

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