

## **The City of Olean Police Reform and Reinvention**

### **Collaborative Plan**

**March 2021**

The City of Olean started a dialogue with residents in June 2020.

Mayor William J. Aiello initiated a series of Town Hall meetings following a number of peaceful protests and a Common Council Meeting on June 23<sup>rd</sup> in which numerous residents expressed concerns. The town hall forum allowed members of the community a chance to define the problems and work together with City officials to devise a strategy to rectify the issues that were causing disruption in the community.

The three town hall meetings were held on June 30, July 9, and July 16 at the John Ash Community Center from 6:30 p.m. -- 8:00 p.m. Because of Covid-19 restrictions the crowd was limited to 50 people, Olean residents were given priority to attend and reservations were required. Everyone was given the chance to speak and time limits were set for this purpose.

The Olean Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative held its first meeting on December 3, 2020 and held 11 meetings from December through February to comply with Governor Cuomo's Executive Order Number 203. Because of Covid-19 precautions meetings were held via Zoom. The meetings were recorded and are posted to the City of Olean's YouTube Channel.

The committee had representation from City government, the City's Police Force, as well as the Cattaraugus County Health Department, District Attorney's Office, and Public Defender's Office. The committee also had representation from local business owners, the Greater Olean Council of Churches, education and housing professionals and members of the community, including those who have had interactions with members of the police department.

During the course of the meetings the committee had access to the following:

1. New York State Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative Plan Workbook
2. Police Department Policies
3. Job Description for a Police Officer
4. NYS Law Enforcement Accreditation Documentation
5. Police Department Blank Reports:
  - Incident Report
  - Arrest Report
  - Domestic Report
6. Arrest Statistics from the Catt. Co. Public Defender's Office

The committee met with the following individuals:

Mary O'Leary Cattaraugus County Social Service

In addition to reviewing police policies, the following topics were reviewed during the course of the meetings:

1. The Role of a Social Worker in the Police Department
2. The role of the School Resource Officer
3. Training of Police Officers
4. Accreditation of the Police Department
5. Incentivizing Police Officer Job Through Property Tax Exemptions & Increased Pay
6. Re-establish a Community Policing Department
7. Initiate a Civilian Review Board
8. Initiate Cultural Awareness Training
9. Initiate a Sponsorship Program to the Police Academy
10. Initiate an Explorer's Program
11. Initiate a Civilian Academy
12. Defensive Training
13. Neck Holds
14. Physical Fitness
15. Police Officer Stress
16. No Knock Warrants

After a thorough review and discussion the following recommendations were made by the committee:

***The Role of a Social Worker***

*The Committee recommended that the Common Council consider a shared services agreement with Cattaraugus County to have a social worker available for the Department when necessary on certain types of calls such as mental health and homelessness.*

***The Role of the School Resource Officer***

*The Committee recommended that the role of the School Resource Officer be defined and be an integral part of the Community Policing Program (please see below). The Committee supports a second resource officer and recommended that the City investigate the option with the Olean City School District.*

***Recruitment:***

*The Committee recommended that the Common Council explore property tax incentives for officers living in Olean and a sponsorship program to the Police Academy.*

***Accreditation of the Police Department***

*The Committee recommended that the Department pursue and maintain accreditation through the Department of Criminal Justice Services. It was stated that many functions of the police department would be monitored in order to maintain the accreditation status.*

***Re-establish Community Policing:***

*The Committee recommended that the Community Policing Program be re-established. The School Resource Officer would be part of the Community Policing initiative.*

*The Committee recommended that the public be made better aware of the community involvement of the Department such as Shop with A Cop, Child Safety Seat Awareness and others.*

*The Committee also recommended that the City research and possibly introduce an Explorer's Program possibly for ages 6-20 as well as a Civilian Academy for residents.*

#### **Initiate a Civilian Review Board**

*The Committee recommended that the creation of a Civilian Review Board be further explored and desired to work together to bring forth their recommendations to the Common Council.*

#### **Training of Police Officers:**

*The Committee recommended that Police Officers continue to receive Defensive Tactics Training and that a Cultural Awareness Program be initiated.*

#### **Choke and Neck Holds**

*The Committee was pleased that the Olean Police Department was proactive and had banned choke holds prior to the passing of the Eric Garner Anti-Chokehold Act. The Committee recommended that the Policy be updated to ensure that the definition of chokeholds include both the obstruction of air to the lungs and of blood circulation to the brain.*

#### **Physical Fitness**

*The Committee recommended that a physical fitness program and testing for police officers be initiated.*

#### **Police Officer Stress**

*The committee is well aware that stresses on Police Officers are overwhelming, especially in the current environment and that this atmosphere has a negative effect on morale, which is low. The Committee thus recommended that confidential programs and help for officers be provided by the City. In addition the Committee suggested that Police Officers who go above and beyond be honored publically.*

#### **Staffing**

*The Committee supported and commended the Police Department's practice of limiting consecutive shifts.*

#### **Website**

*The Committee supports the upgrades to City's website as recommended by the Equity and Inclusion Committee.*