

New York State Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative Cambridge-Greenwich Police Department

Recommendations to the Village of Cambridge Board of Trustees and the Village of Greenwich Board of Trustees

March 2021

In response to the New York State Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative initiative resulting from Gov. Cuomo's Executive Order 203, the Villages of Cambridge and Greenwich developed a plan to evaluate the policies and practices of their combined police department and to solicit community opinion about what if any improvements are needed.

The Villages of Cambridge and Greenwich are small rural communities located in Southern Washington County, each with a population of approximately 1,900 residents. The two villages share nonunion police leadership under a shared-services agreement.

A survey addressing community sentiment about the Cambridge-Greenwich Police Department was distributed widely in each of the villages, and these surveys were available to citizens through the month of December.

Each of the communities formed committees consisting of elected officials, community representatives, and volunteers interested in the process. They held meetings in Cambridge and Greenwich, and then convened two joint meetings to develop the recommendations detailed in this document. Joint meetings were held on February 11 and February 25, with the meeting recordings made available through the Village websites.

The following recommendations resulted.

On the topic of the mental health and well-being of Cambridge-Greenwich Police Department officers, the committee recommends:

- Recognizing the potentially difficult aspects of the police officer's job, the Cambridge-Greenwich Police Department should provide stress management support for our officers. We recognize that resources are available in our area.
- The Washington County safety officer, available in crisis situations, is available for regular information sessions for our officers. The Department will work with Washington County to plan targeted sessions.
- Our insurance agency, NYMIR, offers courses on specific subjects that include health maintenance. The department will distribute information about this resource to officers and encourage participation in them.

On the topic of mental health/wellness and addiction issues in the community, the committee recommends:

- Our officers are in the position of fulfilling multiple roles, including responding to mental health incidents, moderating in domestic disputes, household accidents, and others. Our police department has printed information that officers provide to people involved in such crises. In

order to avoid some of these crisis situations and give community members resources before a crisis point is reached, we recommend disseminating this information to the community now. A subcommittee of the reform committee will proceed with the work of compiling and disseminating more information.

- Other sources of support for community members operate in our region; for example, a mobile crisis unit funded by veterans. We recommend that we learn more information about services that can help our local residents and get the information out.
- Education and awareness training for the public: Once the resource lists are compiled, distribute to the community via our websites, publicity on social media, newspaper articles.
- More information is needed for the public about crisis resources, including hotlines. This information should be distributed.

On the topics of education and additional training of officers, the committee learned about and recommended:

- Initial training, which happens for officers who have gone through the Police Academy. Once an officer completes the Police Academy, that officer travels with an experienced officer until they are deemed ready to work alone.
- Ongoing training currently in place: refreshers take place annually, but this generally covers range practice and other technical training, such as using the alcohol testing equipment.
- The committee recommends that additional training should be instituted for all officers. This should include anti-bias training, cultural sensitivity training, and de-escalation techniques.
- The committee recommends that supplemental training should be a requirement of every officer employed by the Police Department. The Department can begin this process this year by using the courses offered by NYMIR. NYMIR offers a series of courses each year. Officers will be required to complete the complete curriculum by years' end. Participation will be monitored by our chief officer Sargent Danko.
- The committee recommends that the Department institute a policy of mandating officers to complete a self-assessment of their training needs.
- The committee recommends planning community-based training or discussion groups that would bring officers and members of the public into forums to discuss issues or topics that become important to the community. The Village Boards are responsible for planning these events.

On the subject of officer accountability, the committee recommends:

- A formal complaint policy will remain in place, for situations where a complaint against a specific officer is lodged, and this policy is governed by standing laws and policy. The complaint form should be available on the Village websites. The Village will acknowledge receipt of each complaint.
- A generic comment form should be created that will be used to report citizen interactions with the police, either positive or negative. This form will be posted on the Village website, and it can be filed with the Village via email, mail or drop off. The form can be filed anonymously. An alternate version of this could be a "How are we doing?" form that encourages residents to report on any ideas or thoughts about Village happenings that involve one of the Village departments. One of these versions should be created and posted on the Village website and on Facebook.
- Officers on duty will wear functioning body cameras.

- In order to monitor trends within the Police Departments, the chief officer will review and analyze data collected locally and by the New York State Unified Court System as part of the Police Statistics and Transparency Act, which requires NYS courts to compile and publish racial and other demographic data for low-level offenses. This review will be scheduled annually.

Regarding the subject of Community Policing and Community Outreach, the committee recommends, based on a strong response from surveys in both villages,

- The Villages should plan events that bring the residents and the police department together, as soon as possible based on the Covid environment. Ideas for these are open houses for the public to come into the police department offices, a Police Department barbeque for the Village, etc.
- New officers should be introduced to the Village in a couple of ways: 1) new officers should be introduced at the next regular Village meeting; 2) a profile of the new officer with photo should be posted on the website and on social media.
- Weather permitting, officers should spend part of each shift on foot, and the officer should stop in and talk to business owners.
- Public relations events should be planned. Ideas are bicycle safety, a helmet giveaway event, a police-sponsored fun run, maybe just for kids. It could be a dog training mini-event with an officer who has had canine training. The idea is that the Police Department will offer useful information to the public in a format where the officers interact with citizens. These should be jointly planned by the Village and the Police Department.
- The police officers should see it as their mission to get to know people in the community. They should be expected to get out of their vehicles and meet people, when opportunities arise.
- When they perform a vehicle stop, while doing their jobs, officers should at the same time display a professional demeanor.

On the subject of improved transparency, the committee recommends:

- The Village, the Village court, and the police department should develop plans to demystify legal and law enforcement issues. Ideas for this included short articles on the subjects of legal processes, which will appear in the local newspapers or on social media sites.
- The Police Department will work with the Villages to make available a summarized version of their policies and procedures manual, for members of the public. The mayors and the chief officer will be responsible for this task.

On the subject of follow up for these recommendations, the committee recommends:

- During the month of April, 2022, the committee will meet to review these recommendations and evaluate implementation efforts.