



Village of Suffern

Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative Plan

DRAFT

*****Acknowledgements*****

Any success of the collaborative is in large part owed to the dedication and commitment of community volunteers, who took time out of their lives to attempt to build a safer, fairer, and more transparent Suffern. The stakeholder committee worked hard to better their community and police department and the Village of Suffern Board of Trustees thanks them for that.

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INTRODUCTION

The Village of Suffern developed this Police Reform Plan in response to Governor Andrew Cuomo's Executive Order 203. The Village and its police department spent considerable time self-assessing and seeking public input on how the department could best serve the community. This plan documents the process, analysis and conclusions we arrived at over the course of these efforts. Our Police Department was found to be serving the needs of the community well overall, but there were several areas where the community and members of the police department felt there were ways to improve the police service that our residents receive.

On June 12, 2020, Governor Cuomo signed executive Order 203, requiring each local government in the state to adopt a policing reform plan by April 1, 2021. The order mandated that "Each local government entity which has a police agency operating with police officers as defined under 1.20 of the criminal procedure law must perform a comprehensive review of current police force deployments, strategies, policies, procedures, and practices, and develop a plan to improve such deployments, strategies, policies, procedures, and practices, for the purposes of addressing the particular needs of the communities served by such police agency and promote community engagement to foster trust, fairness, and legitimacy, and to address any racial bias and disproportionate policing of communities of color".

The Governor's Office published a "Resources and Guide for Public Officials and Citizens" in August of 2020, which recommended a collaborative process where the community should:

- Review the needs of the community served by its police agency and evaluate the department's current policies and practices;
- Establish policies that allow police to effectively and safely perform 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, and;
- Certify adoption of the plan to the State Budget Director on or before April 1, 2021.

Executive Order 203 mandated that each chief executive of such local government shall convene the head of the local police agency, and stakeholders in the community to develop such plan, which shall consider evidence-based policing strategies, including but not limited to, use of force policies; procedural justice; any studies addressing systemic racial bias or racial justice in policing; implicit bias awareness training; de-escalation training and practices; law enforcement assisted diversion programs; restorative justice practices; community-based

outreach and conflict resolution; problem-oriented policing; hot spots policing; focused deterrence; crime prevention through environmental design; violence prevention and reduction interventions; model policies and guidelines promulgated by the New York State Municipal Police Training Council; and standards promulgated by the New York State Law Enforcement Accreditation Program.

In response to this mandate, the Suffern Village Board, along with Mayor Edward Markunas, convened a working group of community stakeholders, comprised of members of the community, ethnic and religious group representatives, as well as the Suffern Chief of Police and members of his staff. The collaborative workgroup met multiple times over the last several months to discuss the needs, priorities and various topics related to police reform. Included in these workgroup meetings were members of the Rockland County District Attorney's staff, as well as the Rockland County Public Defender's Office and Mayor Markunas, as the CEO of the Village of Suffern. Throughout the committee's discussions, a number of themes became evident:

- Building a law enforcement workforce that is representative of the Village of Suffern
- Connecting law enforcement with the community that it serves
- Creating better mechanisms for addressing mental health responses in our community
- Improving lines of communication between the police and the community
- Ensuring transparency in the operations of law enforcement
- Ensuring law enforcement officers are held accountable for their actions

This Police Reform Plan presents recommendations, made and agreed upon by the community stakeholders' group, to address the aforesaid topics as well as improve the services provided to the Suffern Community by the Suffern Police Department.

Community Stakeholder Committee Members

The Village of Suffern Police Reform Collaborative consisted of Suffern Mayor Edward Markunas, Police Chief Andrew Loughlin and Lieutenant Jose Martinez from the Suffern police department, as well as the following community stakeholders:

Syed Ali

Syed Ali moved to Suffern in 1997 and is the Co-founder and Administrator of the Iqra Darul Eshan Mosque and Islamic School. He is married with two children.

Gina Bertolino

Gina Bertolino has been a Suffern resident since 2002 along with her husband, Joseph Bertolino, and their two sons, Giuliano 23yrs and Leonardo 22yrs. Gina and her sons are graduates of the Suffern Central School District. She is the owner and principal Stylist of Mystic Images Salon, located in the village of Suffern for 30 years. Gina has served as a Suffern Village Board Trustee, Board VP and member for the Suffern Chamber of Commerce where she currently serves as a Board Director/member. As a Suffern resident and business owner she has served many years of volunteer hours, cultivating and establishing a relationship with the community, through her commitment to the commercial success of the local marketplace, annual community events as well as local charitable events.

Banks Dastine

Banks Dastine is a Suffern resident and the owner and CEO of Diddy's Soul Food and Lounge, located in Suffern, NY. He has over eighteen years of small business management experience. He successfully turned Diddy's Soul Food into a newly approved franchise by the United Franchise Group. Mr. Dastine is the CEO of GroundUP; providing assistance to potential business owners. GroundUP has helped individuals build their LLC, S-Corp, C-Corp, and Non for profits throughout the country. He is very involved in the Suffern Community as the Director of the Suffern Chamber of Commerce and is a member of Village of Suffern Planning Board. Mr. Dastine has authored more than six self-help books including: Rethinking Your Purpose and Building Lasting Bonds.

Will Reinmuth

Reverend Will Reinmuth is a Suffern Resident and the Lead Pastor of the All Souls Community Church. He grew up in Congers NY and graduated from Clarkstown North High School. He has been married to a Suffern native for 21 years and has three teenage children.

Bruce Simon

Bruce Simon is a longtime Suffern resident and is a dedicated community volunteer. He has served the community in multiple ways, such as a Little League and CYO Basketball official; a Scout leader; chair of the Recycling and Tree Committees; member of the Planning Board; and as a Trustee and Deputy Mayor. Currently, he is a member of the Zoning Board of Appeals and the President of the Village Of Suffern Community Foundation, Inc.

AGENCY OVERVIEW

The Village of Suffern Police Department is a full-time agency which provides law enforcement services to residents, businesses, and visitors within the boundaries of the Village of Suffern. The Department's mission is to safeguard life and property, provide safe neighborhoods, reduce crime and the fear of crime, provide for safe roadways, and improve the quality of life for our citizens. The foundation by which our decisions and actions are based is guided by our value for human life, public trust, integrity, and professionalism.

The Village of Suffern Police Department has an authorized strength of 31 sworn personnel. This consists of 1 Police Chief, 2 Lieutenants, 1 Detective Sergeant, 5 Patrol Sergeants, and 2 Detectives, with remaining sworn personnel being Police Officers. The Department also has 8 Civilian Employees, including Dispatchers, Records and IT personnel.

The agency has a number of specialized units which include a Detective Unit, Community Policing Unit, K-9 Unit, and a Drug Abuse Resistance Program (DARE). The Department also takes an active role in Homeland Security through our involvement with Counter-Terrorism Zone 4 and has personnel assigned to Rockland County's SWAT Team also known as R.E.A.C.T. The department also has personnel assigned to the Rockland County Intelligence Unit, which coordinates resources between several county, state and local agencies and concentrates on gang related crimes and intelligence gathering.

The Village of Suffern Police Department is accredited by the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services, through their Law Enforcement Accreditation Program (LEAP). Accreditation is a progressive and contemporary way of helping police agencies evaluate and improve their overall performance. It provides formal recognition that an organization meets or exceeds general expectations of performance standards in the field. Accreditation acknowledges the implementation of policies that are conceptually sound and operationally effective. Accreditation is formal recognition that an agency's policies and practices meet or exceed the standards established by the council in the areas of administration, training, and operations.

The NYS LEAP encompasses four principal goals;

- To increase the effectiveness and efficiency of law enforcement agencies utilizing existing personnel, equipment and facilities to the extent possible;
- To promote increased cooperation among law enforcement agencies and other agencies of the criminal justice services;
- To ensure the appropriate training of law enforcement personnel; and

- To promote public confidence in law enforcement agencies

The Accreditation Program is comprised of 110 standards developed to further enhance the capabilities of an agency, and is divided into three categories. Standards in the Administrative section have provisions for such topics as agency organization, fiscal management, personnel practices, and records management. Training standards encompass basic and in-service instruction, as well as training for supervisors and specialized or technical assignments. Operations standards deal with such critical and litigious topics as high-speed pursuits, roadblocks, patrol, and unusual occurrences.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDED REFORMS

In the process of discussing and analyzing the Suffern Police Department's policies and procedures, as they relate to the topics covered in the Governors Police reform publication titled "Resources and Guide for Public Officials and Citizens," the Stakeholder Committee made several recommendations to improve the transparency, the level of trust between the police department and the community, as well as improve the overall operations of the department. The following are recommended reforms that the committee felt would accomplish those goals:

1. Streamline civilian complaint procedures and allow for complaints against the police to be accepted in person, by phone, by mail or electronically. Additionally, anonymous complaints should be accepted and investigated to the fullest extent possible.
2. Ensure "chokeholds" are banned by Suffern Police Department policy, unless the use of such is reasonable and necessary and the use of deadly physical force would be authorized by law.
3. Post critical police department policies and procedures (General Orders) on the Suffern Police Department's website to improve transparency.
4. Increase police department staffing to focus on community policing programs. Specifically, the committee recommends hiring one full time police officer to allow for a full-time community policing officer. In addition to normal community policing duties, this officer would initiate and run a Youth and Police Initiative (YPI) program that targets at-risk youths, in the hopes of changing behaviors and strengthening relationships between the police and these youths.
5. Form a community advocacy group that is inclusive of business owners, residents, homeowner's association groups, religious and community leaders and police department staff. This group would meet on a regular basis to address community concerns and work on police/community relation issues.
6. Increase funding to allow for additional police training in the areas of procedural justice, mental health crises, cultural diversity, and ethics.
7. Increase recruitment efforts to attract minority populations to take the entrance level police officer civil service test, in order to increase the diversity in the police officer candidate pool.

8. Research and allocate funding to equip police officers with body cameras in order to increase transparency, protect the public from misconduct, as well as protect police officers from false allegations of wrongdoing.
9. The committee recognizes the stressful nature of a police officer's job. It is recommended that police officers are provided with annual mental health checkups, similar to an annual physical exam, in order to ensure police officers are adequately coping with the stressors related to their duties.
10. Publish an annual community survey to give Suffern residents and business owners a platform to make suggestions and critique the service provided to them by the police department.

In addition to these recommendations, the stakeholder committee made two recommendations for New York State to implement statewide. The committee recommends;

1. The NYS Department of Motor Vehicles should collect data on driver's license applications regarding race and ethnicity of any person receiving a NYS driver's license or non-driver ID. This data could be utilized to analyze police/citizen contacts to ensure no particular persons are profiled or selected for enforcement action disproportionately, statewide.
2. The committee recognizes the need for statewide and nationwide law enforcement reform, but is also acutely aware that any meaningful reforms will need to be funded. Any reforms that are mandated by New York State should be funded by the state, and the costs of such reforms should not be passed down to local residents as unfunded mandates.

Conclusions and Summary of Action Items

In participating in the New York State Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative, the Village of Suffern, as well as the community stakeholders working group examined the Suffern Police Department's policies and procedures, as well as the department's day-to-day interaction with the community. This review found that for the most part, the police department has a good relationship with, and is supported by the community that it serves. The department receives very few personnel complaints and the complaints that it does receive are properly investigated to conclusion, in accordance with a detailed departmental policy. The stakeholders also noted that the police department is accredited through the New York State Department of Criminal Justice Services, Law Enforcement Accreditation Program, and has been since 2009. The department has maintained this status by keeping current with nationally recognized law enforcement best practices and procedures and updating their department General Orders accordingly. The department has successfully completed two accreditation re-assessments, in 2014 and 2019 maintaining its accredited status. The stakeholders noted that the department's General Orders already satisfactorily address many of the issues and concerns outlined in the Governor's executive order.

The stakeholders committee recognized that despite the excellent service that the Suffern Police Department currently provides to the community, there is always room for improvement. The Village of Suffern and its police department are committed to providing the best possible police service for its residents. In accordance with this philosophy, the following action items will be implemented by the Village of Suffern Board of trustees and the police department:

1. Suffern Police Department General Order 202, Civilian Complaints, will be updated to add specific wording to allow for civilian complaints to be accepted in-person, anonymously, by mail, email, electronically or any other form. Additionally, wording will be added to ensure all civilian complaints received are investigated to the fullest extent possible, even in the event of anonymous complaints and when no complainant is able to be located or interviewed. In addition, to facilitate the ease of filing a complaint against a Suffern Police Department member, civilian complaint forms will be posted on the Suffern Police Department's website, along with instructions on how to submit the complaint electronically, if so desired by the complainant. The forms will be posted in English, Spanish, Yiddish and Creole to accommodate the populations that we serve.

2. Suffern Police Department General Order 210, Use of Force, will be updated to outright ban the use of “chokeholds” by department members, unless the use of such “chokehold” is reasonable and necessary **AND** where the use of deadly physical force would be authorized by law.
3. Critical Suffern Police Department General Orders, such as the Use of Force, Pursuits and Roadblocks, Civilian Complaints, Disciplinary System, Hate Crimes, and Recruitment and Promotion of Personnel will be posted on the Suffern Police Department's website to increase transparency between the police department and the community.
4. The Suffern Village Board of Trustees will research the feasibility and fiscal implications of hiring an additional full time police officer to serve as a community policing officer. The community policing officer would focus on police/community relations, crime prevention, youth outreach programs and any other initiatives focused on improving police transparency and community relations.
5. The Village of Suffern will facilitate the formation of a community advocacy group that is inclusive of business owners, residents, homeowner’s association groups, religious and community leaders and police department staff. This group will meet on a regular basis, to be determined by the group, to address community concerns and work on police/community relation issues. In the event that the Village Board of Trustees authorizes the police department to add a community policing officer, that officer will attend community advocacy group meetings and act as the police department's liaison.
6. The Village of Suffern will allocate additional funding to the police department to allow for additional training in the areas of procedural justice, responding to mental health crises, cultural diversity, and ethics.
7. The police department will increase efforts to encourage minority populations to take the entrance level police officer civil service test, in order to increase the diversity in the police officer candidate pool. This will be accomplished by having police department personnel attend job fairs, community events, and speak at local high schools and colleges in order to encourage a diverse population to take the test. This will be done with the intention to increase the diversity of the police department ranks.

8. The Village of Suffern Board of Trustees will research and allocate funding to equip police officers with body cameras in order to increase transparency, protect the public from misconduct, as well as protect police officers from false allegations of wrongdoing.
9. The Village of Suffern Board of Trustees will work with the Suffern Police PBA to provide police officers with annual mental health checkups, similar to an annual physical exam, in order to ensure police officers are adequately coping with the stressors related to their duties.
10. The Suffern Police Department will publish an annual community survey to provide Suffern residents and business owners a platform to make suggestions and critique the service provided to them by the police department. This survey will be utilized by the police department to evaluate the annual goals and objectives of the department and to make necessary changes to policies, procedures and patrol initiatives, to provide the best police service to the village residents as possible.
11. The Suffern Village Board of Trustees will pass a resolution recommending that New York State requires the NYS Department of Motor Vehicles to collect data on driver's license applications regarding race and ethnicity of any person receiving a NYS driver's license or non-driver ID. The purpose of collecting this data would be to utilize it to analyze police/citizen contacts to ensure no particular persons are profiled or selected for enforcement action disproportionately, on a statewide level.
12. The Suffern Village Board of Trustees will pass a resolution recommending that any reforms that are mandated by New York State will receive funding by the state, and that the costs of such reforms will not be passed down to local residents as unfunded mandates.

NEW YORK STATE POLICE REFORM AND REINVENTION COLLABORATIVE PLAN CERTIFICATION FORM

Instructions: The Chief Executive of each local government must complete and submit this certification and a copy of their Plan to the Director of the New York State Division of the Budget on or before April 1, 2021 at EO203Certification@budget.ny.gov.

I, _____, as the Chief Executive of _____
(the “Local Government”), hereby certify the following pursuant to Executive Order No. 203 issued by Governor Andrew M. Cuomo on June 12, 2020:

- ☐ The Local Government has performed a comprehensive review of current police force deployments, strategies, policies, procedures, and practices;
- ☐ The Local Government has developed a plan, attached hereto, to improve such deployments, strategies, policies, procedures, and practices (the “Plan”);
- ☐ The Local Government has consulted with stakeholders (including but not limited to: membership and leadership of the local police force; members of the community, with emphasis in areas with high numbers of police and community interactions; interested non-profit and faith-based community groups; the local office of the district attorney; the local public defender; and local elected officials) regarding the Plan;
- ☐ The Local Government has offered the Plan in draft form for public comment to all citizens in the locality and, prior to adoption of the Plan by the local legislative body, has considered the comments submitted; and
- ☐ The legislative body of the Local Government has ratified or adopted the Plan by local law or resolution.

Name

Signature

Title

Date



Division of Criminal Justice Services

February 19, 2021

Dear Chief Andrew Loughlin:

On behalf of The Division of Criminal Justice Services this letter confirms we are certifying that Suffern Village Police Department meets certain eligibility requirements, set forth by the U.S. Department of Justice, for discretionary federal grants. Suffern Village Police Department is qualified to receive federal grants for three years from the date of this letter.

Pursuant to Section 2 of the Presidential Executive Order on Safe Policing for Safe Communities, dated June 16, 2020, Executive Order No. 13929 (the "Executive Order on Safe Policing"), the U.S. Department of Justice's discretionary grant funding is only available to state, local, and university or college law enforcement agencies that have obtained (or are in the process of seeking) credentials certifying that they meet certain standards on use of force. The Executive Order on Safe Policing empowers the U.S. Attorney General to designate independent credentialing bodies — including DCJS — to certify that a law enforcement agency meets the conditions of eligibility for federal grants.

Following our review, we have determined that Suffern Village Police Department meets the conditions for certification. Accordingly, DCJS will include your agency going forward within our database of certified law enforcement agencies. Each year we will provide the name of each certified law enforcement agency to the U.S. Department of Justice.

If you would like to discuss further, please do not hesitate to contact me either by email at Ashley.onorati@dcjs.ny.gov or by phone at 518-485-2838. Thanks very much.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ashley Onorati".

Ashley Onorati
Criminal Justice Program Specialist I