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# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

## **State Mandate**

The Village of Chatham Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative was convened by Mayor John Howe to perform a comprehensive review of the Village of Chatham Police Department. This review was mandated by an Executive Order by Governor Cuomo that required all local governments with a police department to develop and enact a policing reform plan.

The reform plan is to include any modifications and innovations to current police deployment policies and procedures based on the specific public safety needs of the community. The Executive Order calls for the plan to also include policies and procedures that promote trust, fairness, accountability, and transparency, and which seek to reduce any racial disparities in policing.

## **Members of the Collaborative**

Mayor John Howe appointed six residents of the Village: Iris Waddell (co-chair), Gary Gelfenbien (co-chair), Adrienne Morrell, Michael Richardson, Lisa Light Rugen, and Katherine Stoessel; two Village Trustees: Jaime Boehme and Pete Minahan; and, two Village of Chatham Police Officers: Assistant Chief Joseph Alessi and Officer John Myers.

## **Community Outreach**

“Focus groups” were formed so as to engage the community in meaningful conversations about policing within the Village and also reimagine ways to provide public safety. The focus groups were: Seniors; Substance Use Affected Community; and local businesses. Efforts were unsuccessful in organizing focus groups from the African-American community, Latina/o community, or from the youth.

Each focus group met separately and then reported their findings to the Collaborative with emphasis on experiences with the local police department and also their particular needs as they pertain to public safety.

To solicit broader community input, the Collaborative distributed an on-line questionnaire for people who 1) own property in the Village of Chatham (commercial or residential or commercial), 2) reside (renter or home-owner) in the Village of Chatham, and/or 3) operate a business in the Village of Chatham.

Finally, the draft of the policing reform plan was presented for public comment to all Village residents on February \_\_, 2021.

## Objectives

The objectives of Collaborative's review included:

Assess Chatham Police Department internal operations, policies, procedures, and practices to detect the presence of implicit bias and systemic racial bias.

Collect and analyze data related to traffic patrol, use of force, and other police officer/civilian interactions and determine the effect on diverse community members.

Provide actionable recommendations for reforms that eliminate racial and implicit biases in policing deployments, strategies, policies, procedures, and practices, including: community engagement, transparency, professionalism, accountability, community inclusion, fairness, effectiveness, and public trust.

## Areas of Focus

The Collaborative identified four areas of assessment for the report:

- 1) **Deployment and Patrol Operations** - traffic control; quality of life complaints; code violations; instances of violence; and, use of force (deadly and non-deadly).
- 2) **Policing policies and practices** - use of force; community policing; recruitment/retention; training; and, complaint process (internal and external)
- 3) **Experiences** - community experiences or interactions with the Village Police Department
- 4) **Needs** - other programs or additional services pertaining to public safety or other programs directed at mental health, the substance use affected community, youth-at-risk, sheltered residents.

## Recommendations

**{editor's note: the following are for example only, the actual recommendations will be made later by the Collaborative}**

*The Village's philosophy and culture have a strong focus on community policing practices, but this message needs to be reinforced to all personnel.*

*A Neighborhood Engagement Unit should be established.*

*Use of force policy should be updated with clarity on when an officer can or cannot use various forms of force.*

*Annual in-service training curriculum should be updated to include various topics, including but not limited to racial bias and cultural sensitivity training.*

*Training is not consistent across the department.*

*The process for issuing a complaint is not communicated to the residents or the business community, which lends to mistrust and a sense of no procedural justice.*

# 1 DEPLOYMENT

The section pertains to the staffing, hours of service, demographics, and funding of the Village of Chatham Police Department.

## 1.1 Staffing

The Village of Chatham Police Department provides public safety services for a resident population of **1770** (2010 census) with significant commuters and visitors during working hours and nighttime entertainment venues, most of which close by 11:00 p.m.

There are **20 employees** classified as “**part-time**” by the Columbia County Civil Service Commission. Job titles include Chief (1), Assistant Chief (1), Sergeant (1), and Police Officer (17). There are no full-time personnel in the department.

In addition, there is one civilian Crossing Guard.

The Chief of Police is the functional department head and is responsible for all personnel. The Chief typically works twenty hours throughout the week without any fixed schedule.

The Assistant Chief performs supervisory duties in addition to routine patrol. Supervisory duties include managing the patrol schedule, oversight of investigations, and all in-house training.

## 1.2 Hours In-Service

The Village Police Department is in-service **83 hours** throughout the week of a possible 168 hours. [7 days X 24 hours = 168 hours]

Typical weekly schedule	Total: 83 hours
Monday-Friday	13 hours
Saturday	12 hours
Sunday	6 hours

Patrols are assigned to a daytime shift, evening shift, and occasional night shift.

The remaining 85 hours in the week are covered by the Columbia County Sheriff and the New York State Police.

Calls to the local telephone number for the Chatham Police Department are forwarded to the New York State Police Communication Center, which dispatches the call to the closest patrol car, be it the Chatham Village Police, County Sheriff, or State Police.

911 calls are similarly dispatched by the Columbia County 911 Center.

In 2018, 47% of 911 calls were dispatched to the Chatham Police Department and 53% to County Sheriff and State Police.

The Assistant Chief, Sergeant, and \_\_\_ Police Officers work most of the shifts in any given month with the other \_\_\_ Police Officers supplementing the schedule.

Typical monthly schedule	19 employees
8 shifts per month	___ employees
6 to 7 shifts per month	___ employees
4 to 5 shifts per month	___ employees
2 to 3 shifts per month	___ employees
1 shift per month	___ employees

### 1.3 Department Demographics

As of December 2020, two Police Officers are female, one Police Officer is Black, and one Police Officer is Latino.

None of the patrol personnel is a resident in the Village of Chatham.

\_\_\_ patrol personnel have more than 5 years of service with the Village of Chatham Police Department.

Years of Service	20 employees
20+ years	___ employees
15 - 19 years	___ employees
10 - 14 years	___ employees
5 - 9 years	___ employees
1 - 4 years	___ employees

## 1.4 Village Demographics

### 2000 census:

1,758 people  
742 households  
425 families  
802 housing units

Of the 1,758 residents:

26.1% were under the age of 18  
6.8% from 18 to 24  
27.6% from 25 to 44  
24.6% from 45 to 64  
15.0% who were 65 years of age or older

Of the 742 households:

31.1% had children under the age of 18 living with them  
41.0% were married couples living together  
12.4% had a female householder with no husband present  
42.7% were non-families

Of the 742 households:

average household size = 2.33  
average family size = 3.06  
37.6% were made up of individuals  
14.4% had someone living alone who was 65 years of age or older

### 2010 census:

86.5% white  
5.0% Hispanic  
3.3% Black  
2.4% multiracial  
2.0% Asian  
0.3% Native American  
0.3% other race

## 1.5 Annual Police Department Budget

Budget Year	TOTAL	Personnel	Pension/ Benefits*	Equipment	Cars	Gas - Clothing Utilities - Office
2020/2021	<b>\$199,640</b>	\$135,270	\$12,500	\$2,850	\$15,487	\$33,533
2019/2020	<b>\$213,873</b>	\$148,562	\$12,000	\$4,000	\$15,511	\$33,800
2018/2019	<b>\$205,913</b>	\$140,058	\$15,000	\$5,000	\$15,000	\$30,855
2017/2018	<b>\$170,436</b>	\$108,358	\$15,000	\$5,000	\$14,578	\$27,500
2016/2017	<b>\$174,438</b>	\$107,360	\$17,000	\$5,000	\$14,578	\$30,500
2015/2016	<b>\$184,381</b>	\$109,889	\$21,315	\$5,000	\$14,578	\$33,600
2014/2015	<b>\$172,720</b>	\$96,940	\$28,780	\$5,000	\$16,000	\$26,000
2013/2014	<b>\$218,977</b>	\$114,873	\$50,302	\$7,000	\$8,052	\$38,750
2012/2013	<b>\$374,540</b>	\$235,949	\$88,339	\$6,000	\$8,052	\$36,200
2011/2012	<b>\$423,881</b>	\$262,818	\$99,611	\$6,000	\$8,052	\$47,400

\* 2013/2014 thru 2020/2021 does not include payroll taxes for social security and workers' compensation

Police Officer **hourly rate** (per collective bargaining agreement): \$16.20 to \$20.26

The Police Department deploys three patrol cars (2014, 2014, 2018) and three bicycles.

## 2 PATROL OPERATIONS

This section pertains to patrol operations, including:

**{editor's note: the following list is for example only, the actual list will be entered by Deputy Chief Alessi}**

- 1) deployments for traffic;
- 2) deployments for quality of life complaints;
- 3) deployments for code violations;
- 4) deployments for instances of violence; and,
- 5) use of force (deadly and non-deadly).

### 2.1 Calls for Service

In 2018, 47% of 911 calls were dispatched to the Chatham Police Department and 53% to County Sheriff and State Police.

In 2019, Chatham Police Department responded to \_\_\_\_\_ proactive (officer-initiated) and \_\_\_\_\_ reactive calls.

The most common call types include the following: **{editor's note: the following list is for example only, the actual list will be entered by Deputy Chief Alessi}** traffic stops, check on a subject, and responding to auto accidents involving property damage.

Year	# Officers	Arrests	Incidents	Property Check	Community Policing	Other	Tickets
8-2020	21	13	1494	1007	141	346	143
2019	19	34	1897	1185	169	543	375
2018	22	27	2220	1547	145	528	240
2017	25	43	2092	1264	173	655	221
2016	24	63	3745	2553	273	919	463
2015	23	76	5161	3172	385	1604	581
2014	XX	51	4236	2759	268	1209	357
2013	XX	68	1551	418	39	1094	313

**Call dispositions: {editor's note: the following list is for example only, the actual list will be entered by Deputy Chief Alessi}**

- Assisted
- Advised
- Report taken
- Building checked secure
- Gone on arrival/unable to locate
- Cancelled or duplicate
- Field interview card completed
- DMV/TRACS report taken
- Traffic violation ticket issued
- Domestic report taken
- Cleared without code
- Unfounded
- Vehicle towed
- Arrest made
- Cancelled by complainant
- No report taken
- Parking ticket issued
- Referred
- Other

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**Traffic Stops: {editor's note: the following list is for example only, the actual list will be entered by Deputy Chief Alessi}**

Traffic stops cataloged in three categories:  
stops resulting in field interview cards (warnings),  
stops resulting in citations, and  
stops resulting in arrests.

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**Arrests:** In 2019, Chatham Police Department made \_\_\_\_\_ arrests.

**{editor's note: the following is for example only, the actual numbers will be entered by Deputy Chief Alessi}**

*The most common reasons for arrest included larceny (1,028 arrests), unlawful possession of drugs or alcohol (1,347), and assault with or without a weapon (598).*

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**Field Interviews:** In 2019, Chatham Police Department completed \_\_\_\_\_ field interviews, documenting interactions with community members that did not result in an enforcement action.

**{editor's note: the following is for example only, the actual numbers will be entered by Deputy Chief Alessi}**

*The majority (54 percent) of field interviews were the result of calls to check a subject. The next most common type, group annoying, makes up only 5.8 percent of the field interviews.*

**{editor's note: the following list is for example only, the actual list will be entered by Deputy Chief Alessi}**

- Check a subject
- Group annoying
- Person annoying
- Person with a weapon
- Loud party
- Fight
- Emotionally disturbed person
- Trouble with a customer
- Burglary in progress
- Get a report
- Loud music
- Get a complaint
- Assist a person/agency
- Person acting suspicious

## **2.2 Police Services for Special Events**

April - National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day  
May - Memorial Day Parade  
May - Sean's Run  
May - Sean's Ride  
July - SummerFest  
August - Fairground Overnight Security  
August - Columbia County Fair  
September - Operation Clear Track  
September - Fireman's Parade  
October - National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day  
October - October feast  
October - Halloween  
November - Turkey Trot  
December - Winterfest  
December - Santa's Mailbox  
Three Times a Year: Chatham School District Drills

### 3 POLICING POLICIES, PROCEDURES & PRACTICES

{editor's note: The Executive Order specifically requires that the Collaborative's report consider the following polices and procedures... the actual list beyond 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 will be entered by Deputy Chief Alessi and Trustee Minahan}

1. use-of-force policies
2. community policing
3. recruitment/retention
4. training
5. internal (department) and external (public) complaint process

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*procedural justice (Wookbook pages 10, 22, 23, 61, 71, 95)*

*studies addressing systemic racial bias or racial justice in policing*

*implicit bias awareness training (Workbook pages 97, 99)*

*de-escalation training and practices*

*law enforcement assisted diversion programs (Workbook page 36)*

*restorative justice practices*

*community- based outreach and conflict resolution*

*problem-oriented policing*

*hot spots policing (Workbook page 41)*

*focused deterrence (Workbook page 41)*

*crime prevention through environmental design (Workbook page 16)*

*violence prevention and reduction interventions*

### 3.1 Use of Force

This section pertains to policies and procedures for use of force, both deadly and non-deadly.

**{editor's note: the following text is for example only, the actual text will be entered by Deputy Chief Alessi and Trustee Minahan}**

Village of Chatham Police Department documented \_\_\_\_ incidences of force that occurred during \_\_\_\_ incidents.

Each individual use of force incident can potentially include multiple officers, multiple community members, and multiple incidences of force.

Village of Chatham Police Department tracks the reason officers used force during an incident, categorizing it into eight options at the level of the incident.

Of the \_\_\_\_ incidents of use of force, \_\_\_\_ were related to the community member resisting arrest, \_\_\_\_ were for non-compliance with stated officer instructions, \_\_\_\_ were due to a combative community member, \_\_\_\_ involved emotionally disturbed persons, \_\_\_\_ were in response to the assault of an officer, and \_\_\_\_ were in response to the assault of another community member. Property damage was relatively infrequently used as a reason, totaling \_\_\_\_ incidents. In \_\_\_\_ incidents, the reason for use of force is missing.

Village of Chatham Police Department includes eight options for describing use of force type, Use of force types and severity:

Type of force	Assessed severity
Firearm	8
Canine	7
Taser	6
OC Spray	5
Baton	4
Other	3
Open Handed Technique	2
Physical Contact	1

**<INSERT USE OF FORCE POLICY>**

## **3.2 Community Policing**

This section pertains to policies and procedures for community policing.

**{editor's note: this section is to be completed by Deputy Chief Alessi and Trustee Minahan}**

**<INSERT COMMUNITY POLICING POLICY>**

### **3.3 Recruitment, Hiring, and Retention**

This section pertains to policies and procedures for recruitment, hiring, and retention.

**{editor's note: this section is to be completed by Deputy Chief Alessi and Trustee Minahan}**

**<INSERT RELEVANT POLICIES>**

**<INSERT LINK TO COLUMBIA COUNTY CIVIL SERVICE>**

## **3.4 Training**

This section pertains to policies and procedures for training in the Village of Chatham Police Department.

### **3.4.1 Certification / Training Officers Receive**

#### **Every Year**

- Firearms qualifications on the range
- Taser Review and Updates
- Blood-borne Pathogens OSHA Training
- Violence in the Workplace Training
- Legislative and Policy updates
- Sexual Harassment training

#### **Every 2 Years**

- CPR / AED
- First Aid

#### **New Officers**

- Naloxone Training

**3.4.2 Basic Course for Police Officers:** Police officers attend the Basic Course for Police Officers (BCPO) at a regional academy. The BCPO consists of a minimum of 700 hours established by the Municipal Police Training Council.

Basic Course for Police Officers includes, but is not limited to:

Ethics & Professionalism  
Cultural Diversity  
Bias Related Incidents  
Professional Communication  
Persons with Disabilities  
Crisis Intervention  
Use of Physical Force & Deadly Force  
Active Shooter Response and Decision Making  
Reality Based Training Scenarios

### **3.4.3 Annual In-Service Training:**

At least 21 hours of in-service training annually which includes, at a minimum, firearms training, legal updates, a review of the use of force and the use of deadly force. This training can be fulfilled through the use of formalized and documented training sessions where lesson plans and attendance records are maintained. This may include classroom training, roll call or video presentations. Note: part-time officers who are full-time officers in other departments may consider in-service training received at their full-time department toward meeting this requirement.

### **3.4.4 Documentation of Annual Training:**

The Chatham Police Department will provide to the Board of Trustees the individual training records including basic, in-service and specialized training courses whether sponsored by the agency or not. These records should include name of the course or training, dates attended, and total hours.

**Note:** With the exception of the Course in Police Supervision and “peace officer” annual firearms and other weapons courses, there is no mandate for “police officers” or “peace officers” to complete in-service training as a condition of continued employment.

<https://www.criminaljustice.ny.gov/ops/docs/training/forms/insevrtrngguide.pdf>

### **3.5 Complaint Process**

This section pertains to policies and procedures for internal (department) and external (public) complaints.

**{editor's note: this section is to be completed by Deputy Chief Alessi and Trustee Minahan}**

**<INSERT RELEVANT POLICIES>**

## 4 COMMUNITY EXPERIENCES

### 4.1 Seniors Focus Group

Report compiled by Brin Quell. Other members of the group: Georgene Gardner; Eileen O'Mara-Garcia; Patricia McKeon; Tom Kenny

#### Questions:

Do seniors feel safe here? Does having a police department make a difference in that regard?

What are some experiences people have had with the PD that we can report on?

Is the cost of the PD worth the services we receive?

Does our PD have adequate training to address mental health concerns?

Does the senior community feel a personal connection to the PD? Do members of the PD know our community?

**Responses:** from randomly canvassed seniors in the community

People feel safe here.

I do feel safe living in the village, but can't say that has anything to do with the police.

I have lived here my whole life, and guess that Village police is a tradition. But, maybe we don't need them. What are they doing?

I had occasion to call rescue squad at 4AM, and they were terrific, here in a little more than five minutes. In retrospect, I was relieved there was no police presence. It would have just added to the tension of an already tense situation.

Many people view the PD here as a tradition. Been here forever. But things have changed. The old full-time force was a visible presence. Many of the officers knew us. Knew who lived on our streets. With a part-time force now, things are very different.

For the most part the officers are not visible. They work odd shifts that change all the time. We don't know any of them and they don't know us.

For the most part, people have had positive interactions with police BUT more often than not people end up talking to someone from the State Police anyhow if they have a problem that requires police intervention or guidance. With a part-time force, one rarely reaches one of the Chatham PD officers.

On a completely different matter: how do we insure that our officers are not linked in any way (past or present) to white supremacist movements and actions? While that may seem like a bizarre response, it's not. We know that all over the country there are white supremacists infiltrating community services and functions in various ways.

## 4.2 Substance Use Affected Community

Submitted by Lori Antonson - Acting President of Columbia County Pathways to Recovery (CCPR) in collaboration with other CCPR board members who collected information for this report.

**Question:** Have you ever had interactions/experiences with the Chatham Village Police Department, and if so, how would you describe those interactions/experiences?

**Specific Responses:** canvassed group consisted of approximately fifteen people

None of the respondents had had occasion to personally call the Chatham Village Police.

One respondent reported that in response to three different 911 calls due a family member's overdoses:

Chatham Village Police responded along with State Troopers and Columbia County police officers.

Chatham police were compassionate and non-judgmental; however, appeared to be unsure how to handle the nuances of the situation.

In one instance Chief Pete Volkmann responded and was very understanding, capable, and able to de-escalate the situation and engage in effective conversation with the family member regarding her substance use and moving forward with possible treatment.

### **Overall Experience with Chatham Village Police:**

The majority reported: non-intimidating, friendly, accommodating, levelheaded, respectful, not out to antagonize.

A minority reported: experiences with feeling "harassed" because of prior drug/alcohol use; young drivers being pulled over for no apparent reason while driving through Village; repeated coercion to give up information or "snitch" on drug suppliers, etc; being stopped and questioned while innocuously standing outside a parent's home in the Village; teenagers/young adults feeling targeted even though not behaving suspiciously.

### **General Perspectives on Chatham Village Police:**

Very good work with public safety at community events/traffic control.

Need to be more visible; people need to get to know the village police, particularly now with a part time police force. Many people have no interactions.

Enjoyed the previous police "walkabouts" in the Village and patrolling on bicycle.

Could be more effective in "taking down" drug dealers/suppliers.

Chatham Cares 4 U program respected and supported across the board, with some reporting it led to their recovery.

It is important to police with more compassion, understanding and without judgment.

Not enough mental health training to de-escalate crisis situations.

### **4.3 Business Community**

Information compiled by Tom Crowell and Melony Spock

**Responses:** from canvass of businesses in the Village

Little need to call local police department.

Most calls go to County Sheriff or State Police.

Feel that Village is a safe place to operate their business.

Appreciate presence during street festivals.

Previously had interaction, but not much recently.

## 5 COMMUNITY NEEDS

### 5.1 Seniors Focus Group

Report compiled by Brin Quell. Other members of the group: Georgene Gardner; Eileen O'Mara-Garcia; Patricia McKeon; Tom Kenny

#### **Question:**

Are there particular needs that seniors have that are being address by the PD?

**Public Safety Needs:** from randomly canvassed seniors in the community

While everyone said they feel safe in the village, a number of people did express concern over these issues: speeding on certain streets; parking issues when weekenders are here; questioning whether Chatham can afford a program like Chatham Cares4U.

It can be appealing to see police officers driving around the village now and then. Maybe their presence adds to our safety. Visibility sometimes acts as a preventive measure.

Many people are aware of and concerned for people with mental health issues. In terms of police intervention in those cases it does not seem the Chatham PD are trained in such matters. They are often young officers just starting out. People would prefer to see such cases managed by county reps instead; there is much support for funding social service professionals to work alongside police in these matters. This is not possible in a small village such as ours.

**Suggestions for Use of Budget Resources:** from randomly canvassed seniors in the community

A PD of 19 part-time officers doing about 84 hours of scheduled shifts per week at a cost to the village of \$200K per year raises questions about whether a village this size can afford to maintain a PD. Other towns this size do not have one.

We heard from Copake Town Supervisor Jeanne Mettler that they dissolved their PD by referendum a few years ago, have seen no uptick in crime and have saved a lot of money. Not everyone is happy with the decision, of course.

We know the State Police will have a presence on Rt. 295 soon. That raises a big question of whether we also need a PD right in our village.

## 5.2 Substance Use Affected Community

Submitted by Lori Antonson - Acting President of Columbia County Pathways to Recovery (CCPR) in collaboration with other CCPR board members who collected information for this report.

**Question:** What are the community needs of people struggling with substance use disorder and/or mental health issues, and are there additional programs or services you would like to see in the Village and in our community?

### **Public Safety Needs:**

Integrate social service/mental health professionals to ride along for mental health related calls.

Certified Peer Recovery Advocates (CRPAs) to ride along for overdose response and to help create a safe place for dialogue with person.

Training and/or ride alongs for assistance if an overdose occurs in the patrol car.

Cross training officers for better preparedness to handle substance use calls.

Community awareness of programs such as Chatham Cares 4 U.

Need for police referrals to other services for substance use and mental health support, i.e. MCAT (Mobile Crisis Assessment Team). Possibly establish a 311 call system for non-emergency calls for information about local services, support agencies, referrals, etc.

Work locally to staunch illegal drug commerce (not stand down awaiting drug task force units).

### **Suggestions for Use of Budget Resources:**

Need for more local services for mental health support/substance use counseling.

Need for affordable housing and local support services upon release from detox/rehab facilities.

Need for transportation to/from local and non-local supports and services.

Develop a more involved and fully engaged community around substance use recovery and mental health supports and establish safe, sober events for youth as well as for adults.

Build local awareness/understanding of substance use and mental health needs.

Parent support programs run by social workers to help mediate family conflict which may prevent the need for police involvement.

As a preventative measure against drifting into substance use, need for more widespread youth activities as alternatives to idle time after school, and to provide snow days/winter vacation activities. Pool hall? Bowling alley? After school and Adult Ed classes? More use of local tennis courts? Community swimming pool? Skating rink?

Need for a community center as well as renovate/restore the Crellin Morris Memorial to utilize its full potential.

Youth programs relying on mentors from the community to teach skills that can help steer youth toward a passion and a focus.

Adult sports teams/clubs.

Better utilization of Crellin Park: flood parking lots for skating rink? Community kids' gardens? Rollerskate/rollerblade rink? Skateboarding area? Use of pavilions for community classes/regular events?

Invest in expanding music/arts programs in the Chatham Central School District. Establish scholarship funds for underprivileged and economically weaker families.

Expand use of PS21 to include free community summer activities other than stage performances: overnight camping? Weekly outdoor movie events?

More awareness of Chatham Library and their events, and better collaboration with community for more robust use of the facility to house/host supportive activities.

### **5.3 Business Community**

Information compiled by Tom Crowell and Melony Spock

**Responses:** from canvass of businesses in the Village

Change hours to later in the day so there is less coverage in the morning but more in the evening.

Foot patrol on main street.

## 6 THE COMMUNITY SURVEY

A survey was composed and made available to Village residents through the Village website, emails, Facebook page and had mention in local papers. 175 people responded to the questionnaire. The results of the Village survey are listed below:

### Q1: Do you own property (residential or commercial) in the Village of Chatham?

169 Answered / 1 Skipped  
Yes = 119 or 70.41%  
No = 50 or 29.59%

### Q2: Do you reside (renter or home-owner) in the Village of Chatham?

170 Answered / 0 Skipped  
Yes = 135 or 79.41%  
No = 35 or 29.59%

### Q3: If yes, do you live in a house or an apartment in the Village of Chatham?

134 Answered / 36 Skipped  
House = 116 or 86.57%  
Apartment = 18 or 13.43%

### Q4: Do you operate a business in the Village of Chatham?

167 Answered / 3 skipped  
Yes = 39 or 23.35%  
No = 128 or 76.65%

### Q5: What is your age?

18-24	3
25-34	21
35-44	21
45-54	8
55-64	35
65 +	40
No Response	44

**Q6: What is your gender?**

Female	78
Male	46
Non-Binary	3
No Response	40

**Q7: What is your race and/or ethnicity?**

White/Caucasian	104
Black	4
Hispanic	2
Arab American	1
Mixed	2
Hispanic Asian	1
Why? Shouldn't Matter	5
No response	50

**Q8: What experiences or interactions have you had with the Village of Chatham Police?  
What experiences or interactions have you had with the Village of Chatham Police?**

113 answered / 54 skipped

A little more than 30% of survey participants did not respond to this question. Out of the 113 responses, many responded that they had little or no experience with the police and gave no descriptions. Most of the responses just answered the question so they weren't positive or negative responses. General responses mentioned speeding/parking tickets/traffic stops, assistance with problems, neighbors, teenage pranks and theft. Responses that were more detailed are listed below:

"I've had the village police ride my bumper when I came through the village late at night. They made me feel very nervous and worried that I might do something wrong while I was driving home. I pulled over to let them pass so that I could continue to drive in peace; however, they had the nerve to pull right up to my driver's window and stare at me. Scared and not sure what my rights were, I put down my window, as did he. He asked where I had been and where I was going. Truly none of his business!! A police state here in Chatham, NY. Another time, I went down into town to pick my son up at the brewery around midnight, and the Chatham Police car was stopped dead in the middle of the street right outside the pub and he wasn't moving. Making some point that he was watching the pub. Don't appreciate their sense of entitled power."

"I have been a business owner, I have had a family member arrested, I have had a child harassed and threatened by a police officer. I have had to call for assistance for a car robbery, I have had to call police for a neighbor dispute."

"Reported a possible child abuse and asked that someone with sensitivity respond. The Chief handled the incident himself. On another occasion the Chief accompanied the EMTs when called for a medical incident (myself)."

"Recently, officer responded to a report of signs stolen/vandalized on our lawn; officers direct traffic during events. A couple of years ago, officer stopped by to tell us about neighborhood program."

"Mostly good, a couple disconcerting. On two occasions officers acted in an unprofessional and threatening manner. Fortunately the chief at the time resolved the situation. None of the officers involved are still around."

"No interactions. I've only ever been stared at while walking down the street while an officer often idles and chats up a neighbor. They've never waved, smiled, or said hello."

"When we first moved here 5+ years ago and had some concerns about neighbors we were told by the chief to "move"."

"None over the past few years. Anything that happened prior to our experience is not relevant today."

"When we opened our store, they stopped to talk with us and introduce themselves."

"Overall I try to avoid them, but if I do experience them it's been fine probably because I'm a white male"

“Bad. Officers drove up and told my kids they couldn’t climb a tree in our yard. I had to go down and confirm there was no law against MY kids climbing MY tree in MY yard. They cost \$200K a year and provide no services. Guns in the hands of white men make me feel unsafe. Black cars, dark paramilitary outfits make me feel unsafe. I already pay for State and County police, I do not need a third police bill. There’s no crime in Chatham, police are unnerving, redundant and a luxury tax for themselves.”

“My interactions with Chatham police have been good. But I appreciated was but when I was in the office late at night and they saw the lights on the walking patrol would just stop by and make sure everything was OK. They would also check to make sure the business door was locked and let us know if it was not.”

“When I first moved to the Village many years ago, I was pulled over several times for minor issues like license plate light. I felt like honestly I was being targeted. Then I had to file a police report for a credit card fraud. When I went to the police to file such a claim, I was treated like I had something to do with the fraud. It was very surprising. I think things have changed a lot over the last several years. The police seem more approachable”

“I was pulled over for rolling through a stop sign on Sunday. They offered an outreach program a kind of get to know you which was nice.”

**Q9: If you have not had any experiences with the Village of Chatham Police, please explain why. For example: never had a need to call for police, did not know how to call the Village Police directly; unsure of what kind of help the Village Police provides; called for help, and County Sheriff or State Police responded. 57 answered / 110 skipped**

Most respondents stated that they never had a need to call the police. If they did call the police, many respondents said that the County or State Police responded. A few detailed responses below:

“It’s not clear what the PT village police actually do, you can’t reach them if you wanted to, seems like a total waste of tax dollars when we have a clear state police presence.”

“Kevin Boehm once held traffic for me while I set off a black powder explosion under the Crandall awning. sans firemen, sans a pyrotechnic license, this kind of “experience” epitomizes small town largess, was in many ways reckless. There’s no crime. I’ve never gotten a speeding ticket. I have called police on two occasions and never had Chatham police show up. An officer came by trying to sell me the MYCOP program. I let him talk, let him wind himself, then asked if I might make a recommendation: told him about the Menlo Park study (read about it on [policeone.com](http://policeone.com)) asked if he might consider wearing a light colored blazer instead of black paramilitary gear, “it’s’ not black. It’s blue”. I was standing 5 feet away and it looked black. “Ok, it’s blue. Would you consider wearing more of a street cloths look?” “it’s not paramilitary.” He argued. “Ok, argue with me.” He threw his MYCOP sheet on the ground, “Forget it, you don’t like cops.” He walked off. With such poor training, such lousy people skills, why on earth am I taxed for Village police?”

“When our security alarms were going off at the store, the Sheriff arrived. Sadly, the Village Police hours have been cut. So, even though our store is literally right next to the Police Dept, the Sheriff had to drive up to investigate. Luckily, it was a serious situation, but unfortunate that we don’t have a local police presence to protect us 24/7.”

“Never had the need to. Only experiences have been at fairs/festivals or public marches. At these times police officers seem to only helpful and polite.”

**Q10: How would you describe your interactions/experiences with the Village of Chatham Police?** 110 answered / 64 /Skipped / 13 No experiences

**Positive descriptions – 47** (cordial, friendly, positive, fine, professional, respectful, accommodating, willing to help, pleasant)

**Okay – 19** - not great or mixed – (mostly no detail, a couple to do with no follow up on an issue, one with harassment)

**Negative – 18**(‘out to get me’, ‘could do without’, unhappy with how teenage son was treated, ‘inept’, ‘only out to get people’, incident with young son, ‘uncomfortable’, ‘no follow through’, ‘rude’, ‘arrogant’, ‘surlly’, ‘not friendly’, ‘sadly negative’ (no details), ‘ridiculous’, ‘not easily reached’, ‘waste of time’, ‘annoying’, ‘silly’)

Handled problem – 3

Praise for Chief Volkmann – 3

Not easily reached, State Police better – 3

If a police department, full time better than part time - 1

**Q11: Are you aware of any of the following programs provided through the Village of Chatham Police? (check any you know about)** 96 Answered / 74 Skipped

- Chatham Cares 4 U (83 or 86.46% know about this program.)
- Your Cop (16 or 16.67%)
- Dark House Checks (19 or 19.79%)
- Bike Patrol (36 or 37.50%)
- Foot Patrol (34 or 35.43%)
- Sobriety Checkpoint (21 or 21.88%)
- Enhanced/Focused Enforcement (6 or 6.25%)
- Body Cameras (17 or 17.71%)
- In-Car Cameras (18 or 18.75%)

**Q12: If you have had occasion to be involved in/with any of these programs, please describe your experiences.** 47 Answered /122 Skipped / 19 No experiences

**General:** great programs, sounds good: 3

**Bike/Foot patrol:** Wanting officers on foot or bike – 4

**Your Cop – 4.** Mixed response - Overall liked meeting officer but lamented lack of follow up. i.e., program not effective because not followed through.

**Chatham Cares 4 You – 10.** Generally positive. ‘Innovative’, ‘important’. Two had volunteered for program but others said they liked idea but had had no direct experience. Not a fan of CCares4U – 1 (didn’t say why)

**Dark House Check– 4.** All positive

**Negative:** Stopped because my car isn’t nice; officer lied; felt harassed – 1

**Q13: Are there other programs or additional services you would like to see the Village, County, and/or State provide to our community to promote and enhance public safety? For example: programs directed at mental health, the substance use affected community, youth-at-risk, sheltered residents.** 76 Answered / 93 Skipped

**Note:** For those who responded, support for these programs were strong. (47 explicitly in support)

**A recurring theme:** Support for and desire to see mental health, substance abuse programs, housing for homeless, youth programs, outreach and programs for elderly; that these were important and should *not* be run by police but by other social/community organizations.

**Specific responses:**

*(Mental Health, substance abuse and recovery, emphasis on help not enforcement and that these be free of charge and of good quality – 4*

*Take CCares4U funds out of police budget and fund it as a county or village project – Spend police budget on village beautification, roads etc. -4*

*Use \$\$ from police to fund Youth at Risk – 5*

*Divert existing resources to non-police crisis response especially for vulnerable population, youth, mental health, and a commitment not to work with ICE - 1*

*Mental Health – 5*

*Police need to be more involved with community -2*

*Officers need crisis intervention and bias awareness training – 4*

*Cops **not** to respond to MH and substance abuse - 2*

***No** police resources for social programs – 3*

*Outreach for elderly and homebound - 1*

*More resources for library, MH, substance abuse and rehab, Crellin Park, Youth support, good housing, these problems not solved by police – 3*

*Need to reconsider how police are deployed and for what, reimagine police interaction with community – 3*

*Officer to attend community social events to get to know people – 4*

*Free afterschool programs for all youth and MH support – all outside the PD -1*

*Speed cameras on Rt66 not police cars – 1*

*DARE program to continue in county - 2*

*Praise for Chief Volkman for opioid program; substance abuse and MH should NOT be through police. – 4*

*Prefers full time police (rather than part time officers)- 1*

*Stop police speeding through village – 1*

*Drug abuse a problem in our area – 2*

**Q14: If you would like someone from the Collaborative to follow up with you, please provide a way to contact you.** 22 Answered / 147 Skipped

Six people requested follow up - (5 emails, 1 phone number). All six were contacted. One responded to email asking about when report was going to be published. He was given date report is to be posted on village website and date for public meeting.

Spoke to one respondent by phone. She wanted to discuss a very unpleasant experience with a village officer in 2019. The incident had to do with her son who has Asperger's. She described the officer as rude, arrogant and frightening. She asked if officers have training in mental health issues and how to de-escalate and manage these situations sensitively and non-violently. Her opinion is that these situations should not be handled by police but by trained mental health professionals.

#### **Other responses**

Too many officers. Too much tax.

Disappointed Questionnaire did not address issue of police budget and whether Chatham needs its own police department.

**Q15: How safe do you feel living in the Village of Chatham?** 118 Answered / 52 Skipped

I feel very safe = 86 or 72.88%

I feel somewhat safe = 31 or 26.27%

I do not feel safe = 1 or .85%

**Q16: If you answered above that you feel very safe, please tell us what contributes to your sense of safety.** 81 Answered / 89 Skipped

- Never had a problem. (10)
- Nothing goes on here, quiet town, Low crime. (26)
- Friendly neighbors/community, knowing neighbors. (25)
- Vigilant community members/community working together. (6)
- My own personal protective measures/I own gun(s). (3)
- Police presence and responsiveness. (12)
- Not the police. (3)
- Street lights.
- Good that we have a police department, but I think it could be smaller.
- We don't have many issues with homelessness due to PTSD or substance abuse, as most people are sent to Albany. Because most people in a desperate situation don't leave here we tend to not have a lot of crime.
- We do not need village, county sheriffs, and state police. Coverage by county/state police is sufficient.
- Not a whole lot of traffic, easy to navigate, absence of surveillance technology in public space[s]
- I used to feel more safe because I knew the police were patrolling at night, but now I don't feel that way because I have heard there's not as much coverage as there used to be.
- I appreciate the Chatham police, they seem to have a nice relationship with the community and for the most part leave law abiding people alone.
- Three police departments covering the area don't need Chatham.
- Knowing some of the store owners. Residents and visitors appear orderly and cheerful.
- I will say that the patrols are not every night which I understand but they could mix them up to keep everyone on their toes.
- Having a local police dept is helpful because they get to know everyone too and do foot and bike patrol rather than just driving around. It's good that we're not depending only on state troopers or county sheriff.
- I used to live in Brooklyn, this is very safe area compared to the city.
- Outside of the Covid situation, there is a strong sense of community, and a good selection of local programs, churches and support.

- Aware of my surroundings.
- The demographics of a small mature population
- I just do. It has very little to do with CPD.
- Police , Fire, EMS all add to the safety of our village.
- I am white and present as a cis woman so I hold a privileged identity that police are not interested in harassing.
- I come from a large city things that happened there don't happen here.
- My location: Sidewalk on other side of street (limits pedestrian traffic), limited neighbors.
- The state police and Sheriffs patrols are often more visible than our part time police patrols.
- My feeling of safety has nothing to do with the police.
- Maybe I'm living with my head in the sand, but the Columbia County general community itself seems pretty sensible, I don't really hear much about scandal in local law enforcement, and the state is one of only four that doesn't allow 'open carry'. (If that ever changes, hello Canada.)
- My legal status/race/gender.
- We are on a private dead end street. No one comes here.
- The Village Police do not make me feel any safer.
- My neighbor situation has become unsafe, otherwise the village is wonderful.

**Q17: If you answered above that you feel somewhat safe, please tell us why only somewhat safe.** 32 Answered/ 138 Skipped

- The Chatham police are rarely around when needed.
- Crack head that rides his bike on Main Street and yells profanity. PD does their best with him politely but he's a detriment to the village.
- There are too many drug deals that go on.
- Concerned about potential extreme right wing violence, threats and harassment of demonstrators and activists, lack of accountability of law enforcement.
- The lack of Police presents in the night hours.
- Less safe due to bail reform not the pd.
- It's a village with a wide range of residents. You never know what's in the hearts of men. Look at the riots this spring. Can't trust anyone.

- My neighbor situation has become unsafe, otherwise the village is wonderful.
- There is not any communication about crime in Chatham so I'm unaware of the crime stats and concerns. I would like more lighting of the County Fairgrounds.
- Due to all the current events that happen around the country and how it's restrained the police presence is a concern.
- The Village is a safe community but there are teenagers who play pranks with property and because of that, I'm vigilant.
- White male officers, and there's been no diversity in the history of village police, no women, no people of color, create anxiety, and a pervasive sense of fear. Who can tell me they like being followed by police? with no crime, it's just a racket.
- Police are not on duty all the time.
- Aware of increased drug activity and reduced local police presence.
- 
- I lock my doors.
- Limited availability of direct access.
- Never any police officers on duty and cannot go in and speak to them.
- Our community has changed over the years and as expected not what it once was. Drugs are still a problem but without arresting the dealers we will never see any improvement.
- 
- Too many unknown people around, drug use is on the rise.
- Rednecks w/ monster diesel trucks, Rednecks w/ guns.
- You can never be 100% safe.
- Need more police for all the drug dealers and pot smokers.
- As violence and looting round the country escalates, I would feel more safe if we had a consistent 24/7 police presence. We have security cameras (interior and exterior), but a physical presence would be more reassuring.
- This summer not much of a police presence.
- 
- Part time force. Response time.
- I feel unsafe from the BLM that targeted our home and character - LOCALS.
- Traffic is not being regulated.
- 
- It's not an full time department now. So you never know how far away help is.
- 
- Something That has recently bothered me is that on several streets big pick up trucks will tailgate, rev their engines and accelerate down village streets. It is menacing and these drivers seem above the law.

**Q18: If you answered above that you do not feel safe, please tell us in what way(s) do you not feel safe?** 5 Answered / 165 Skipped

- Less police presence.
- Trumpites, Oath Keepers, Sovereign Citizens, White Supremacists and Fascists who threaten violence towards anyone who does not agree with them. Coal rollers who blow clouds of black smoke out of their illegally modified diesel trucks. I've seen this in Chatham.

**Q19: What would make you feel safer?** 70 Answered / 100 Skipped

- Better lighting/more street lights. (3)
- Full-time or More police presence/More Foot and bike patrols. (14)
- Less police. (7)
- Remove drugs from Chatham. (4)
- A flashing crosswalk sign on railroad ave by the tracks.
- Cops actually making themselves present in the community to make themselves known and residents can see them as neighbors, rather than them always sitting in their cars hiding out, trying to catch people speeding or leaving the bars.
- Community watch programs.
- More police patrols on dead streets like mine.
- Village police, when I see state troopers or sheriff's I wonder what's going on that our local cops couldn't handle it.
- Stronger mechanisms to hold law enforcement accountable for misconduct, diversion of responsibilities away from police to non-police crisis response.
- A monumental severance to the Chatham police payroll, with those funds being redirected into bettering the wellbeing of the community.
- The police do not make me feel safe. I think they need more training and less immunity. The family members of cops get away with whatever they want, even high school students. It's unacceptable.
- Less police and better community programs to bolster the community.
- Directing funding away from law enforcement towards social services so that people can get the help they need, so law enforcement is not overburdened with work that they are not trained for or should be engaging in.
- More proactive. Less of the police being vilified.

- Cops that actually cared about the community and its residents. They CARED and didn't regard citizens as just another suspect worthy of a ticket. I see them solely as ticket writers. Useless, actually.
- I just remember when officers checked on Main St. Businesses at night and now that does not seem to be happening.
- 
- Action by the court to remove these neighbors from their dwelling.
- Regular communication about crime stats in Chatham.
- I would like more lighting of the County Fairgrounds.
- We could further develop the sense of community by using the internet and local groups to reach out to more residents and make more personal connections between people. Setting up virtual neighborhoods where people can connect. This is probably what Facebook can do, but we aren't on social media, so maybe I'm just out of touch. But, now that many people only use cell phones, it would be nice to be able to have even stronger neighborhood bonds.
- World peace.
- Police that are trusted to serve and protect the honest taxpayers that pay their salaries and pensions. They have a tough job but also, unfortunately, a bad track record in too many places around our country, and that has, fairly or not, eroded trust here in Chatham. In this era of tight budgets and high taxes, every expenditure of the Village must be justified. If the Police are to remain in their present form, there ought to be a detailed justification presented to the public, a demonstration of what they do for us and what changes they intend to make in order to improve their service.
- Less drugs and a more visible PD doing policing rather than social work.
- The police patrolling my street and responding quickly to my calls have helped me feel safe.
- If we removed Chatham police patrols from our streets and spent our money on food, housing, mental health, and drug treatment for our community.
- Return to full-time police with foot patrols, more aggressively prosecute drug dealers.
- I don't live in the village, so I can't answer this question the way it is asked, but my experience as someone who owns property there, is that the Chatham PD is a layer of service that is redundant. Chatham handles parking tickets and likes to chase speeders (something that could be addressed with speed cameras if needed..) and Sheriffs or State police get called for anything important. This scenario is not a good use of tax dollars. I would feel just as safe without a Chatham PD. Let's put our money into badly needed infrastructure repairs/upgrades (water system, sidewalks, street maintenance, etc.).
- To actually SEE the police patrol and not sit doing speed traps.
- To know how to reach someone local and the response time we would have.
- Reflective paint on the crosswalks for those crossing the street at night

- Be available-be seen and be present.
- Do away with the part-time police dept and use the money saved to improve streets, water and sewer.
- 
- Being able to open carry a firearm and disband local pd.
- More foot patrols, more PD facetime in the community.
- I worry that attrition at the Chatham Fire Dept is a cause for concern.
- Crack down on drug use by DEA.
- No diesel trucks on public roads. Less weapons of mass destruction in our community (guns).
- Everyone have a gun.
- I am concerned about possible trouble from white supremacists.
- In general I feel safe but I would love to see more help for people that could use it.
- Keeping our 2nd Amendment.
- Fewer people advocating violence against people who disagree with them.
- We feel VERY aside from the group of people that emerged to tear our Village apart because "they could". Shameful.
- This is a safe community with services from County Sheriff and State Police... I do NOT find a need for Village police too.

## 7 RECOMMENDATIONS

### 7.1 Recommendations from Seniors Focus Group

The biggest takeaway from our senior focus group is that as a part-time operation, our Village PD is fairly invisible to most of us. We don't feel any less safe because of that. In fact, safety is not mentioned as a reason to maintain a village PD. Instead, it raises the question of what is the real value of the PD to us at this time? Is it worth \$200,000 in the annual budget?

The police have been a fixture here for years. Older people especially know that. And have some good feelings about that. But the current force of part-time officers plays a very different role here and it's an unclear one since few of us ever see them at work. How is their time spent and how does it serve us?

Looking out for each other could be more of a community-wide focus if we want it to be. Concerns for our neighbors safety and well-being might be better and more cost-effectively served through other means such as establishing a neighborhood watch system with "block" captains. In the event of more short-term rentals in our village, the clarity of neighborhoods diminishes drastically. Building up connections amongst ourselves is important. When needed, we can call on State Police.

If we *are* to maintain our own PD, some neighbor express an interest in better communication between the PD and the public. That might mean having the PD send out a quarterly newsletter or have a regular column on the village website. That might include a photo of an officer along with his/her bio. Perhaps a meet and greet night for the community to meet officers could be valuable.

In general, the thinking is that IF we have a PD then they need to be visible to the community. Walk Main Street. Talk to people. Ride bikes around neighborhoods. And their actions and policies need to be transparent. That means all policies need to be readily available to anyone who wants to read them without the need for filing a FOIA request.

## **7.2 Recommendations from Substance Use Affected Community**

The collective responses received by this focus group indicate that the vast majority of the respondents believe that investment in collaboration with social services and the Chatham Village Police may yield better results for enhancing public safety and policing as well as help to foster mutual trust and cement healthy, positive relationships with the Village Police.

While they realize that the resources are limited in a small village, they believe that there is great benefit in building community awareness, collaboration, and understanding of substance use disorders/mental health needs, and that developing and implementing community based supports for those suffering from these issues can be a positive force for change and crime reduction in the village of Chatham. To quote one participant: “the power of collaboration has the capacity to restore the lives of individuals, families, and communities”.