



Public Safety Committee on Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative

Report and Plan

DRAFT

March 10, 2021

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Introduction

On June 12, 2020, Governor Cuomo issued an [Executive Order](#) requiring each local government in the State to adopt a policing reform plan by April 1, 2021. The Village of Ballston Spa responded by convening a committee of village residents to review the Order, assess the Ballston Spa Police Department, and make recommendations presented in this report for consideration by the Ballston Spa community and Board of Trustees. This report, once ratified by the Board, will be submitted to the State Budget Director by April 1, 2021. Village adoption of this plan is a condition of allocation of State aid.

Committee members

- Lori Acee (Chairperson)
- Susannah Amiteye
- Kelli Gregory
- Ray Otten
- Lorri Riggs
- Joe Stapf

Additional participants

- Larry Woolbright, Ballston Spa Village Mayor
- David Bush, Chief of the Ballston Spa Police Department

Goal and purpose

The goal of the Ballston Spa Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative is to engage in a constructive and inclusive conversation about policing in Ballston Spa and explore opportunities in regard to how we create safety in our community. The purpose of Governor Cuomo's Executive Order #203 is to foster trust, fairness and legitimacy within communities throughout our state and to address any racial and disproportionate policing of communities of color.

Law Enforcement Overview

The Ballston Spa Police Department comprises 3 full-time police officers plus the Police Chief. The Police Chief has recently moved to a part-time, administrative role. There are 18 officers total on staff, including part-time employees.

There are two police officers on duty at all times in two patrol cars. Their primary activities are proactive patrol, including traffic enforcement, crowd control and community interactions, as

well as reactive calls responding to 911 for motor vehicle accidents, unattended deaths and domestic disputes.

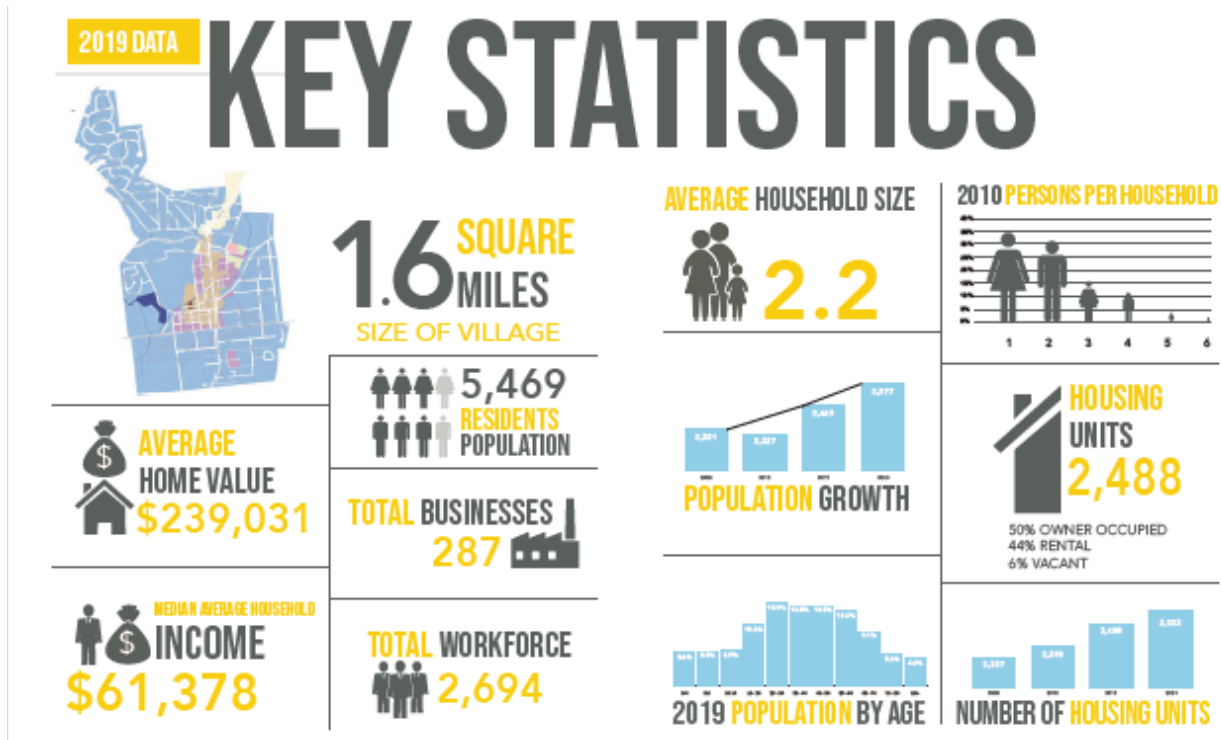
Mental health calls have increased significantly over the last 9 months during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Police Department partners with Saratoga County and other resources to support mental health needs.

The Police Department also frequently responds to calls related to substance abuse/overdose and homelessness.

During the summer, the Police Department normally conducts crowd control at the fairgrounds, where events regularly convene 5,000 to 15,000 people. Police officers are typically deployed there at a ratio of 1 to every 500 event attendees.

Village Demographics

Excerpted from the Village of Ballston Spa Economic Development Plan, pages 10-11.



Population by Race/Ethnicity (page 36)

2019 Census Data	
Total	5,470
White Alone	91.1%
Black Alone	1.7%
American Indian Alone	0.3%
Pacific Islander Alone	0.1%
Some Other Race Alone	1.1%
Two or More Races	3.7%
Hispanic Origin	4.7%
Diversity Index	24.3

Data Notes: Persons of Hispanic Origin may be of any race. The Diversity Index measures the probability that two people from the same area will be from different race/ethnic groups.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2019 and 2019 Esri converted Census 2000 data into 2010 geography.

Committee Work Process and Expectations

When this Executive Order was provided to our committee, it was accompanied by a 135-page book of suggestions, ideas, best practices and topics to consider as part of our review and plan, the Police Reform Workbook.

Most of the items and a large part of the process is directly related to incidents that took place across our country involving communities and law enforcement that are reported to have bias, whether they be race, religion, gender, etc. The need to have unbiased interaction and a collaborative approach to successful policing is imperative for public safety and for public confidence in policing service.

Our committee believes from insights gathered by thorough and exhaustive conversations with the Chief of Police, the community at large, and by a detailed look at our demographics, that we have a police organization that strives to be a good community partner, and many of the items proposed are already a part of daily operations. There were a few items that could improve the organizational approach and documentation processes, which are included both in our recommendations and in detailed minutes available to the public and attached to this plan.

Executive Order Goals and Objectives

1. Review the needs of the community served by its police agency, and evaluate the department's current policies and practices.
2. Recommend and establish policies that allow police to effectively and safely perform their duties.
3. Involve the entire community in the discussion.
4. Offer time for public comment and plan review during meeting process and by community survey.
5. Present the plan to the legislative body to ratify or adopt it.
6. Certify adoption of the plan and submit to the State Budget Director on or before April 1, 2021.

The members of the Committee were asked to provide insight and perspective critically important to this work. They were provided with reading materials to review in advance of meetings as well as a resource guide of materials to explore on their own.

The committee includes a diverse group of people representing a variety of institutions, community organizations and neighborhoods. This work was approached with a deep sense of civic duty to our residents. The differing life experiences of our committee members really helped to make for a strong group for this purpose. We felt it was important to draw on those experiences to evaluate what needs are critical in our community.

Members of the outside community were invited to discuss various topics: Director for the Sheriff's Dept. 911 Call Center operations and a Ballston Spa Business and Professional Association (BSBPA) board member to offer best practices for community-based surveys.

In addition to the members of the committee, community members were invited to attend all Zoom meetings and to offer public comment.

Committee Meetings

The Committee met on Wednesdays at 7pm on Zoom as per the meetings listed below.

Meeting Date	Discussion Topics
November 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introductions• Review of Committee charge• Discussion of the functions of the police in Ballston Spa (pp 9-19 in NYS Resource Guide[NYSRG])
November 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Functions of police (continuation)• Discussion of resources needed by police in Ballston Spa (pp 19-21 in NYSRG)
December 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Guest Steve Gordon, Director for the Sheriff's Dept. 911 Call Center invited to discuss and answer any questions about the 911 process.• Procedural justice and community policing (pp 22- 50 in NYSRG)• Discuss questions submitted by Committee members for draft community survey.

January 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guest Dave Womer, BSBPA board member invited to discuss draft of survey questions. • Leadership, culture and accountability (pp 51 – 81 in NYSRG)
January 13 January 27 February 10 February 24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Report • Village Survey
March 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft report review
March 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation of report to Village Board (<i>planned</i>)

The first four meetings explored a range of topics, including:

Policies, Standard Operating Procedures and General Orders

This working group reviewed and evaluated current BSPD policies and operating procedures. We discussed recommendations regarding changes, additions and/or the elimination of BSPD policies.

Civilian Oversight

This working group reviewed existing BSPD's collection and dissemination of police data, including any additional areas impacting policing transparency and accountability to the community. We will make recommendations regarding these matters.

Police Department Functions

This working group reviewed calls for service, officer-initiated actions and crime and demographic data to determine the scope of functions currently performed by BSPD. We also reviewed available data related to homelessness, mental illness, school interactions, addiction, poverty and domestic violence and discussed recommendations regarding the scope of services and any alternative models for intervention. This group will identify other agencies and service providers that could positively aid or impact the work of the BSPD i.e. mental health services etc.

Community Safety and Restorative Justice

This working group reviewed BSPD's harm reduction strategies, restorative and procedural justice models (including discussion of any discriminatory or bias-based stops, searches and arrests), problem-oriented policing, and hot spot policing.

Recruitment, Retention, Promotion, Training and Officer Development

This working group reviewed the effectiveness of current recruitment efforts, training, including implicit bias awareness training and de-escalation training, and ongoing professional development training. We will make recommendations for changes necessary to ensure that the BSPD hires, trains, promotes and evaluates officers in a way that builds trust and strong police – community relations. We also discussed issues of officer wellness and well-being.

Please see minutes of each meeting attached at the end of this plan for full meeting details and discussions.

Survey of Village Residents

The Executive order required collaboration by the public on this effort. In addition to holding meetings open to the public, the Committee developed an 18-question survey that was distributed electronically by Survey Monkey and in hard copy. The survey was promoted on social media and through word of mouth. There was a 12-day response window. Over that time, 99 responses were collected and compiled.

Respondents represented:

- 99 residents of the Village of Ballston Spa
- 77% of the responses were from residents aged 40 and older, though there were responses from every age range 18 and above
- 71% of respondents were female
- 74% of respondents owned their own home

Responses are highlighted below in graphs and percentages. The Committee has reviewed all responses to open ended questions and compiled summaries below representing common responses. The complete survey results are attached to this report.

Note: Several responses included details on specific incidents within Ballston Spa. This information was shared with the Chief of Police. However, completing this survey does not constitute formal notification to the Police Department. To submit any information or a formal complaint to the PD, please call the Police Department at 518-885-5033.

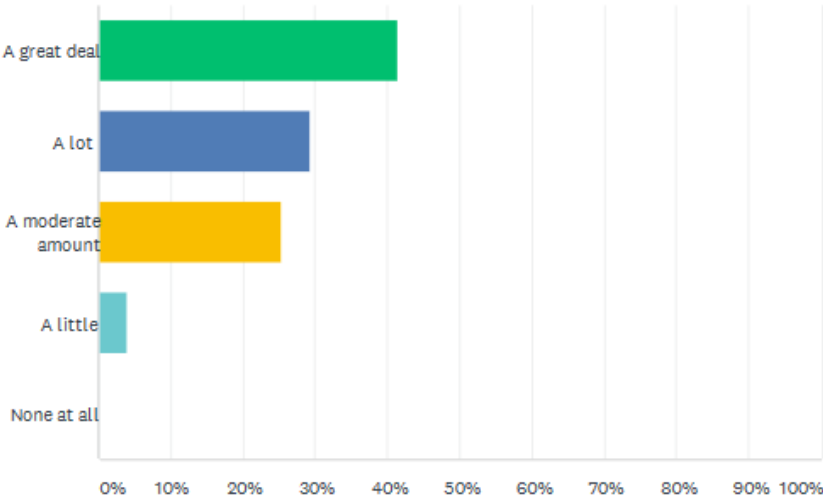
Q2 How safe do you consider yourself in Ballston Spa

Answered: 99 Skipped: 0

	NOT SAFE	SAFE	VERY SAFE	TOTAL
How safe do you feel at night in your home?	1.01% 1	37.37% 37	61.62% 61	99
How safe do you feel walking at night in downtown Ballston Spa?	11.58% 11	57.89% 55	30.53% 29	95
How safe do you feel out alone at night walking in your immediate neighborhood?	12.63% 12	47.37% 45	40.00% 38	95
How safe do you feel out alone during the day walking in your immediate neighborhood?	3.06% 3	21.43% 21	75.51% 74	98

Q3 Please rate your level of trust in the Ballston Spa Police Department

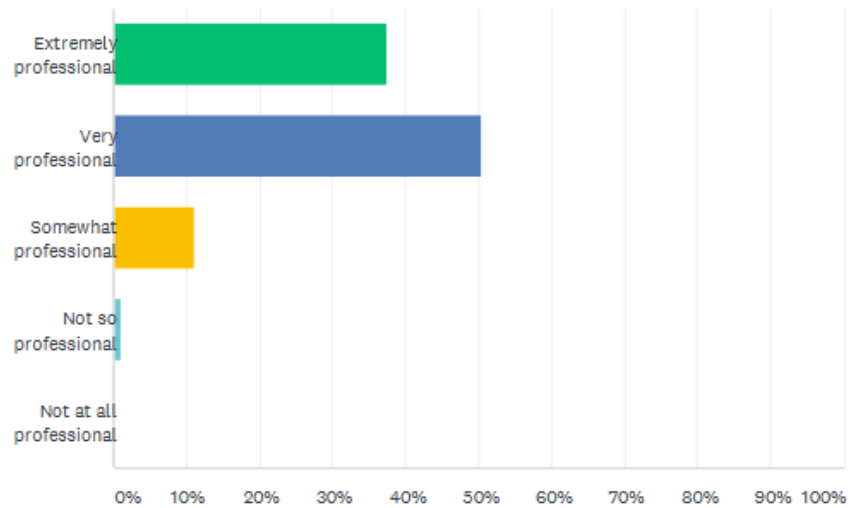
Answered: 99 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
A great deal	41.41%	41
A lot	29.29%	29
A moderate amount	25.25%	25
A little	4.04%	4
None at all	0.00%	0
TOTAL		99

Q4 In a situation where you required help or assistance from the Police Department, to what extent do you feel the responding police officer would treat you with respect and professionalism?

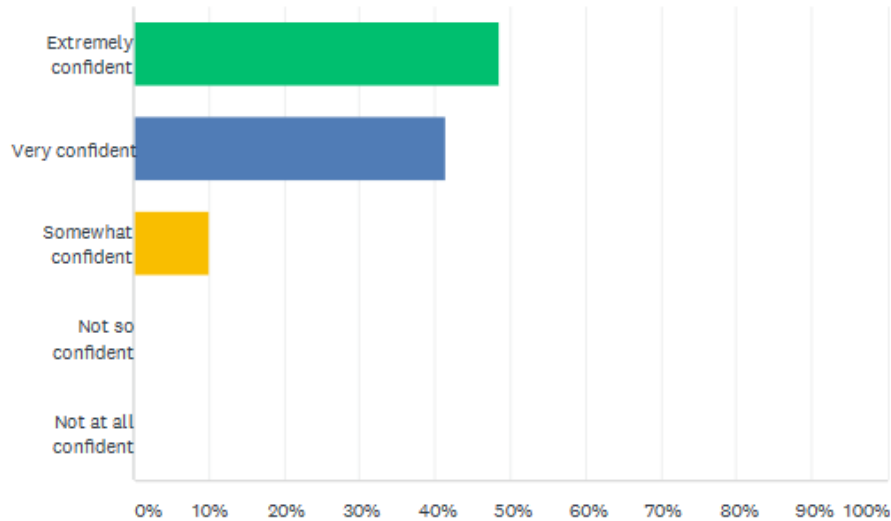
Answered: 99 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Extremely professional	37.37%	37
Very professional	50.51%	50
Somewhat professional	11.11%	11
Not so professional	1.01%	1
Not at all professional	0.00%	0
TOTAL		99

Q5 Please rate your level of confidence that the Ballston Spa Police Department would provide needed assistance upon a call to 911

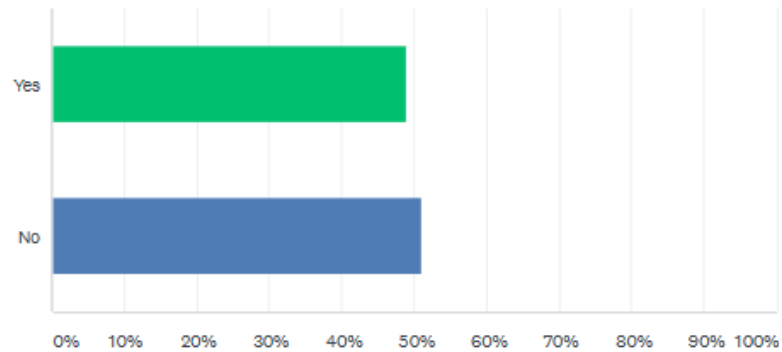
Answered: 99 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Extremely confident	48.48%	48
Very confident	41.41%	41
Somewhat confident	10.10%	10
Not so confident	0.00%	0
Not at all confident	0.00%	0
TOTAL		99

Q6 In your experience, do you have any reason to believe Ballston Spa would benefit from additional police officers?

Answered: 98 Skipped: 1



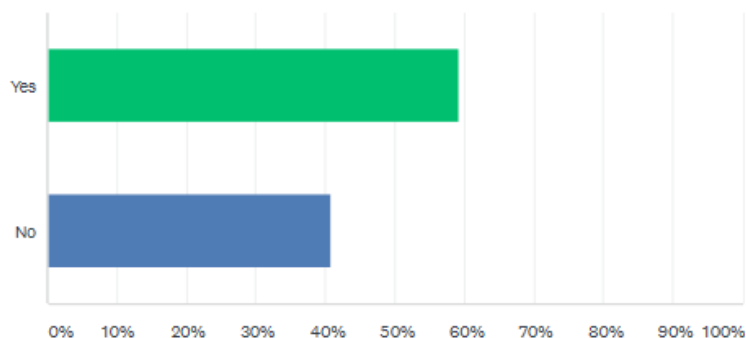
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	48.98%	48
No	51.02%	50
TOTAL		98

Summary of responses:

Fairly even split, sense that some would increase the level of police officers, but equally as many were satisfied with the current level of officers.

Q7 In your experience, do you have any reason to believe Ballston Spa would benefit from additional training for its police officers?

Answered: 98 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	59.18%	58
No	40.82%	40
TOTAL		98

Summary of responses:

- Recommended training included:
 - Domestic violence
 - Drug/alcohol dependency
 - Racial sensitivity/bias
 - Crisis intervention and de-escalation
 - Mental health issues and special needs cases

Q8 As the Ballston Spa Police Force is charged with enforcement of the existing laws of where we live, what is your opinion of the effectiveness with which they enforce those laws on an everyday basis? Please cite any examples you have witnessed firsthand.

Answered: 62 Skipped: 37

Summary of responses:

- "Efficient" to the best of their ability
- There when we need them
- Speeding and traffic control is top enforcement issue witnessed

Q9 In regards to the local laws and ordinances of Ballston Spa that do not make sense to you, how do you participate in affecting changes to those policies?

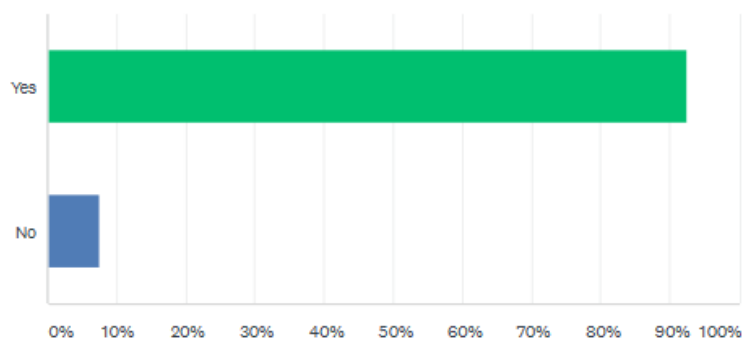
Answered: 58 Skipped: 41

Summary of responses:

- Attending local government meetings
- Voting for preferred candidates based on issues
- Not enough knowledge of laws, or no opinion

Q10 In your opinion, is the Ballston Spa Police Force watchful of and do they exhibit responsible care concerning our local laws and ordinances as well as those of the County, State, etc.?

Answered: 93 Skipped: 6



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	92.47%	86
No	7.53%	7
TOTAL		93

Q11 Do you feel that having more officers dedicated to Community Policing roles would be worth the extra expense to the Village's budget? These officers would be involved in roles such as foot or bicycle patrol during daytime or early evening hours, at special events in the Village, working with the school's resource officers, or meeting with senior citizens groups, civic groups, assisting at food pantries, church traffic issues, etc.

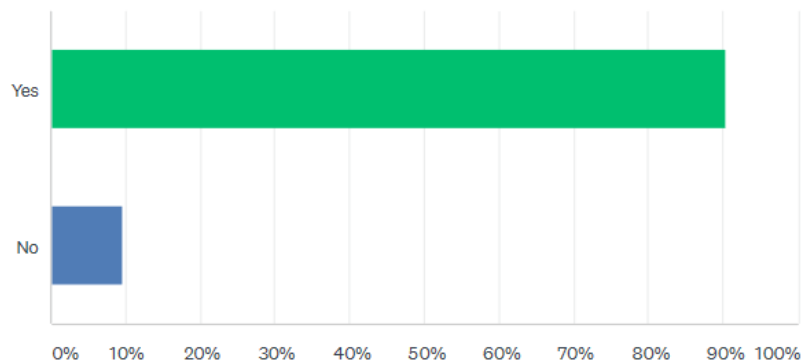
Answered: 78 Skipped: 21

Summary of responses:

- Clear majority responded "yes," that the additional expenses would be worth it
- Caveats to the responses included that it would depend on the cost to villagers
- More visibility of the police department on foot or on bicycle would be beneficial

Q12 In your opinion, does Community policing help in crime reduction or building the public's confidence in the safety of living in our Village?

Answered: 93 Skipped: 6



Summary of responses:

- The community gets to know and trust the officers serving the community and the officers get to know and understand individuals and issues in the community.
- Increased, visible police presence would help with crime reduction
- Having more citizens involved with contributing to the community and caring for neighbors will help with safety in the Village
- Community policing helps in crimes reduction and building confidence and trust

Q13 While Police officers all receive extensive on-going training throughout their careers in order to deal with a variety of difficult situations, in your opinion, should these same officers be offered adequate health and safety measures concerning coping strategies, stress management, and dealing with other mental health issues that may affect them?

Summary of responses:

- They have a stressful job and should be given the necessary tools to help them cope.
- What our officers see every single day is enough to break strong people. It is our job to support them so they can keep us safe.

Q14 Do you have any suggestions for the Ballston Spa Police Department?

Summary of responses:

- Keep up the good work
- Keep providing safety and security for our village
- Always be willing to learn more

Committee Recommendations

Upon thorough review of the available materials, discussions over the series of meetings and analysis of the survey, the Committee has aligned on its recommendations for the Police Department. These recommendations do not represent any major corrective measures or reforms to the Police Department. Rather, they outline standards to be adopted by the Police Department and institutionalized going forward, regardless of leadership or staffing.

Police Department Functions:

- The Police Department does not currently have a written handbook or policies in place for reference by department members. For that reason, the committee recommends establishing a Mission Statement and written policies for consistent training and ongoing reference
 - Note: A new initiative to update and formalize PD policies is currently underway
- In order to formalize the goal of the Collaborative to “address any racial and disproportionate policing of communities of color,” the Committee recommends incorporate language of inclusivity into the PD Mission Statement: *The Police Department is committed to protecting all citizens of the Village of Ballston Spa regardless of race, color, gender, sexual orientation, religion, disability or age.*
- The Committee recommends instituting a computer-assisted system for compiling and retaining records to minimize individual effort and ensure accurate record keeping
 - Note: A new CAD system has been approved by the County and is expected to be incorporated in the coming year
- To ensure ongoing community involvement and improved communications, the Committee recommends periodic surveys or meetings open to the public to solicit input
- To ensure the PD is practicing fair and open recruitment and hiring practices, the Committee recommends that open or potential positions are posted publicly to upholding current inclusivity and the strongest candidate pool

Training and Officer Development:

- Currently all police officers go through basic training at the Police Academy prior to entering the police force. In addition, the Committee recommends ongoing training in several areas:
 - De-escalation training for the safety of police officers and members of the community
 - Cultural diversity training
 - In recognition that police officers themselves may face mental health challenges, and that addressing mental health situations can be challenging, the Committee recommends training on both mental health self-care and training on working with community members with mental health or special needs
 - Note: The Committee has identified a program entitled AWARE – Mental Health 101 workshop that is supported by a local capital region grant. This program is open for both officers and the community

- The Committee recommends surveying the police officers to gain a better understanding of what the community can do to support them better. The goals would include identifying meaningful, ongoing training needs.
- In order to ensure the police officers continue to be perceived as leaders in the community, the Committee recommends developing a written policy on culture and on duty/off duty behavior and appropriate activities
- The Committee recommends a regular evaluation process for all police officers to assess performance and feedback, and provide specific development steps and measures

Note: The Village Police Department has recently engaged with the Saratoga County Sheriff's Department to conduct joint training going forward.

Additionally:

- The Committee recommends continuing their role as a standing committee on an ongoing basis to serve as an advisory council and community advocacy group, meeting at least semi-annually

Commitment to 21st Century Policing

The committee upholds the values reflected in the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing and would like to note them.

- Building Trust and Legitimacy
- Policy and Oversight
- Technology and Social Media
- Community Policing and Crime Reduction
- Officer Training and Education
- Officer Safety and Wellness

In Closing

We will continue to evolve based on our community input and changes in laws, the criminal justice systems and financial times.

Participating in this process as committee members and with the input and insights of both Ballston Spa Chief of Police David Bush, Mayor Larry Woolbright, and our community members here in the village was an honor.

We respect everyone, regardless of race, sex, religion or personal preference.

Overall, our feedback from the community and stakeholders was very favorable; something we are proud of.

Our sense was Chief Bush and the police force in the village of Ballston Spa believe in integrity, professionalism, fair treatment and quality service. As a committee, we acknowledge the hard work and years of dedication given that has gotten us to where we are. Our sights were set on addressing what needed change while not making change for the sake of it, but rather for important and valuable reasons that benefit the community and the police department together.

Attachments

Meeting Documents (links below)

1. Committee Meeting Notes, November 4, 2020
2. Committee Meeting Notes, November 18, 2020
3. Committee Meeting Notes, December 2, 2020
4. Committee Meeting Notes, January 6, 2021
5. Committee Meeting Notes, January 13, 2021
6. Committee Meeting Notes, January 27, 2021
7. Committee Meeting Notes, February 10, 2021
8. Committee Meeting Notes, February 24, 2021

Resources

NYS Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative: <https://www.albanyny.gov/641/Police-Reform-Reinvention-Collaborative>

Village of Ballston Spa Economic Development Plan: <https://saratogapartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Ballston-Spa-EDP-FINAL-min.pdf>

Documents shared from BSPD: Use of Force Policy, Mental Illness or Crisis Policy, Bicycle Patrol Policy, Taser Use Report

The President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing:
https://cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/taskforce/taskforce_finalreport.pdf

Committee on Police Reform and Reinvention

Meeting: November 4, 2020

Meeting Minutes

Recorded by Susannah Amiteye

Attendees:

- Mayor Larry Woolbright
- Police Chief David Bush
- Lori Acee
- Susannah Amiteye
- Kelly Gregory
- Ray Otten
- Lorri Riggs
- Joe Stapf

Introductions

Mayor Woolbright: The Governor's order specified his involvement in the Committee. Goals for the Committee are for us to help set up the policies and procedures to help the police department. There are few policies at this time. One of our primary recommendations might be a list of what policies the department should have and what procedural methods they should have, and whether we can help with that.

Lori Acee: Member of the community, on the Library Board. Assistant to the Academic Librarian at Skidmore College. It is a worthy cause for our community. Interested in police agency, community members. It's a good conversation to have, feel honored to participate.

Susannah Amiteye: Lived in Ballston Spa for 14 years, happy to contribute to the Committee. Two children in Middle School, part of a mixed race family. A lot of division across the country between police and communities, hope we can overcome some of those issues in Ballston Spa.

Kelly Gregory: Was invited to participate. No negative experiences with the police. Moved to Ballston Spa 25 years ago. Married with two children (HS and MS). Works as a nurse in a different school district.

Ray Otten: He is a village resident since 1983, in the area since 1974. Executive Director for the Community emergency Corps. Has worked with many current and past officers. Has always been impressed by the police under not ideal conditions. Grew up in Schenectady, gained experience growing up in that type of an area. He has gotten involved in many different things in the village—Rotary, other committees.

Lorri Riggs: Thrilled to be part of this. Active member of the community. Has lived here almost 20 years. Recently moved back to the village. Her son is a senior in high school. Has had a variety of experiences

with the police—both good and troubling. She wants to contribute to improving the interactions. She is the Assistant Dean for Student Success at Skidmore. She has perspectives from her work as well. She would like to find middle ground.

Joe Stapf: Moved to Ballston Spa 6 years ago. Lives at Doubleday Woods. Retired from New York State, employee assistance program. Feels like the liaison between the police and Doubleday Woods. Always satisfied with the results with the police. Nothing but praise for the police.

Chief Bush: Chief of Police. Born in the village, been here 60 years. Has been a police officer for 32 years, chief of police for 4 years. Has been ordered to participate in these committee meetings.

Proceedings

Mayor Woolbright thanked the group. This committee was convened by Executive Order of the Governor. The charge is to:

- Review the needs of the community served by its police agency
- Evaluate the department's current policies and practices
- Establish policies that allow police to safely and effectively conduct their duties
- Involve the entire community in the discussion
- Develop policy recommendations resulting from this review
- Offer a plan for public comment
- Present the plan to the local legislative body to ratify or adopt it
- Certify adoption of the plan to the state budget director on or before April 1, 2021

The NYS Police Reform Resources Guide pages 109-116 has a detailed outline of the process that the state recommendations.

Currently we are at the stage to assess where we are and gather data.

Today we will cover Functions of the police, pages 9-19.

How the police and community engage with one another. Mayor Woolbright proposed that one of the policies could be a policy on how law enforcement interacts with the public, procedural justice. How they treat the public, what the expectations are on how the police interacts with the public.

- Joe: Thinks the police are wonderful, courteous, have his trust. He doesn't see any room for improvement. It's being done very well at present.
- Mayor: We need to have more policies and procedures spelled out and written down
- Ray: This is common among police and emergency services. No policy or guideline for everything that comes at you. A lot is reactive, based on your training. Extremely important to get things down on paper
- Chief: There are not many policies or procedures in writing. We need them. We have to have them. It's a protection for the public and for the officers. It's very time consuming. He has some policies available for review: Use of Force, Domestic Violence, Mental Health, Pursuit Policy, etc. The state has come out with a model policy on the use of deadly force. Currently comparing this policy to the village's. Chief may be able to email these to the Committee members.

- Chief
 - There is no Mission Statement. For the last 20 years, they have developed policies as needed (eg, tasers). His predecessor did not develop any policies, manuals or procedures. There is progress being made
 - 3 full-time police officers plus the Chief. 18 officers. 35 years of service up to 2 years. Part-time staff include County Deputies.
 - The most extreme cases: Double murder/suicide. 6-week old baby was smothered to death.
- Chief on role of police currently
 - Primary activities are: proactive patrol (traffic enforcement, crowd control, interacting with community), reactive (911 calls: **motor vehicle accident**, unattended death, **domestic**). Most of the staff time is on reactive.
 - 20-25 domestics/month
 - Traffic accidents vary, from 0/week to 12/week
 - No less than 2 police officers at any one time in their own vehicles.
 - Self-initiated interventions: primarily traffic enforcement
 - Domestic violence all over town
 - Drug issues: Dept. works closely with DEA task force. Local suspect is often “being turned” so the information is not public
 - Mental health calls have increased 10-fold since Covid. They rely on Saratoga County Mental Health Unit. Our mental health subjects are not getting the help that they need. They are brought home in hours. One person was brought to the Crisis Center 4 times in a weekend. He should have been kept for 72 hours and wasn’t
 - Mental Health is County, Sheriff is County.
- Ray: Emergency Corps is also brought in to help on Mental Health but don’t have a lot of training.
- Kelly: Mental health is a huge problem right now. Very hard to find placements now. Many people are treated out-patient when they should be treated in-patient
- Is there support from other departments (County, State)?
 - Very good cooperation with Sheriff’s Department and NYS Police
 - We also support other departments when needed. Good mutual respect between the agencies
- Police Departments are Village/City (none in Town of Ballston).
- Complaints
 - 1-2 every 3 months would be a lot
 - Chief expects officers to treat the public how they want to be treated. He does not receive complaints about the officers. Common theme: officer was being “mean” or “rude.” No particular units or officers receive those complaints. No common thread in who is making the complaint. Per Chief, 99.9 percent of complaints are from a traffic stop. People don’t like to be stopped and they don’t like to get a ticket. All complaints have been about traffic stops
 - Susannah: One interaction, and the guy was horrible. Nasty, intimidating, mean. In the Village.

- How should police react when someone breaks the law? Civility, courteously, with respect, professionalism
- Should you deploy social service personnel instead of or in addition to police officers?
 - Some things in the manual will not apply to us, and some will not apply to large cities
 - We will not be able to hire mental health professionals. We need to rely on our relationships with the county
 - Other partnerships: Wellsprings, Saratoga County Mental Health (but they don't leave the building; police are on the street)
 - Main goal with Mental Health issues: keeping people from getting hurt, and keep people from hurting themselves
 - Yes, we want police to respond to mental health calls, substance abuse/overdose calls, homeless people
 - Police officers carry Narcan and they have had reversals when you get there quickly. Police can get there quickly and administer Narcan, and EMTs can treat them at that point
 - Homeless population: It's getting cold and they need someplace to go. Police can help. They work with social services for emergency housing, Code Blue, Shelters of Saratoga
- Reduce violence by deploying policing to other programs
 - We don't have other resources. No choice but to rely on County resources for support
 - No specialized units. Everyone patrols.
- Police can respond to all of the calls with the current staff. They have partners to rely on any issues they need help with
- Biggest issue? Training.
- Lori A: Suggests social service messaging or social media messaging to promote social services. Reach out to the community. People don't always know where to go and they call the police in a crisis. Maybe someone in the community would be willing to work on promoting some of these resources to help alleviate the demand on the police.
 - Let the community know who to call
 - Mayor: Could add a section on the Website, and/or put out periodic Facebook posts
 - Lori A: The Library could be a facilitator for a Zoom meeting for the community on all the resources the village offers. How to alleviate strain on police. A Resource Night.
- 911 Calls
 - Saratoga County Dispatch Center handles 911. The Village has no say in how they do their jobs. They get a call and they give it to us. They handle Fire, Ambulance, Police.
 - Sheriff's Dept receives the calls and puts it out to the Deputies
 - The County is looking at their 911 dispatch
 - County could give us an overview of their 911 process during one of these meetings (Steve Gordon—supervisor for 911 Center. Ray to contact him)
- Law Enforcement in schools
 - Sheriff's dept handles that (County); has Resource officers
 - Village police stop by schools, especially Malta Ave and Saint Mary's
- County Committee
 - Meeting at McMaster St Supervisor's Room
 - Open to the public

- Chief to let us know
- Next Meeting is November 18 at 7 pm
 - Agenda: Conclude follow-up on police functions, any resources or information that we need
 - Brainstorm: What else do we need to know in order to decide on our focus for the plan? For instance on roles/functions in order to get started on planning for the final report
- Comment from member of the public, Liz Kormos:
 - Concur with suggestion to connect with the County. Would be good to know if they are looking to add social workers, mental health people since we lean on them for support.

Committee Roles

- Lori Acee accepted role of Committee Chair
- Susannah Amiteye took on role of Committee Secretary

Action Items

- Mayor to send in follow-up:
 - Existing policies
 - Compiled stats on types of calls
 - Police Department budget
- Lori A to send agenda for next meeting on November 18
- Chief Bush to Send information about the County Police Committee meeting
- Susannah to send meeting minutes
- Ray to follow-up with Steve Gordon regarding speaking to us about the 911 process

Committee on Police Reform and Reinvention

Meeting: November 18, 2020

Meeting Minutes

Recorded by Susannah Amiteye

Attendees:

- Mayor Larry Woolbright
- Police Chief David Bush
- Lori Acee (Chairperson)
- Susannah Amiteye
- Kelly Gregory
- Ray Otten
- Joe Stapf

Not in attendance:

- Lori Riggs

Observers: Liz Kormos, Gina Marozzi

Proceedings

Lori Acee: The task tonight is to conclude our review of any functions of the police, and discuss resources needed for the Ballston Spa Police. Pages 19-21 in the Reform and Reinvention guide.

Lori reviews the charge for the committee:

- Review the needs of the community served by its police agency
- Evaluate the department's current policies and practices
- Establish policies that allow police to safely and effectively conduct their duties
- Involve the entire community in the discussion
- Develop policy recommendations resulting from this review
- Offer a plan for public comment
- Present the plan to the local legislative body to ratify or adopt it
- Certify adoption of the plan to the state budget director on or before April 1, 2021

Chief Bush has sent Police Procedures:

- Mental illness or in crisis
- Bicycle Patrol Policy

- Use of Force Policy
- Electronic Control Weapons
- Also, Incidence Report

Mayor also sent NYCOM Survey on Police Reform and Reinvention

We should review staffing levels, budgeting and equipping the police department.

Resourcing

Next set of questions is about resourcing. Chief Bush answered questions:

- What are the staffing needs, and should components be civilianized?
 - Only have Crossing Guards and the Enforcement Officer, who is not a police officer
- Any functions performed by non-uniformed officers?
 - No
- How should the police get involved in crowd control?
 - Normally without the pandemic, we're attached to the Saratoga County fairground. 5K-15K people per day can attend the fair
 - We handle it when it needs to be handled, and we don't have a lot of that here
 - Big talk is the demilitarization and military surplus gear. We don't have any of that. The most we have is a protective vest. We have a non-lethal force shotgun (currently out of service)
 - We react to the crowds and determine:
 - 1. Public safety
 - 2. Participant safety (protest or demonstration)
 - 3. Officer safety
 - Ratio of police officer to crowd: probably 1 police officer to 500 people
- Larry: Police presence was there over the summer during the recent "gatherings" (demonstrations) in town. No situations, smooth. Police officers stand back and observe
 - Susannah: Spoke about the police at the Black Lives matter demonstrations over the summer. Tensions were high, but police were completely appropriate and supportive
- Issues at the Fairground?
 - Normally the events run really smoothly. The only thing is the beer tent during the fair which can become unruly. There are always police at the beer hall
 - Fair also performs their own security to work the gates and crossing gates, but they are not officers
 - State police and County police are at the fair; they have a booth. Usually manned by corrections officers or police dispatchers, not playing an enforcement role
- De-escalation efforts?
 - Chief would like something on de-escalation in the handbook. De-escalation training is handled at the police academy. It needs to be ongoing

Incidence Report

- Chief: The statistics are not reflective of "normal." In the beginning of Covid, there was not a lot to report on. That's very unusual. Half or less of the normal number of calls

- Mental Health is a huge topic right now.
 - We have a core of officers that handle the situation very well. There was an incident with a machete, where an officer could have used deadly physical force but have not resorted to that. Chief is proud of the officers
- Mayor: Looking at the statistics, Jan 2020: 7 MHU calls. Oct 2020: 11 calls.
- Chief: Mental Health is reflective of the community and society, and long winter months. There could be a long stretch with no calls, and then a month with 12
- Acronyms
 - PDMVA—property damage motor vehicle accident
 - PIMVA—personal injury motor vehicle accident
- Domestic/MHU cross-over: Sometimes mental health crosses over into crime (murder-suicide)
- Have you seen any models in other departments where outside MH professionals collaborate with police?
 - One of the issues is that this happens spur of the moment. Not enough time to make a phone call, you have to go.
 - We need to determine: is this person a danger to himself or to anyone else? This needs to be decided quickly
 - Must try to coax that person into mental health voluntarily
 - If they do not go voluntarily, a MH professional must sign an order to take them in involuntarily
 - May not be practical to partner. Decisions are being done quickly

Training

- Should there be refresher training on mental health for police officers?
 - Chief: Would be helpful. These things cost money.
- Mayor: We can afford training. We have made an effort to increase training in all aspects across the Village. Hiring personnel would be another thing.
- Chief: He is a police instructor who can instruct all of these courses. It's hard to get everyone together and pay them. Firearms training needs to be done over 4 days
- NYMIR—insurance company, has online training that officers can do
 - Chief: Does not replace classroom training with role play and feedback, but does serve a purpose
 - Extensive training is available online
- Lori: May be able to do Zoom training in addition to online training
- Lori: Training is available on mental health, domestic violence, autism. Any training can be helpful. Sometimes nice to have a MH professional give feedback. We may have to dig a little deeper to support the police department
- Chief: Online is not enough but may be enough to support

Police Procedures

- Bicycle Patrol
 - We never have 2 road patrols to allow for a third on bicycle; must not be much
 - A lot of times bicycles are deployed during parades or at the fairgrounds. There used to be more of this on bicycle or on foot

- Mayor: Would like to see more of this, interacting with the community or with local businesses
 - Mayor: It's important for us to have a Village Police Department, to have people who know you, who know the community, who are out there on the streets. Would think that that's what we are looking for in a small village
- Kelly: Was always thrilled to see a police officer interact with the kids, left a memorable, positive influence on the kids. Her kids have good memories about this. May not be as available now that resources are tighter.
- Mayor: If you're going to have community who knows the police and vice versa, you need a larger force. It's harder for the part-time officers to develop those relationships. Looking at the budget, the difference is overtime and benefits—both of which only apply to full-time officers. Benefits probably add up to \$25K-\$30K per full-time person. That would be the cost of switching to a more full-time force
- Ray: What would that mean in terms of taxes per year?
 - If we spend \$15K, taxes go up 1%. If we hired 2, that would be 2%
- Chief: Some part-time officers will work up to 20-25 hours/week, others will work 1-2 shifts. Variable. A lot are 300, a lot are 500-600 hours/year
 - Currently have 3 retired officers who work part-time with us (great asset), as well as Sheriff's deputies who work part-time (limited hours)
- Mayor: Does the committee want to recommend more police officers?
 - Joe: It would be nice to have more police officers. But this village should be commended for doing as much as they're doing with limited resources
- Chief: The 101-year old lady would call 911 and request a specific officer and a special coffee
- Chief: The County police (Sherriff) and State police are also reviewing the police procedures in the same way as the committee. All the municipalities are doing this too
- Policies: Should the committee help revamping/updating the current documents?
 - Committee could make recommendations to the Chief about revisions, but not actually write policies
 - Chief: Use of Force Policy: Has to change. In the past, there were things that have been used that are not acceptable anymore. No knee on the back of the head, no chokehold. No use of excessive force—liability for officer and witnesses. The state has come out with a model policy and we should model our policy after theirs. **Mayor will send this out.**
 - The Chief's deadline for updating policies is essentially now.
 - Mental Health policy is up to date
 - Logistically: policies need to be made electronic and consistent formats
- Chief: Need a very detailed manual with policies about everything, protection for police and municipality. In the past, there were no policies or procedures. We are starting from scratch
- Mayor: Working on implementing a plan to allow the chief to spend more time on policy and procedure issues
- Considerations for how our policies would differ from larger municipalities
 - Example: sexual assault falls into felony. Our officer handles from beginning to end. The county officers will not handle from beginning to end, they turn it over to other staff members. We don't have supervisors and investigators to turn it over to

Community involvement

- Lori: The state is pushing for community involvement. As a group, we could think of ways to improve the relationship.
 - Library Community Meeting on Zoom, discussed on Library Board Meeting. Positive connection. The Library Board Members thought it would be great. Something to try. If it helps 5 or 10 people, could be worth it. It's free
 - Chief used to do talks for business association. Preventing robberies, burglaries, what happens if you get held up. Was helpful but need people to come to him to ask
 - Lori: Very helpful for the community to get to know the police force
- Police Station
 - Facilities are humble
 - Library: Facilities refresh made a difference for the library. Could work for the police force as well. Volunteers could paint or help in other ways
 - Joe: No money for improvements in the police department budget
 - Chief: Not complaining about the facilities, and probably new things coming. We came from a tough spot a couple of years ago. It's a work in progress.
- Mayor: We need a comprehensive plan. There are many opportunities for improvement in the Village. Getting our finances fixed has been our first priority. Not sure if we are going to keep the police in that building long-term. Facilities piece is on the minds of the board members
- Mayor: Should we get public input from the larger community?
- Lori: Proposes a basic survey. What would they like to see in the Community? How would they like to connect with the police?
 - Susannah agrees. School has been sending surveys throughout the year. Gives the community an opportunity to contribute. Seems like a good starting point. We could share the information and let the Village know we are conducting this effort
 - Village Board sent a link to Economic Development Plan survey, made it available in hard copy too. Got over 400 replies
 - Lori: Combination of questions from committee and from the Chief/police
 - Susannah: Keep it short, 5-10 questions. Multiple choice and open ended. Draft over the next couple of weeks
 - Send any ideas to Lori in the next 10 days; regroup on 12/2
 - Liz Kormos offered to help with the survey, fielding it, analysis, create the report, include graphs, etc.
- Mayor: Consider public Zoom? Invite the community. Publish the meeting ID and password
- Ray: Steve, 911 dispatcher could come to the next meeting on 12/2 or 1/6, he could speak at the very beginning. Ray will follow-up regarding his availability

Public Comment

- Gina Marozzi: Out of an abundance of caution, having a village official run a questionnaire, might be an issue. Might need a third party to run it
 - Liz has experience with surveys, the data is the data. She has offered to help
 - Lori clarification to Gina: A village official should maybe not do the analysis of the questionnaire?

- Gina: it's a village official checking data and analyzing results
- Liz Kormos question for the chief: How many hours can an officer work before it kicks to full time and is eligible for benefits? NYS: 19.5 hours. Saratoga County, which we fall under: 32 hours/week, but not on a continuous basis. No annual number. We don't run into that problem
- Liz: It seems like we have a lot of police officers. Could that number be reduced if we give them more hours? Is it hard to get the continuity?
 - Chief: Part-time people are working because they don't want to work full-time
 - If part-time officer cannot work a case, Chief will reassign it to someone who can come

Meeting was adjourned.

Committee on Police Reform and Reinvention

Meeting: December 2, 2020

Meeting Minutes

Recorded by Susannah Amiteye

Attendees:

- Mayor Larry Woolbright
- Police Chief David Bush
- Lori Acee (Chairperson)
- Susannah Amiteye
- Ray Otten
- Joe Stapf
- Lorri Riggs

Not in attendance:

- Kelly Gregory (unable to join)

Guest: Steve Gordon, head of 911

Observer: Gina Marozzi

Proceedings

Steve Gordon, director for the Sheriff's department 911 Call Center :

- The service provided to the village is top-notch when it comes to police, fire, ambulance. There is a state-of-the-art radio system, CAD (computer) system used to track calls. Also have the technology now that can plot cell phones
- County has made significant investment
- When Saratoga had issues due to COVID (outbreak in the PD), call center lent support within hours due to the interoperability infrastructure in place
- Enhances public safety anywhere in the county, not just in the village
- Service covers the entire county aside from City of Saratoga Springs. Work in concert with them
- Mayor: We have a small village with a police department, fire department, EMS. Do you have other police agencies you can call in, including social workers and mental health outside the village?
 - Yes, have access to all the county resources as requested by incident commander

- Work closely with office of Emergency Services, public health, EMTs, mental health (Dr. Prezioso). Can contact anyone but would not initiate without a request from the scene.
- If Ray has an incident and needs 10 ambulances, Call Center can handle it. If there is a fire at the school, Call Center would summon those resources based on pre-plans. Active shooter or bank robbery would require additional police support, which they would know. Otherwise, wait for a request
- Lori: Any public education or community-based communication programs?
 - Only small programs. There was disability awareness training for field responders, fire and EMS. Nothing widespread. Narcan programs. Not aware of any large-scale programs
- Ray: What is it like when you get a call at the comms center until you get a deputy or police officer on the scene?
 - Entire county: They field 80,000-85,000 emergency calls for service per year to dispatch cars. 250,000 phone calls—total, including information or routine calls.
 - On the Law Enforcement side, prioritize based on closest call. They put that out to county: sheriff and State. First arriving unit handles that call
 - Don't send other PDs in to a jurisdiction where there is a PD
 - Every day, the police on duty report who is working, and it goes into the CAD system. If call volume exceeds capacity or if they need additional assistance, or high profile, then they would put out the "all call" for help. ATF, FBI, etc. Anyone who shares the common radio frequency can assist
 - Also provide tow service, business contacted, additional support
- Ray: Closest car policy works. In our area, there are many overlapping districts (eg, Northline and 50). It's a good working relationship.
 - Response times are quick. Saves lives. System works well
 - Volume of calls is a lot. They get busier every year
 - 7 people on staff at a time, minimal. Can go up to 14 at any one time. Onsite workers, no remote. Others can overhear the call and respond immediately. Team effort needed for success
 - Small percentage of calls are for the Village, but the PD responds quickly, even to non-emergency calls
 - Biggest challenges: mental health and well-being of staff and workers. Last week someone in the 911 center had cardiac arrest, and they had to handle calls at the same time as resuscitating their colleague. Calls are often high intensity. Need to maintain composure, regardless of nature of the call
- Chief Bush: That day, when one of his people had cardiac arrest, they never stopped. They still answered calls on this busy day
- Lorri: How do you support staff?
 - Team effort, support of their peers. There is high level of awareness now. Also supervisors are good at recognizing when there might be an issue. There is an EAP group. Help with healing process
 - They have a quiet room in their new office

Lori Acee thanked Steve and resumed meeting discussion.

Reviewed section that was assigned for the meeting on Procedural Justice and Community Policing.

Best Practices list for creating a culture of community policing

1. Create a comprehensive community policing strategic plan.
2. Train all personnel on community policing – including overcoming distrust.
3. Foster an atmosphere of openness and transparency.
4. Adopt procedural justice as a guiding principle.
5. Prioritize law enforcement personnel safety and wellness.
6. Engage the community in a true partnership to address crime and disorder issues.
7. Treat every contact as an opportunity to engage positively with a community member.
8. Measure social cohesion and work to develop relationships.
9. Reevaluate metrics of community policing success.
10. Incorporate community policing measures into the performance evaluation process.

Mayor: How does the list of goals compare to the current situation in the PD? Are we there? Should we expand?

Chief Bush responds:

- Community policing costs money in personnel and resources
- In the workbook when they mention Community Policing, they mean a police officer assigned to a certain sector where they have jurisdiction
- When there are speeders on Hyde Blvd, we respond and address it. When we had Colonial Hills car break-ins, police officers assigned. This is how we respond in the Village
- We don't have the resources to assign officers to certain areas
- The arrest recently of 2 men who stole guns. That took two men 12 hours, start to finish: arrest, arraignment, processing, etc. We don't have the man power to assign police for Community Policing
- In the Village, we don't have the same problems that they have in larger areas that require Community Policing. We're very lucky, we don't have that

Lori: Maybe for our village, it will look different. Education programs, Coffee with Cops, being present at school sports? Since we cant dedicate staff to neighborhoods

Chief Bush

- Officers should be out there interacting with the community
- Should continue with basketball games with kids on the side of the road
- Will come to Lions, Business Professional Association, etc. Need to be invited

Ray: The closest we have to community policing is probably the School Resource Officer?

Yes, at the MS and HS, and across the elementary schools including Malta Ave. We used to have that, and it's a great thing. We still go into the school and interact. The SROs are affiliated with the Sheriff's office.

Lori: The next section is about detaining based on reasonable suspicion. Discuss discrimination and bias, including choke holds

- Chief: We don't stop and frisk. Has never been in policy or procedure. Have to have a reason to impede someone on the street
- Broken windows: Yes, criminal mischief might lead to information on a bigger crime. We're not going to turn a blind eye to someone committing a crime. With every crime, you have a victim. That victim deserves justice. That's his policy. They give plenty of breaks but the victim has a right to be heard. Minor crimes have to be addressed. Never elicit information about other crimes
- Bias-based stops, discriminatory—we don't do that. They look for whoever has been described.
- There is no discrimination in this PD because it is not present and he would not accept it.
- No police choke holds—now it's against the law. Chief has never used it or been involved in a situation where one was used.
- If you're fighting for your life, "anything goes." You're going to do whatever it takes not to get yourself killed.
- Use of force for punitive or retaliatory reasons. People have spit in my face, people are offensive about family members. People use lewd gestures. People will say and do the most horrific things when they're caught. It's hard not to react. You can't do this job if your skin is thin.
- Using force on people in hand cuffs: Chief doesn't tolerate it. Once they're restrained, your part of the fight is over. They may even be kicking the windows out of the car; the windows can be replaced
- Lorri: How do you ensure that the people who work for you are following the same value system?
 - Chief has to have the faith and confidence that they're doing what they're supposed to do.
 - Point of reference; we're not being sued, not being charged with laws of excessive force.
- Mayor: Should we have written policies or procedures? Yes, protects officer and municipality
- Lorri: Do we do any kind of restorative justice programs?
 - We don't have the authority to have a conclusion like that. Parents might decide to punish a kid with apology or way to rectify the crime (eg, egg on car). The court has more teeth than the PD
- Mayor: Do you work closely with the village judge? Yes, per chief. They have a good relationship with the court. Don't always agree
- Everything goes to the village court except for felonies. We can arraign on a felony but it will end up in county court

- Susannah: Thought this section of the workbook was about racial bias and racial tensions. What is your perspective on what racial tensions there are or are not, or anything we need to address? Do we need to consider unconscious bias? Important for the committee to at least talk about
 - Village of Ballston Spa Next Wave book has demographics
 - 2019, 91.1% white, 1.7 % black. We don't have a large black population in the village
 - 99.9 % of the people we arrest are white. We don't have that issue here.
 - During BLM protest, Chief witnessed black and white were chatting at the gas station. There was a lot of tension at that time. Black man came and apologized to the Chief for the protest and the situation (tension, distrust, implication that all police were bad). We don't have that issue here. Chief has not seen the issue here.
 - No interactions with minorities in the Village. We don't even deal with them.
 - A great example of a black citizen in the community: Michael Washington was a gang banger in Philadelphia, shot 7 times. He's very friendly, jolly. Chief loves sitting and talking with him. We need to interact more with non-white members of the community
- Susannah: Maybe record demographics going forward? Yes, even on traffic stops now those demographics are required to be recorded with the state
- No quotas in the Village, not allowed to
- Shooting at moving vehicles? The only reason is if your life or someone else's life is in danger.
- We don't have a lot of high speed pursuits. We've come to find out that most people who flee, it's because there are underlying reasons—warrant, drunk, etc. Have to weigh these things quickly
- No facial recognition technology. The NYS BCI may have it—not sure
- Diversion programs? For youthful first-time offenders, mental health issues, restorative justice
 - Overseen by court system. Several ARC homes in the village. One with a mental health issue where person lashes out at staff. The staff are adamant about pressing charges. When someone wants to press charges, we have to do it. Diversion programs are handled by the court. Probation may reach out and ask our opinion—that's a formality
- Hot spots: not a pressing issue for us generally
- De-escalation strategies: initially police officers are trained through the academy on de-escalation. The Chief models this for other officers. His guys are really good at it. For example, Todd Ives is really good. Additional, ongoing training would benefit the officers, but we're dealing well now
- Ray reinforced this: EMTs have called for help with a subject and the de-escalation techniques they use are spot-on, a lot of time people need to take the ride to the hospital. A lot of time people are not stable and will try to fight. Even EMS are trying not to restrain patients
- Chief: You'll always have some people under the influence of drugs or alcohol, and that person is not thinking rationally. Again, we don't have the law suits or false arrests. We just don't have them

- Lori: Community outreach plans. We may be able to get the PD out there more with the public.
- Citizen advisory boards/committees: may need to set that up in the future
- Chief: Community engagement: The PBA is not out there as cops. They used to ride with Mr. Ding-a-ling, and would give out ice cream. They have given out Thanksgiving turkeys. Community understands and recognizes that the PBA has given to the community. Could they build on it? Yes
- Lori: Social media could help raise awareness. There is a Ballston Spa Police Department Facebook page with arrests, weather reports, events, road closures
- Marginalized communities:
 - What about where English is limited? Chief: when we have this situation, we have resources available through the state to get an interpreter. At the nail salon by New China restaurant, one of the nail workers abused one of his clients. They started by using a translation app, then worked with an interpreter. He was arraigned and processed.
 - Several hearing impaired people in the village. Chief: Officers carry a pencil and pen
 - LGBTQ community? Chief: We don't put an emphasis on this. We don't make that person feel different. We have had several domestics between LGBTQ partners. We treat it the same way as heterosexual couples. It's a non-issue
 - Mayor: Any persecution of people in those categories? Chief: No. My officers are human beings. They treat people the way they want to be treated. To treat anyone differently would be a hate crime. Chief: One hate crime in 20+ years in this village
 - Immigrant community: We have substantial number of Hispanic and Asian community members. Other than the case with the nail salon, no issues.
 - People only want the police when they have a problem. We haven't had a problem with these communities
 - Lorri: Do we know whether marginalized communities are comfortable with the police?
 - Chief: Distrust with authority may come from ICE
 - Chief has had conversations with members of these communities, and they are friendly and nice people
 - Policies and procedures are ever-changing. We have a rule book with vast numbers of policies. We play by those rules; we have to
- Lori thanked Chief Bush for his candor and input; we always learn so much from him on these calls

Survey feedback

- Dave Womer could review the questions for objectivity, and ensure that the questions are unbiased. He will set up the survey and compile the findings
- Chief has no additional questions for the survey; he expects negative commentary since those are usually the kinds of responses that come from this type of survey

- We need to set up the survey with appropriate introduction to establish the purpose and set up the survey responsibly/respectfully
- Lorri: When we see the report, we should look for themes and not highlight outlier complaints. We should ask questions with a scaled response—this may invite neutral responses
- Ray: He hates yes/no questions. What is your opinion on this and why? Need to ask for detail
- Lori: Will need to ask Dave about open ended questions: hard to compile commentary or put it visually
- Lori will invite Dave to review the draft questions and come to the next meeting

Mayor: Wants to praise Chief Bush. “I think the world of him.” He is our Andy Taylor (from Mayberry). He was born and raised here, is a really nice guy. Mayor appreciates Chief’s generosity in working with this community

No public comment from remaining observer, Gina Marozzi.

Meeting adjourned.

Committee on Police Reform and Reinvention

Meeting: January 6, 2021

Meeting Minutes

Recorded by Susannah Amiteye

Attendees:

- Mayor Larry Woolbright
- Police Chief David Bush
- Lori Acee (Chairperson)
- Susannah Amiteye
- Ray Otten
- Joe Stapf
- Lorri Riggs

Not in attendance:

- Kelly Gregory (unable to join)

Guest: Dave Womer

Proceedings

Lori Acee introduced Dave Womer, who is a member of the BSBPA (?) and has offered to help with the community survey on policing.

Dave Womer

- Some of the questions need to be reworded
- What is the intent of the survey?
 - Lori reviewed the goals for our group and for the survey. We need community engagement and involvement
- Suggestions:
 - Use multiple choice answers or scales to get better recording for reporting
 - Open ended questions are good for new ideas, but harder to parse
- Recommends dissemination through social media
 - Email to residents only
 - Initial question could be a qualifier: Are you a resident of the Village? Request street address? Consider importance of anonymity
 - Mayor: Are you a Village resident? Yes/No. Disqualify them if they respond no

- Survey Monkey: costs money if more than 100 responses and more than 10 answers.
Can cancel after a few months
- In terms of questions, do you want to capture demographic information? Depends on what we're trying to get at (neighborhood, age, race, rent/own)
- One leading question: question about training. Be cautious about being leading
- Scales should be 1 to 5 or 1 to 7
- Shorter the survey, the better the response rate. Survey Monkey will tell them about how long it takes
- You can upload questions into Survey Monkey, they will provide recommend revisions
- Look for example surveys available in public domain
- Mayor: Our biggest problem may be getting responses. The easier, the better
- Dave could take a stab at revising the survey
- Mayor: will look into Survey Monkey, Village may have a subscription
- Dave has a contact on the Saratoga Springs committee doing the same thing, he will reach out and ask for feedback

Use of Force Policy

- Committee should review and provide feedback by next Monday
- Chief Bush: Needed to update per Governor's mandate
- Lorri had no additional feedback

Schedule moving forward

- Lori to follow-up with schedule for upcoming meetings

Topics for tonight: Leadership, Culture and Accountability

Culture for police

Chief Bush:

- 3 full-time, 15 part-timers. Full-timers don't go anywhere. We don't advertise or put out job postings. Chief has a stack of applications. Most of the time, Chief Bush knows candidates. Nothing scientific about selection process.
- "We don't baby people, but need to keep our part-timers satisfied."
- Only one supervisor: Chief Bush
- Lori: Psychology test?
 - Chief: Would be more appropriate for larger force, and we don't have the budget
- Chief: The only record of stats we do is the SGS Report that tells exactly which crimes have been committed. Feed into FBI reports. We don't have evaluation for promotion reasons—we don't promote anybody.
- Rewards? Recognition? Incentives? No. Too small for "Officer of the Week", etc

- Inclusivity? Diversity? We rely on people coming to us looking for a job, benefits are good (even for part-timers). Chief is not looking for a certain demographic or anything else. He is reviewing applications that come to him
 - 2 Hispanic males
 - No females now
 - 1 gay officer
 - The rest are white, [heterosexual] males
- Are there applicants from other demographics, or are they just not coming?
 - Chief: Of 20 applications, typically a few Hispanic males, a couple of women
- Mayor: The Chief leads by example. He has witnessed it, and heard how officers talk about him.
- Use of Force
 - Internal reviews? We haven't had any reviews since Chief has started here, but he looks forward to starting doing them. Looking at performance reviews from state police and other organizations
 - Committee could include mention of reviews in the report, could be a formal recommendation
 - Chief probably has 250 policies that need to be written plus Mission Statement
 - We don't use external reviewers
 - Have you had to address problematic behavior regarding an early intervention system? Chief addresses behavior immediately
 - Part-time officers don't have a recourse if behavior is not up to par
 - Misconduct? There is a formal process in the Collective Bargaining Agreement for handling misconduct, he has never had to go there. Never gotten to legal action
- Off Duty behavior?
 - Chief: Will be covered with a policy. We don't want them running bets or staying at bars until late
 - Social media: Has been a minor issue in the past, corrected by a counselor
 - Chief: Generally doesn't eat in the Village, nor do the officers unless they can watch food being prepared
- Advocacy, oversight
 - Use of Force here is so seldom
 - Two weeks ago, officer had to complete a Use of Force form due to dispatching a raccoon. Had to submit form to state
 - "Generally try to use mouths more than muscles"
- Misconduct
 - Would be handled internally unless needed to be escalated
 - Could be multiple agencies
 - Force will be used, but it is very rare
 - Will take an anonymous tip, but they can't interview the person or follow up
- Local Legislature
 - Not appropriate in structure NYS sets up for its Villages. Villages can make policies, but cannot tell the police what to do
- Annual surveys to track trust levels
 - We don't have this

- Is it necessary?
 - Chief: people voice their complaints, even on FB
- Data technology
 - Data was collected from daily blotter
 - Chief had to click through day by day to see what the calls were
 - Are supposed to go online with the CAD system – hasn't happened yet. Every system had to be on board. As the little guy, we have to wait
 - Potential recommendation for Committee
- Demographics
 - Should data be collected to detect racial disparities?
 - Now there is a place on the reporting forms to indicate race
- High-risk technologies
 - We don't have/need heavy technology
- Policy for maintaining sensitive data?
 - We have e-Justice system that allows us to do criminal history, motor vehicle checks, sexual offender checks, etc. They require the department to adhere to a certain level of security to have access to that program. Must maintain state security protocol to maintain that system. On the other hand, have files with very sensitive information (child sexual assault, rape, etc) that are kept in a locked file with a camera system. Those files are also kept electronically
- Video cameras in cars or body worn
 - We don't have body worn cameras or in-car cameras
 - Storage for these data are very expensive. Couldn't afford to store the data for 6 officers every day
 - If Governor is mandating this, there would need to be some financial assistance
- Mental health
 - Lori to review regarding training programs for officers regarding mental health issues, substance abuse

Next Steps

- All Committee members to review Use of Force Policy and send feedback to Lori
- Dave to draft survey that Lori will distribute
- Lori to send proposed schedule for upcoming meetings

Committee on Police Reform and Reinvention

Meeting: January 13, 2021

Meeting Minutes

Recorded by Susannah Amiteye

Attendees:

- Mayor Larry Woolbright
- Police Chief David Bush
- Lori Acee (Chairperson)
- Susannah Amiteye
- Joe Stapf
- Lorri Riggs

Not in attendance:

- Ray Otten (unable to join)
- Kelly Gregory (unable to join)

Proceedings

Lori: We have discussed how the department operates, budgets, equipment, and community relations. We are now at Phase 3 where we need to start drafting the plan. We should break down the issues that we want to focus on. Any areas that are in need of change. Then, we should draft the goals to focus on.

Lori:

- Feels like everything that Chief Bush has shared with us has been very transparent. She feels really good about the police force. We should all feel very lucky, and we should feel blessed. The things she has noticed are:
 - Update key documents
 - Supporting the police force as far as mental health
 - May be helpful for the community to have a public video call that provides mental health resources. Chief Bush could present police services
 - Inclusion and racial tensions are an issue nationally. I don't think we have a problem with that here in the Village. We should include our demographics in the report
- Susannah:
 - We do have low numbers of minorities here, but we should go beyond just including those demographics; we should include "regardless of race, creed or gender" or some similar language in policies going forward

- Lorri:
 - We should recommend CAD system for tracking
 - Formulating regular soliciting of public input
 - We don't have a hiring issue, but we should think more about hiring or recruiting
- Joe:
 - Haven't discovered anything new. Has believed the police are doing a fantastic job. Village is a great place to live. The police do a great job. Annually, we have elections
 - What should we do for the police? Maybe we should survey them? They are put in tough situations. How can we help them?
- Larry
 - One of the things I like the best is the concept of procedural justice, treating individuals with trust and respect. Not suggesting that we suffer from not doing those things. But maybe Committee should make a statement that they value those things, be aware of them, consider training in them.
- Susannah
 - Chief Bush has identified training as an ongoing need. We could recommend additional training, even if it requires budget from the Village.
 - Recruitment: suggest posting those positions so the hiring process feels more open to outsiders
- Chief Bush:
 - It's been a crazy year and this police reform came at a time of a perfect storm as far as the police department is concerned
 - For years we were doing our job the way we've always done it
 - When he was hired to be the chief of police, it was required that he "work the road" so the time to get and work the department was not there. A simple accident could take 3 hours. Now that he is semi-retired, and his only function is to run the department, he has the time to write these policies and get them approved. He's been retired for a month. Well over a hundred procedures that have to be written. Each policy has to be specific and unique to the Ballston Spa Police Department
 - One of the problems with hiring is when a part-time officer leaves. He doesn't have a lot of time to put a new person on. Need to get an officer hired and out on the road. We could put out a call for resumes for general interest, but will need to fill it as soon as possible
 - Chief knows that a lot of the things that need to be done takes money. It's quite expensive. We've been restricted in doing this for the last few years
- Larry: No longer in a financial crisis as we were a couple of years ago.
- Lorri
 - This has been a great, educational experience
 - If this is all we can come up with, then we are in a good spot. We have the Chief's commitment and the Mayor is involved
- Lori
 - Chief is very transparent in a refreshing way
 - All of the minutes will be attached to the document as well as the results of the survey
 - There is very little to point to and a lot to celebrate

- Lori sent a preliminary draft outlining the work we have done to date, to tell the public what we have been doing and what we could include
 - Community Safety
- Outlined what we have reviewed
- Other documents: Should we include?
- Resources
 - Ballston Spa Economic Development Plan
 - Collaborative document
- May want to include an intro letter
- Main plan
 - Discussion themes
 - Guide for reform
- Need to get the survey out
 - For elderly/non-social media savvy, put it in hard copy and deliver to Doubleday Woods, Mohegan Hills
- Mayor looking into options for sending out the survey. Will reach out to Saratoga Partnership
- Chief Bush:
 - Going back to Use of Force Policy. Comment on “recognize the value of all human life”; tend to include less. Proposes: All human life without prejudice to anyone.
 - Change wording in form to: “Possible Mental Health Issue”
- Mayor gave member of the public opportunity to speak; no comments or questions
- Lori
 - Executive order lists the stakeholders that must be involved: DA and Public Defender; the Chief had reached out and they declined participation

Committee on Police Reform and Reinvention

Meeting: January 27, 2021

Meeting Minutes

Recorded by Susannah Amiteye

Attendees:

- Mayor Larry Woolbright
- Police Chief David Bush
- Lori Acee (Chairperson)
- Susannah Amiteye
- Joe Stapf
- Lorri Riggs
- Ray Otten
- Kelli Gregory

Proceedings

Lori welcomed the group. Asked Ray and Kelli to share their areas of interest and areas of opportunity for our report.

Lori read Ray's email:

- In looking at what notes have been put out I have to agree with most input. The differing life experiences of us all really help to make for a better committee for this purpose. I feel it is important to draw on those experiences to evaluate what needs to happen here in our community. We are very unique and should not look to have a "cookie cutter" approach to the task at hand. What works for Albany, Atlanta, Chicago, etc. may not work, or be necessary, here. We should rely on the needs of our community and address those needs aggressively. Rely on the folks that got us to where we are, change what isn't working, reinforce what is, and don't make changes for the sake of change. We should be sure we address issues that Do exist and not chase those that don't exist just to be like everywhere else.
- In reference to hiring, Everyone has the same opportunity to apply for a position with our PD. If they choose Not to apply, that is their choice. Active recruitment for positions that don't exist is counter-productive and is not beneficial to anyone.
- As our new President has said in some of his new legislation, Let's "advance equity for all" (a statement I feel says it all) and not compartmentalize it by adding qualifiers. Let's continue to allow the PD to do its job correctly, analyze mistakes as they occur, prevent their occurrence, provide our officers all the support we can, and make use of the vast resources available as needed.

- Ray
 - Adding on, having been involved in EMS for so many years, he takes that training and applies to many aspects of life. For instance, when they come across a car crash, they treat what is most important. They go to the root of the problems to treat the major issues. Here we are trying to take care of major issues, let's not worry about the other things that are going on
 - In HR, you don't want to advertise jobs that are not there. If you can't hire people because there are no positions, you discourage people. You don't know people until you interview them. In the EMT group, 99% of the time, it's referrals. They start in a temporary position and are evaluated

Recruitment and posting positions

- Susannah
 - In terms of the HR question, would like the Village to be inclusive and open to new applicants from other communities. We can make it clear that there is no current opening, but they should feel free to send in an application for future consideration. In this way, we are encouraging people from elsewhere to apply
- Lorri
 - Agree that we should open up the recruitment effort to a broader pool with an announcement on our Facebook page or through other means
- Chief: It's a paper application. There are two factors: they already have to be trained, have to be a certified police officer. We're 90% part-time. That person has to fit into that time frame. We don't train anybody.
- Lori: It should be okay to accept applicants based on those parameters—must be certified, part-time, would have to be a process in place for selection
- Lorri: We need to put policies in place that ensure we are being inclusive that will last beyond Chief Bush's tenure
 - We need policies in place to reflect the changing demographics
 - Chief agrees
- Chief: One of the things to remember is that we generally don't get officers from other districts. They don't want to commute. Chief has worked at the police academy for many years. That's the circle.

New language for inclusivity

- Susannah:
 - In regards to the inclusive language, would like to include something like this in our report, for inclusion in a Vision Statement or Mission: "The Police Department is committed to protecting all citizens of the Village of Ballston Spa regardless of race, color, gender, sexual orientation, religion, disability or age." This may not cover all of the interest groups, but it is probably 95%. It is important for people within those groups to feel represented, and our including that language will help.
- Lori: Suggests including that kind of sentiment throughout our documents
- Lorri: Proposes adding it to the overall mission, intent, value statement, etc. See Montgomery County report for example. On page 4, they include their purpose: "To foster trust, fairness and

legitimacy within communities throughout our state and to address any racial bias and disproportionate policing of communities of color.” We can state something like this

Kelli:

- Microphone not working, could not speak
- Agrees with a lot of what is being said. The PD is doing a good job, and at this point the focus should be on getting the wording in that everyone can agree upon
- Was caught up in the application discussion. Having applications on file seems like a good idea

Lori:

- Links went out for other draft reports and we can review them
- Larry had sent out SharePoint link with various documents
- Everyone should go look at all documents and pull any language we think we should include into the master document
- Dave Womer will be building graphs from the survey; we will include in the report
 - Getting the survey to the elderly population: We will distribute to Doubleday Woods, Mohegan Hills, PD Facebook page, Library. We will manually enter those responses. We will then enter the data and keep the paper copies for protocol. Needs to be advertised within the Village
 - Lorri: Would like the chance to print and hand to neighbors/friends
- Joe lives at Doubleday Woods and could hand deliver to 95 residents, and collect

Susannah: Wondering if we have alignment on our Committee name: Should it be the Committee on Police Policies and Practices?

- Up for consideration and discussion

Mental Health and Wellness Training

- Lori received an email about upcoming training; it's open to everyone. Under a grant.
- She will send out a link
- 2/10: 11-12, 3/25: 12-1
- We could post this for the Village and invite police to conduct the training too
 - Chief: viable option for them to take training as long as they could pause and come back to finish

There were no observers.

Lori adjourned the meeting.

Committee on Police Reform and Reinvention

Meeting: February 10, 2021

Meeting Minutes

Recorded by Susannah Amiteye

Attendees:

- Mayor Larry Woolbright
- Police Chief David Bush
- Lori Acee (Chairperson)
- Susannah Amiteye
- Joe Stapf
- Ray Otten
- Kelli Gregory

Unable to attend:

- Lorri Riggs

Proceedings

Lori:

- Tonight's focus will be the "areas of opportunity" for committee recommendations
- Police department functions:
 - What should we include in the report?
 - Updating policies: underway
 - Include initial demographics (remove this from the report as a recommendation)
 - Susannah added info from the Economic Development Plan
 - Add page numbers
 - Susannah had provided qualifiers regarding "all citizens"
 - Ray does not feel qualifiers are needed; does not feel adding specific groups are needed
 - We could add "equity for all" after the qualifiers
 - Lori: Because some of these issues prompted this issue, we should include the qualifiers
 - Kelli agrees
 - Chief Bush: One of the problems we run into is that we are excluding other groups
 - Chief: would be okay with including the qualifiers in the Mission Statement or Vision

- Chief: Does not want to include in every policy; We need to get the Use of Force Policy as soon as possible
 - Decision: leave Use of Force Policy the way it is
 - Lori: how about “regardless of orientation”
 - Susannah does not think it goes far enough
 - Decision: Include the qualifiers in the Mission Statement
- Add CAD System for tracking: OK to add
 - Chief: It’s a county-controlled system; we will come on board when it’s rolled out
- Regular yearly or periodic soliciting of opinions
 - Lori to follow up with Joe
- Hiring/recruiting:
 - Recommendation to post openly and solicit applications as needed. Is that ok?
 - Chief: OK to put out call for applications regardless of openings
 - Kelli: Continuously accepting applications
 - Ray: That’s what we say on the EMS website
- Training/Officer development
 - Supporting mental health for police force
 - Chief Bush: Met with County undersheriff regarding training
 - Most groups will focus on de-escalation, diversity training, etc
 - County is coming up with a syllabus including mental health training
 - Lori will come up with social media post about the AWARE training
 - Chief: Would like the village to train with the county; budget will have to be covered
 - Mayor; If it’s local and/or online, budget should not be prohibitive
- Survey the police to see what we can do to support them, uncover training needs
 - Lori to take offline with Joe
 - Chief: One of the frustrations that PD officers have is that when one officer does something bad, all officers are bad. Police officers need to take decisive action in tough situations. We are scrutinized. Do you want us to stop the aggressive assault? Or do you want us to be compassionate? Constantly going from one level of mentality to another. I don’t want police officer to wonder if they should stop and react. I want them to react. Not every police call is a controlled environment
 - Lori: The officers need to be people and officers. It could be stress reduction, or something along those lines
 - How do you feel about surveying the officers:
 - Chief: It’s a good idea
 - Lori: there may be commonalities
 - Mayor; What could this committee do to support you, or help you in your job?
- Culture of the Community
 - Chief is working on a policy: conduct on duty/conduct off duty
 - Need to spell out what is/what is not acceptable. Will be in the handbook
 - Mayor: maybe we recommend that that is covered in the Policies and Procedures Handbook, and that it be brought on line as soon as possible

- Develop an assessment of police officers
 - Chief has this in draft; will be in use very shortly
- Make the current committee a standing committee as advisory council
 - Lori thinks it's a good idea
 - Check in on the work that has been done and what more can be done
 - Chief thinks that the committee has done a fantastic job, he is very pleased
 - Things pop up and would be good to have this type of committee to approach this type of issue
 - Lori: We're a diverse group, neighborhoods, ages/stages, different parts of the community. We could get the pulse
 - Mayor: Included this in the original email that went out to the group; could resign as needed
 - Ray: semi-annual would be warranted; things change on a dime.
 - Lori: Or as needed

Survey

- We have preliminary survey data: 90 responses (75 residents)
 - Age demographics. Over 60, 16%, etc.
 - Do we still need paper survey?
 - We would be promoting to that age group, and we would have to compile the data
 - Mayor: Sounded like a perfect bell curve
 - Ray: has been working the system, and listening to seniors who don't have access to computers or cell phones
 - Mayor: 60 and up is a broad age range.
 - Kelli: OK with giving these out
 - Survey went out to EMS, Police Department website, Village.
 - Chief: Seniors really want to be heard
 - County undersheriff said they only got out 30-40 surveys
 - Mayor: Does Doubleday Woods have equal members who lived here and has moved here? Yes
 - Chief: Doubleday Woods knows the PD very well
 - Susannah: Distribute a sample of 20?
 - Lori: We would have to find a volunteer to enter in the paper copies OR we keep all the paper copies
 - Mayor: Distribute as many as you want and then randomly choose responses
 - Lori: Mohegan Hills? May not need to increase the sample (skip it)
 - Lori will drop them off for Joe at the Police Station
 - Decision: Distribute widely and then enter random sample of 20
- Next meeting:
 - Any additional commentary would be welcome
 - Review the survey results; discuss how to present the overview of the
 - Joe: He could have them done in a day; Susannah will key in the results

- Public comment?
 - Liz Kormos was on for at least part of the meeting; no comment

Committee on Police Reform and Reinvention

Meeting: February 24, 2021

Meeting Minutes

Recorded by Susannah Amiteye

Attendees:

- Mayor Larry Woolbright
- Police Chief David Bush
- Lori Acee (Chairperson)
- Susannah Amiteye
- Joe Stapf
- Lorri Riggs

Unable to attend:

- Ray Otten
- Kelli Gregory

Proceedings

Lori:

- Tonight we will go through the survey results
- Many items we have already identified; some suggestions that Chief Bush may find useful. Also some bigger issues like parking that beyond our purview
- Survey results included only Village residents
- Survey validated our gut instincts; the Village seems very pleased with our police department and our policing

Lorri: This is a moment to celebrate; the results were very positive. Congratulations to Chief Bush

Survey results:

- Reviewed results for each question
- Discussion of summarizing some of the open-ended responses; calling out themes. Consider call-outs next to the graphs
- Training
 - Everyone can benefit from training
 - Some suggested areas: mental health, special needs
 - We should prepare proactively for situations that may arise in the future
 - We need to prepare, anticipate issues

- Somehow we should look at parking in the Village
 - There was a committee a couple of years ago that looked at this; the issues may have been that there is not enough parking directly in front of local establishments
 - Mayor obtained extra parking from EOC and County after hours
 - Maybe we should have a call-out about the parking situation
- Speeding cars should be addressed on Hyde Blvd, Chapman, Malta Ave
 - We only have 2 police officers who cannot sit on these streets all the time
- Add box asking residents to turn in tips: submit a report

Chief: Very difficult to arrest drug crimes; takes more than just witnessing a deal. It takes time. Everyone who works narcotics is overwhelmed. Has been a rash of overdose deaths in Saratoga County. Last week, there were 3 overdoses in Ballston Spa (2 deaths). Impurities being mixed with heroin and cocaine.

- Small departments like ours handle everything. We don't pass anything off to investigators or other staff
- Special needs: We have special needs citizens and homes in the Village. We work with the staff at those homes.
 - A lot of the training addresses mental health and specialty needs, part of conflict resolution, de-escalation
- Lorri: Maybe we need to educate the community on what the police are receiving in training
- Chief: Would be good to say that we plan on doing additional training, and list that out. No need to include timing
- Lori: PD will receive ongoing training with the County
- Lorri: We are building trust. We are committed to conducting the training

Village Board will have a public comment meeting on March 22

Lori: We could have our draft report to the Board by 3/15; needs to be shared for public comment at least a week before Board meeting on 3/22

- We need to pull some findings and graphics into the plan
- Lorri: Happy to help, will make the time
- Will send the draft report back to the group for review
- Will send to Mayor by 3/12

Will post report on the Website

May not need survey in paper copy

No public comments