member of the "We Are Amherst Collaborative" team. This structure would eventually form the vehicle of which nearly all of the collected data and action plan initiatives would be delivered. The benefit of using this process to collect and subsequently analyze data was that the collaborative was able to collect rich and well defined data in order to identify topic areas of concern. The use of qualitative data collected via survey, in-person discussion, stakeholder group meetings, and other dialogue-centered methods, proved to produce meaningful and quality data and responses from the community. Community Facilitators, Community Stakeholder Groups and Community Outreach were the primary data drivers used to deliver the qualitative data noted above and became the cornerstones of the comprehensive data collection structure for this policy position.

6.1 COMMUNITY FACILITATORS

Community facilitators were defined as leaders within their own communities, neighborhoods, expertise and/or businesses and those individuals also recognized as leaders of the community at-large. Sibu Nair, Executive Director of the Council of Heritage & Arts of India (CHAI) Organization, Tom Doktor, retired FBI Supervisory Special Agent, Antonio Perry, Principal of Sweet Home High School, Ann Nichols, Esq., Amherst Town Prosecutor, Ryan Haggerty, Esq., Erie County District Attorney's Office and Nina Cherian, Esq., Public Defender, were all community facilitators for this initiative. The role of a community facilitator required attendance at several police organized workshops, engagement with the community at-large during public outreach events and public comment forums and virtual/in-person stakeholder meetings.

6.2 COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

Community stakeholder groups were identified and formed to assist the Collaborative with obtaining outreach goals, to facilitate strong relationships with the community at-large and to further address the needs of community members. The following stakeholder groups were formed at the onset of organization: Religious and Faith based, Cultural based, Education/Academic (including higher educational institutions- local colleges & universities), Disabled and Impaired, Youth & Family Services, Social Services/Mental Health, Business owners, Homeowner and Neighborhood Associations, Amherst Police Union and the Legal Community. The members of these groups were identified and contacted by the Collaborative team with regard to participation. Many of the members included additional community leaders, as well as individuals who came forward and wished to volunteer to participate. Community stakeholder groups met for a group discussion and members of the Collaborative team were available for post-meeting follow-up and further discussions.

6.3 COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Community outreach was conducted by the Amherst Police Department and the Town of Amherst as a collaborative effort to organize several public pop-up events. These events, based on COVID-19 compliant guidelines and regulations for event gatherings, were held in public spaces such as a shopping center parking lot, convenience/grocery store parking lots, public parks and grocery store lobbies where permission for use was granted. A sample survey along with a list of all of the community outreach events held has been provided in the Policy Position Supplemental Packet.

7. QUALITATIVE DATA AND TOPIC AREAS

As a result of all data drivers described in Section 6, this Policy Position and subsequent data compilation, a qualitative data analysis was conducted to identify common patterns, themes and broad community issues. In this section, such commonalities will be introduced in the form of topic areas in which the Collaborative has identified as areas where action may be taken. For the purposes of this document and to protect the identity of the participants who wish to remain anonymous, included narratives may refer to individual participants as "Participant." Each topic area is accompanied by a narrative or reflection from a related participant. Survey data has been organized in the form of word clouds to visually represent the various topic areas acknowledged to be more common among some participants. Corresponding data in the form of word clouds can be found in the Policy Position Supplemental Packet.

7.1 Hiring Practices

Several survey results indicated some members of the community felt that the hiring practices of the Amherst Police Department should align with the intent to broaden the diversity of the police department. During discussions with the Higher Education Stakeholder Group, it was noted that, while the current hiring practices derive from civil service standards; perhaps there were alternate avenues in which interested individuals may seek in order to be considered for a position with the Amherst Police Department. Additionally, it was noted that the civil service hiring practices often naturally or unnaturally discount minorities and other individuals who may not have access to the resources required to learn about opportunities and/or access to testing sites. The hiring of sworn and unsworn police personnel is conducted in accordance with New York State

Civil Service Law. Employment is based on civil service testing, job-specific requirements and Town of Amherst residency requirements. Further information on Civil Service Laws and Regulations can be found by visiting the New York State Civil Service website https://www.cs.ny.gov and the Erie County Department of Civil Service website https://www2.erie.gov/employment.

In a discussion with "Participant A" at an outdoor community pop-up event, a member of the Collaborative team noted the following communication: "Participant A" described a personal background in military service and noted additional law enforcement training. "Participant A" was interested in learning more about the hiring process of the Amherst Police Department, but was not sure of where to begin. During the discussion, "Participant A" suggested an increase in communication and outreach with former and current military service members. Such extra effort may be beneficial to assist in recruitment to law enforcement positions. Additionally, an increase in communication with regard to hiring practices, standards and civil service opportunities may assist the Police Department in recruitment of individuals with existing experience and training, in particular those interested applicants with military experience or similar.

This particular narrative, as it relates to hiring practices, was echoed by participants in other groups as well, including the Higher Education Stakeholder Group, and the Educational Stakeholder Group. For those groups, students and educators also sought increased communications of the current hiring standards and policies as an action item to address the needs of the community, as well as to foster increased awareness and engagement of the hiring practices.

7.2 Community Policing

During nearly all of the stakeholder meetings, as well as in-person community outreach, the topic of community policing and the lack of a "community presence" were expressed. While many respondents noted that they were pleased with the community presence they did witness, it was also observed that such a presence was not consistent in terms of regularity. In particular, respondents noted a disconnect between the Police Department and the neighborhoods they serve, oftentimes with visibility and interaction only at scheduled events rather than "walking the beat" and interfacing consistently with residents.

During a community outreach pop-up event at a local park, two Collaborative team members spoke to "Participant B" who discussed their own experiences with the Amherst Police. "Participant B" noted that when they initially moved to Amherst, the Police presence in their community was much stronger, adding that they would recognize officers "walking the beat" and engaging with youth in the local parks. This participant reflected on a decrease of this presence and noted that additional community programming within the neighborhoods may assist the Police in furthering their community engagement; in particular where neighborhoods, which are home to minority and cultural groups and a larger youth population, reside. Specifically, this Participant noted that they would be happy to see additional event-based programming such as a "Bike with a Cop" event and other community policing outreach events of this nature.

This narrative was also reflected by several other stakeholder group members; often with members recanting memories of much greater police visibility and engagement within the neighborhoods and parks.

7.3 Racial Profiling/Bias

A major construct of the national discussion on policing in the United States, is the issue of whether or not racism exists within the Amherst Police Department. This was a natural topic of discussion in many of the stakeholder group meetings, as well as the in-person community outreach events. It should be noted that only a small number of participants of this study alleged that they had experienced personal discriminatory bias; however this behavior was not reported to be displayed by any members of the Amherst Police Department. A majority of the participants who had experienced alleged racial profiling or bias in the past relayed narratives and experiences from police departments outside of the Town of Amherst. Nevertheless, there were some participants who felt as though they had been profiled based on their race or ethnicity. For those who had not experienced such personally, the national discussion was something of concern for them; often citing the need to act in a specific way as to protect themselves from potential use of force or violence, in situations where police were present.

In further discussions with "Participant B" at a community outreach event at a local convenience store, they reflected on their experience with moving to Amherst and encountering what they perceived may have been racial profiling or bias. On their way home from working a night shift, "Participant B" expressed concern that they had been pulled over solely based on their race and that such had happened more than once. "Participant B" noted that while the interactions with the Officer were amiable, there was concern for the reason in which they had been stopped and whether or not it was related to an offense or based on their race.

This narrative was again echoed within additional stakeholder groups. It was brought to the attention of the Collaborative that at times a person of color or minority alleged to have made a call to the police and upon arrival the officer would make an inaccurate assumption with regard to the caller, and speak with the caucasian individual first before assessing the role of each individual and/or speaking with the person of color or minority. This topic area will be addressed in the action plan to reflect additional training needed with regard to dispatch and officer communication.

The Amherst Police Department has been proactive with regards to bias, racial profiling, and procedural justice. Numerous racial bias and procedural justice training courses have been completed by Departmental personnel prior to this directive from the Governor. In April of 2016, four (4) Supervisors attended a "Train-the-Trainer" course entitled "Fair and Impartial Policing." They then trained the entire Amherst Police Department on this topic at their Fall In-Service Training. In the September/October of 2020, two (2) Supervisors attended a "Train-the-Trainer" course which focused solely on procedural justice. In the Spring of 2021, the entire Amherst Police Department is scheduled to be trained on this topic. These training courses emphasized and focused on human decency and compassion for others. The thirty-three (33) Supervisors of the Police Department also participated in a New York State Division of Criminal Justice Service webinar entitled "Perspectives on Police Reform." This webinar focused on the following topics; Challenges in 21st Century Policing, National Police Reform, and Institutionalizing Procedural Justice. The Amherst Police Department is dedicated to ensuring its officers have the knowledge and training necessary to perform at the highest level when performing their job.

7.4 Mental Health Training

During nearly all of the community stakeholder meetings, as well as in-person community outreach events, there were an overwhelming number of respondents who noted their desire to see more training, in particular as it relates to mental health advocacy and awareness. Due to the sensitive nature of this topic, and in order to protect the privacy of all community members and stakeholder group members, specific quotes and narratives have not been provided; however, issues relating to the topic area will be noted in this section, and addressed in the corresponding action plan.

During the Mental Health Awareness stakeholder group meeting, it was noted that all the participants felt it was important for the Amherst Police Department to continue to work together with local mental health professionals and advocates. The overwhelming response to the question of whether or not the participating professionals felt the Amherst Police Department should continue to be involved with issues and/or disputes with regard to mental health, was one of absolute majority. All of the participants indicated that the involvement of the Amherst Police Department on such calls was both welcomed, and beneficial. It was noted by many participating professionals that the reason for the strong, positive response, was due to the existence of highly trained professionals in the Amherst Police Department, and their communication skills and ability to connect with community members and professionals and mental health advocates.

The Superintendent of Amherst Central Schools, also provided some insight and suggestions into mental health training. During an educational group stakeholder meeting, it was suggested that the Student Resource Officers (SROs) be cross trained with the educators with regard to mental health and cultural awareness of their district's

demographic population. Such training would be a collaborative effort of the school district and the Police Department to fill in gaps in training which address issues relating to the youth and their families.

Discussions of the mental health, and access to professional resources, of the Amherst Police Department Personnel, was also noted during this stakeholder meeting, as well as among collaborative members. While current procedure and policy affords Amherst Police Department personnel access to such professional resources, further discussions included the potential to develop and adopt additional programming to meet the needs of officers and other personnel who may be experiencing mental health crises. This are of discussion will be addressed in the corresponding action plan.

7.4.1 Disability Awareness

Members from the Disabled and Impaired Advocacy Stakeholder Group shared stories and concerns with regard to lack of training as it relates to service animals, language and specific impairments such as communication with the deaf and blind communities. It should be noted that the Amherst Police Department was one of the first police departments in New York State to have completed the New York State Disability Awareness Training. Additional remarks and narratives included the discussion of access to mental health services for individuals who have been prosecuted, as well as for the sworn and unsworn employees of the Police Department.

Also during the Disability and Impaired Advocacy Stakeholder meeting, "Participant C" noted the need for additional training as it relates to individuals with disabilities and their unique and/or specific needs. "Participant C" provided an example of the need for continued communications post-incident. During an alleged incident where "Participant C"

had placed a call to the Police Department to report a harassment, the follow-up was lacking in terms of additional support. During and after this incident, this Participant continued to receive calls and/or threats from the person harassing them and it was their opinion that there was little police interaction beyond the initial call and a brief follow up. "Participant C" expressed the need for increased communication after an incident had occurred and/or more specific support for those individuals with disabilities.

7.5 Town Court Access

Prior to the commencement of the "We Are Amherst" initiative, it was noted by several community members that access to the Town Court has been an issue; in particular, for individuals not residing within the Town of Amherst. Such lack of access was also noted by members of the Higher Education Stakeholder Group, some of which have limited access to private transportation. This topic issue implores the larger issue of the lack of public transportation town-wide and lack of a town-wide transportation plan and accessible infrastructure. Other stakeholder group members echoed similar issues with their inability to present themselves for a court hearing due to the lack of public transportation access.

The Town of Amherst recognizes the issues relating to the lack of public transportation access to the Town Court and the need for additional advocacy. In addition, the Town of Amherst supports advocacy for a town-wide public transportation plan which includes forming partnerships with both public and private transportation providers. The Town of Amherst also recognizes the limited infrastructure for pedestrian and bicycle traffic currently leading to the Town Court. The Town also recognizes the need for improvement and expansion of accessibility on its own property.

Town Court access issues are not limited to transportation and accessibility. There

is a need for on-site storage for individual's personal belongings to safely store those belongings for those individuals utilizing public transportation that may not be taken into the Town Court building. The current Town Court policy does not allow for individuals to carry backpacks, large bags, cell phones or other personal belongings into the building.

8. TOWN OF AMHERST TOPIC AREA POLICY STATEMENTS

Town of Amherst Policy Statement - Hiring Practices

The Town of Amherst would like to formally provide a statement with regard to additional action(s) to be taken by the Town to address the topic of hiring practices, and to provide additional support for the prepared corresponding Amherst Police Department Action. The Town of Amherst is committed to working with state and local representatives to advocate for changes to Civil Service Laws and standards, as well as support of additional civil service testing dates and improved access to testing sites.

Town of Amherst Policy Statement - Court Access

The Town of Amherst would like to formally provide a statement with regard to additional action(s) to be taken by the Town to address Town Court access of which they have jurisdictional responsibility. With regard to court access issues discussed during stakeholder meetings and community outreach; the Town of Amherst will continue to work with the Court, as well as the Amherst Police Department, to advocate for better public access to Court, as well as recommend and advocate for more online options. With regard to public transportation access, the Town of Amherst supports advocacy for a town-wide public transportation plan, including forming partnerships with both public and private transportation providers. Finally, the Town of Amherst will advocate for and support the purchase of a locker bank to be located in the main court building, and accessible to court and town guests to utilize.

9. CONTINUED ENGAGEMENT

Upon the conclusion of initial public community outreach events, stakeholder group meetings and facilitator meetings, the “We Are Amherst'' Collaborative conducted additional meetings with a few stakeholder groups. The additional meetings were conducted with the following groups: the Social Services/Mental Health group, the Disabled and Impared group and Amherst Police Union. The purpose of these additional meetings was to present a drafted policy position and to accept feedback and opportunity for additional input.

Additional outreach to other stakeholder groups and Collaborative facilitators was also completed providing an extra layer of transparency throughout the reform process. All participants were provided with a copy of the Policy Position and resulting Action Plan and given ample opportunity to comment on both documents. All comments, criticisms and suggestions were considered in drafting this final document for submission to the State.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of analysis of qualitative data, Collaborative discussions and meetings, and continued community engagement, the "We Are Amherst" Police Reform Collaborative makes the following recommendations for approval and adoption by the Town of Amherst Town Board:

The Amherst Police Department will draft and submit for consideration and adoption, the approval of a Police Reform Action Plan to address topic areas of concern noted in this Policy Position. The Action Plan should further define issues found relevant to community members and note specific short and long term planning and action to be taken.

Recommended policy adaptations, changes and action items may include, but are not limited to, the retention and further development of community stakeholder groups and their continued role in participation in policy efficacy, the reform/adaptation of policy language and standard procedure as it relates to dispatch and officer communications, a full review of police complaint process and specific action, if any, to be taken.

These recommendations support the analysis of data collected during stakeholder meetings and community outreach efforts, as well as personal narratives and conversations between We Are Amherst Collaborative members and community members who wish to remain anonymous. These recommendations are in no way orders or directives, but rather suggestions of actions relating to topic areas which the Amherst Police Department may encounter.

11. CONCLUSION

The “We Are Amherst” Collaborative would like to thank the community at-large for participating in this study and process and for the continued engagement as the resulting Action Plan is further developed. At the conclusion of this study, and during data analysis, it became clear that the Town of Amherst Police Department has gone above and beyond to set policies, provide training, and effectively use the accreditation review process to continually monitor issues and complaints, and engage and support the community. Such actions support the Amherst Police Department in continuing to be leaders of professionalism within the law enforcement field. It is the belief of this Collaborative that with continued active community engagement, policy reviews and transparency between the Town of Amherst, the Amherst Police Department and future Collaborative work, that goals and actions taken will strengthen our entire community and the relationships in which we take great pride.