

**NEW YORK STATE POLICE REFORM AND REINVENTION COLLABORATIVE**  
**PLAN CERTIFICATION FORM**

I, Rika Levin, as the Mayor of the Village of Ossining (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.

**Rika Levin**

Name



Signature

**Mayor**

Title

**March 26, 2021**

Date



SUSANNE DONNELLY  
VILLAGE CLERK

# VILLAGE OF OSSINING

## MUNICIPAL BUILDING

16 Croton Ave  
Ossining, NY 10562  
Phone (914) 762-8428

### Adoption of Plan pursuant to Executive Order 203, New York State Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative

WHEREAS, on June 12, 2020 Governor Andrew M. Cuomo issued Executive Order 203, "New York State Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative; and

WHEREAS, the Executive Order states in part, "beginning on May 25, 2020, following the police-involved death of George Floyd in Minnesota, protests have taken place daily throughout the nation and in communities across New York State in response to police-involved deaths and racially-biased law enforcement to demand change, action and accountability and there is a long and painful history in New York State of discrimination and mistreatment of black and African-American citizens dating back to the arrival of the first enslaved Africans in America and this recent history includes a number of incidents involving the police that have resulted in the deaths of unarmed civilians, predominantly black and African-American men, that have undermined the public's confidence and trust in our system of law enforcement and criminal justice and such condition is ongoing and urgently needs to be rectified; and

WHEREAS, the Executive Order directed each local government entity with a police agency including the Village of Ossining to, "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"; and

WHEREAS, the Executive Order directed the chief executive of such local government to, "convene the head of the local police agency, and stakeholders in the community to develop such plan...consult 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, and create a plan to adopt and implement the recommendations resulting from its review and consultation, including any modifications, modernizations, and innovations to its policing deployments, strategies, policies, procedures, and practices, tailored to the specific needs of the community and general promotion of improved police agency and community relationships based on trust, fairness, accountability, and transparency, and which work to reduce any racial disparities in policing"; and

WHEREAS, the plan is to be offered for public comment and after consideration of such comments, "shall be presented to the local legislative body in such political subdivision, which shall ratify or adopt such plan by local law or resolution, as appropriate, no later than April 1, 2021"; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Trustees appointed community members representing stakeholders along with elected officials and others to the working committee to develop the plan to be presented to the Board of Trustees; and

WHEREAS, in October, 2020, the Village entered into an agreement with Matrix Consulting Group ("Matrix") for Matrix to act as a facilitator which work included initial meetings with elected and appointed officials; meeting with members of the village's Civilian Police Complaint Review Board; meeting with individual stakeholders; conducting general outreach to the community including conducting sessions in Spanish, undertaking a community survey and meetings with the working

committee and its subcommittees dealing with Governance and Oversight; Internal Operations and Practices; Policies and Procedures and Hiring and Training; and

WHEREAS, in January, 2021, the first draft of the plan was made available to the Board of Trustees and the public, which plan was subsequently revised following comments from members of the working committee and from the public as a result of the public engagement sessions; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Trustees received the revisions of the plan based upon the aforementioned comments on March 5, 2021 and March 16, 2021 which revisions were discussed by the Board of Trustees at the March 10, 2021 work session and March 17, 2021 regular meeting; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Trustees extends its thanks to the members of the working committee who devoted countless hours of time to develop the plan which the board now must consider and approve for transmittal to the Department of the Budget in accord with Executive Order 203; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Trustees also extend its thanks to the many residents of Ossining who participated in the public meetings, public survey, listening sessions and board meetings providing their opinions about police services in Ossining and recommendations for future action; now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Village of Ossining Board of Trustees hereby adopts the Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative Plan annexed hereto as Exhibit "A" and be it further

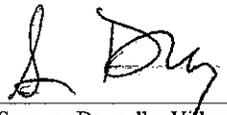
RESOLVED, that the Mayor shall sign the Plan Certification form, annexed hereto as Exhibit "B" and the plan and the form shall be submitted to the Director of the New York State Division of the Budget on or before April 1, 2021.

STATE OF NEW YORK ( )  
COUNTY OF WESTCHESTER ( ss.: )  
VILLAGE OF OSSINING ( )

I, Susanne Donnelly, Village Clerk of the Village of Ossining, Westchester County, New York, DO HEREBY CERTIFY, that I have compared the foregoing with the original resolutions adopted by the Village Board of Trustees at a meeting held on the 24th day of March, 2021 and that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the original thereof. I DO FURTHER CERTIFY that Mayor Rika Levin and Trustees Manuel Quezada, Omar Lopez, Robert Fritsche, and Dana White were present at such meeting.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and the seal of the VILLAGE OF OSSINING, THIS 25th day of March, 2021.

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Susanne Donnelly, Village Clerk

A stylized map of Ossining, New York, showing a network of streets and roads. The map is overlaid on a blue background with diagonal lines. The text is positioned on the left side of the map.

**Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative**  
VILLAGE OF OSSINING, NEW YORK

March 25, 2021

**matrix**   
consulting group



**16 Croton Avenue  
Ossining, NY 10562**

Rika Levin  
Mayor

---

Tel. (914) 941-3554  
Fax (914) 941-5940  
[www.villageofossining.org](http://www.villageofossining.org)

March 26, 2021

Ossining's Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative Plan, created in accordance with Governor Cuomo's Executive Order 203, is intended to enhance the quality, transparency, and equity of law enforcement policies and practices in Ossining, while also providing our Police Department with the support and tools necessary to perform its duties and vital mission.

These wide-ranging measures constitute a significant reform of policing procedures and policies in Ossining. This plan is the final product of many months of dialogue and study, survey, focus groups, one-on-one interviews with stakeholders, feedback from the police department, and administrative leadership; all guided principally by a diverse group of residents who made up the working committee. We are deeply grateful to all who participated in this process, particularly the volunteers who donated considerable time, energy, passion, and thoughtfulness. The Board of Trustees is satisfied that these measures will improve the lives of all residents. It will be judged by reasonable people to be a herculean feat accomplished during a global pandemic that weighed heavily on everyone's minds and hearts. It was accomplished at a time that also highlighted institutional inequities throughout our society.

However, this community exercise does not occur in a vacuum but rather in the context of a nation-wide reckoning with the historical and present-day impacts of racial bias and institutional racism within law enforcement and the criminal justice system. While we recognize that the Ossining Police Department and its current Chief of Police are one of the most progressive in the county, the existence of institutional bias is beyond reasonable dispute, confirmed by many personal testimonials. Although most people in Ossining express genuine pride in our community's diversity and profess strong allegiance to racial equality, we are by no means immune to these broader conditions. We must confront the hard reality of racial bias within our community.

This is not to impugn the performance or motivation of Ossining's police officers. We are proud of our Police Department. We are confident that the majority of its members are personally and professionally committed to equal justice under law, mindful that through the review process, our Police Department has received many compliments, and grateful for the steps the Chief of Police and the department have taken over many years to strengthen Police-community relations and train its officers to deescalate conflict. Similarly, it would be wrong to view these recommendations as punitive in their treatment of the Ossining Police Department. Quite the opposite, we propose to assign additional resources to our police.

Ossining's ideals of diversity and welcoming of old traditions and new residents are powerful and uplifting, but too many residents' daily experience has fallen short of these ideals. Every member of our community, regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, sexual preference, religious beliefs, or national origin, is valued and should be afforded the full and equal protection of the law. Every resident and those that pass through our community should be treated equitably and with fairness by those sworn to serve the public for the common good.

It is also not our intent to imply that law enforcement is uniquely deserving of scrutiny. Unfortunately, there is evidence that a generational pattern of structural racism continues to profoundly impact various structures in our community and communities across the state and country, with everything from housing patterns, public health, immigration policies to educational attainment illustrating racial disparities. But because the police are the only local

government entity empowered to use deadly force, the consequences and implications of bias in law enforcement, whether implicit or explicit, are more immediate and consequential than in other entities. It is, therefore, sensible that the Governor asked local municipalities to turn their immediate attention to police reform.

Fundamentally we believe that police officers themselves benefit from an organizational culture rooted in empathy, collaboration, and accountability. The job of policing will be safer and more rewarding in Ossining when officers are accorded the full respect and honor that their essential duties merit. It is our hope, as demonstrated in this plan, that the Westchester County Police Academy, which is responsible for training police officers, will update its curriculum to be more aligned with the current policing needs and that our neighboring municipalities and the State investigate more and better ways to provide guidance on issues related to hiring and promoting more police officers who mirror the demographics of our communities. We hope that more educational resources become available to police officers throughout their careers.

The creation and completion of this plan includes the first phase of a multi-year process of discovery, discussion, reconciliation, and improvement by a group of residents, professionals, and government, who found common ground on which to stand strongly. The journey was understandably bumpy, at times contentious and uncomfortable, but the process as a whole produced a plan that will provide the community with better outcomes. The Board of Trustees must continue to support all efforts to execute the plan and the approved recommended measures. Beyond providing a roadmap for immediate, practical steps, it is our intent that these recommendations will establish a space and framework for ongoing, honest dialogue and enhanced collaboration between our Police Department and the people it serves.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rika Levin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "R" and a long, sweeping underline.

Rika Levin  
Mayor, Village of Ossining

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# 1. Introduction and Summary

The Matrix Consulting Group was retained by the Village of Ossining to facilitate a Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative involving the community and its police department. Arising from New York Executive Order 203 and based on extensive stakeholder input, this document provides a long-range plan for policing in Ossining. The initial report was released on January 21, 2021 and revised to incorporate the points raised in subsequent reviews. The Village Board of Trustees met on March 10 and March 17, 2021 to review the suggested recommendations from this process, accepting most, modifying a few and tabling others for future consideration.

## 1. Background and Scope of the Study

In the Spring of last year, in the wake of incidents resulting in the killing of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, a great protest movement arose around the country questioning not only the handling of these incidents of violence against Black citizens and what the general role of policing in our society should be. Last June, New York State issued an Executive Order (203) entitled “New York State Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative.” Each local government with a police agency was required to perform a comprehensive review of practices and policies to promote fair and transparent community-oriented policing strategies designed to eliminate racism and racial disparities. These efforts were designed to be inclusive and collaborative involving not only police departments but also community stakeholders. These publicly reviewed and approved plans are to be delivered to the State by April 1, 2021. This report represents the Village of Ossining’s Plan for Police Reform and Reinvention.

## 2. Developing Ossining’s Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative

Last year, Ossining’s Mayor and the Board of Trustees began its police reform evaluation effort to meet the requirements of Executive Order 203. Two steps were taken to initiate this process:

- The Mayor and Board created a working committee to coordinate the overall process of developing the Village’s police reform plan. The representation of the committee was drawn from the community but included engaged residents, leaders of local houses of worship as well as representatives from the Ossining Police Department (OPD). A list of representatives of the working committee is at the conclusion of this Introduction and Summary section.

- The Village reached out to consulting firms to assist with the facilitation of a public outreach process and the development of its police reform plan. The Matrix Consulting Group was selected in October and the process was initiated in late October.

The process employed by the consultants to develop the police reform plan was inclusive and consisted of the following steps:

- Initial meetings with Village and Town elected and appointed officials to understand their perspectives on current and past policing issues and priorities for the future.
- Meetings with the Chair and board members from the Village's Civilian Police Complaint Review Board (CPCRB) to understand those processes and, given the new appointments to the CPCRB, opportunities to improve the review of complaints.
- Meetings were held individually with a variety of community stakeholders representing:
  - Citizens who have been involved in public services generally and policing specifically.
  - Representatives from various community groups.
  - Representatives from faith-based organizations.
  - The Ossining Police Chief, his command staff and randomly-selected line and supervisory personnel.

Most of these interviews were conducted in November of last year.

To maximize public input into key issues relevant to this effort, the Village and the consultants conducted more general outreach to the community. These efforts took the following forms:

- Community listening sessions were conducted over a two-month period. Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, these community listening sessions were conducted virtually, via Zoom. The following listening sessions were held:
  - On Thursday evening, December 10<sup>th</sup>, a Spanish language session was held.

- On Saturday morning, December 12<sup>th</sup>, a general community meeting in English was held.
- On Thursday evening, December 17<sup>th</sup>, a meeting sponsored by the Ossining chapter of the NAACP was held.
- On Thursday evening, January 7<sup>th</sup>, a meeting was sponsored by the Ossining LGBTQ Alliance and co-sponsored by the LOFT LGBTQ+ Community Center.
- On Tuesday, January 19<sup>th</sup>, a meeting was held with students from Ossining High School.

Over 200 people participated in one or more of these sessions. A brief summary of the input received from these sessions is provided later in this Introduction and Summary, with a more complete summary provided later in this report.

- A community survey was created for this project and was open online for residents to respond to. The focus of the survey was on perceptions of safety and interactions with police officers in Ossining. There were English and Spanish language versions of the survey. There were over 800 responses to this survey. A brief summary of the input received is provided later in this Introduction and Summary section.

Throughout this process, the consulting team met with the working committee to plan the community listening sessions and the roll out of the community survey. Project planning meetings were held with the consultants on November 20<sup>th</sup> and December 2<sup>nd</sup>. Beginning in December, four subcommittees of the working committee were established to provide focused discussion on grouped police reform topics. The subcommittees included:

- Governance and Oversight
- Internal Operations and Practices
- Policies and Procedures
- Hiring and Training

Subcommittee meetings were held in December and January to develop suggested recommendations on police reform to bring to the working committee as a whole and eventually to the Board and the public for adoption and submission to the State. Working committee discussions on the results of the subcommittees were held on January 6<sup>th</sup> and January 13<sup>th</sup>. This Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative report is the result of this process.

After the initial draft was submitted in January, the Board of Trustees was briefed and a series of three (3) virtual public meetings were held to receive comments (on February 6<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and the 27<sup>th</sup>, with the last one in Spanish). In addition to the community review meetings, extensive feedback was received on the initial draft from Working Community members and from residents. The feedback received on the initial draft of this report was utilized in revisions.

Finally, as indicated above, the Board of Trustees met on March 10 and March 17, 2021 to review the suggested recommendations from this process, accepting most, modifying a few and tabling others for future consideration. Recommendations suggested by the Working Committee which have been tabled or deferred for future consideration are contained in the final chapter of this report.

In summary, the Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative had extensive focus from within the community and this input was valuable in the development of the multi-year plan contained in this report. This police reform plan is presented with the understanding that this will require a multi-year effort that will require additional updates and changes to meeting the needs of the community.

### **3. Key Themes Arising from the Community Listening Sessions**

Many attendees expressed having had positive interactions, especially with the Chief, and were very appreciative of these efforts. Additionally, participants were largely complimentary of the community-policing events in place in Ossining, such as attendance at block parties, coffee with a cop, the motorcycle unit's parade, drive-by birthdays and movies in the park.

However, many issues were identified critical of police interactions with the community. Key themes which arose from this process included:

- An overall lack of trust, especially with communities of color. This lack of trust can result in a reluctance to contact the police for service or to make a complaint.
- A lack of consistency in support, outreach and police interactions.
- The need to better keep the community informed, especially for Spanish-speaking residents.

There was also interest expressed for better trained police personnel with more mental health support for police officers.

## 4. Key Themes Arising from the Community Survey

The survey was publicized through the Village's social media pages, website and the Mayor's newsletter, as well as various posts by community groups and email newsletters.

In total, 839 respondents took the survey. Given Ossining's population of 25,086, (2019 US Census) this can be considered an exceptionally high response rate.

Overall, responses were largely positive, comprising over 75% of the responses in every question on issues of accountability and trust in law enforcement. The questions where the most doubt was expressed involved complaints, particularly whether filing the complaints would result in retaliation and be appropriately investigated. There was significant divergence, however, in the responses by race. These disparities in attitudes toward accountability and trust are critical and need to be highlighted.

Clear majorities agree with all statements, indicating high levels of community support for the department's interaction and engagement efforts. However, positive responses among black residents were lower than that for white and Latinx respondents.

Only 2% of respondents do not feel safe during the day, compared to 16% at night. This was fairly consistent among all respondents.

## 5. Key Themes Arising from Ossining Police Department Personnel

The project team conducted a series of police department interviews of personnel. The interviews covered the following topic areas: understanding of Executive Order 203, what does the department do well, what are areas for improvement, policies and procedures, community engagement/relations and training. The following are general themes from the police department interviews.

Most respondents felt the department does a particularly good job of:

- Community outreach;
- Social media;
- Having body-worn cameras;
- Leadership is good, open and supportive of new ideas.

OPD staff often volunteer at community events and all stated they had attended these events. Community outreach is strongly encouraged from leadership. Officers felt they had a very good relationship with the community.

Officers, overall, thought their training was superior to other agencies. Officers were generally supportive of additional training on de-escalation and procedural justice. All officers had attended the implicit bias training.

## 6. Summary of Recommendations

The working committee and its subcommittees worked diligently to create suggested improvements to the Ossining Police Department which are implementable in a reasonable period. Many of these changes can be implemented quickly by the Village and its police department, for example, policy changes. However, other changes will take time and will require additional resources, action by other government entities, and/or negotiation as part of the Ossining Police Benevolent Association's collective bargaining agreement. An implementation process is outlined for each of the recommendations made in this report.

The process of implementation will begin immediately after this Police Reform and Reinvention Plan is submitted to the Director of the State Budget Office.

Implementation of the recommendations needs to be monitored by the Village. The following process is recommended:

- Either continue the Working Committee's existence post April 1<sup>st</sup> or create a new committee to monitor implementation. If the Working Committee continues, the Village should expand its membership to be more representative of groups within the community whose relationships with the police are most in need of repair, particularly Black men. Call the committee the Police Reform Plan Implementation Committee or similar.
- Charge the Committee with monitoring the implementation of specific recommendations. The Committee would also play an important advocacy role with respect to the Board and the community.
- In at least the first year, the Committee should meet monthly to review progress. This process needs to be supported by data and summaries of implementation progress by the Police Department.
- The Committee should report to the Village Board monthly on implementation process for each accepted recommendation. Mid-course changes may also be necessary and these should be discussed at the Committee and Board levels. The reports should be centered around answering the following questions:
  - What was the goal of the recommendation?

- Is ‘success’ measured appropriately?
- Did the change achieve its objective?
- Would another approach better achieve the objective?
- The Committee would meet for a period of at least two years. During this period, the Committee should also further evaluate the suggested recommendations tabled for future consideration.
- The Village should also monitor the community’s satisfaction with these changes over time through surveys or focused community meetings.

This process would ensure transparency and help engender confidence in police reform in Ossining.

### **Oversight and Transparency**

Remove OPD representation on the CPCR, for a total of civilian five seats with two civilian alternates. To maintain their advisory capacity, OPD will appoint up to two *non-voting* Police Department members. Votes would be taken using a simple majority.

Edit the definitions of substantiated, unfounded, and unsubstantiated complaints in order to make the distinction clearer and to avoid confusion.

Add to the Village Code that Corporation Counsel or their designee is in attendance at every meeting. The Board of Trustees should receive a quarterly update on complaints from the Corporation Counsel or CPCR chair at a public board meeting.

In the post-COVID-19 environment, the CPCR should retain the ability to hold virtual or hybrid meetings.

Add a provision to the code to ensure that records pertaining to the interaction that led to the complaint (such as police reports, bodycam footage, etc.) are retained until the CPCR has conducted its review and made a determination.

The location of CPCR meetings should be on any Village property.

Increase the maximum amount of time an individual has to file a complaint from 90 to 120 days from date of incident.

Specify that investigation of complaints will begin within 10 calendar days of the complaint being received and will be concluded within 30 calendar days of receipt unless OPD submits a written explanation to the CPCRБ chairperson.

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CPCRБ member training should be split into two categories: core training, which would be required prior to reviewing complaints, and supplemental training, which must be completed within six months. Core should include use of force, vehicle stops and constitutional issues. All other training should be considered supplemental training.

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OPD should be responsible for providing all training to the CPCRБ. This is a codification of current practice.

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OPD should make regular reports on a variety of metrics, including traffic stops, arrests, complaints according to demographics.

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Names and contact info for all police personnel that are ranked lieutenant and above should be listed on the Village/OPD website, in addition to the demographics of OPD personnel overall.

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The Village should support efforts at the County and State levels to reform indemnification of officers and to eliminate qualified immunity as a defense in civil suits against an OPD defendant.

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## **Policies and Procedures**

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In order to increase transparency and to better inform the public, police department policies should be posted online. In addition, the policy manual should be made available in hard copy (for a copying fee) at the police department or Village Clerk's office.

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The department should adopt bias-free and anti-racist policing policies.

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The police department should work with the LGBTQ+ community to rewrite GO 3.91 and expand on an LGBTQ+ policy.

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The police department should modify its general orders to include OPD officers will not respond with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) unless they are called to the location.

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## **Internal Operations and Practices**

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Work with Westchester County, neighboring communities and non-profit agencies to develop a mental health, homeless and substance abuse crisis response unit that responds along with the Police Department and provides follow-up case management.

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Work with the Village and Police Department and possibly non-profit agencies to create a voluntary response registry which would assist emergency communications and responders.

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Work with Westchester County to provide officers with crisis intervention training (CIT).

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Develop a public awareness campaign in both English and Spanish to explain the Police Department's role with respect to ICE activities in the community.

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The Village and the Police Department should work together to make a more robust website on the Department, its organization and services.

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The Ossining Police Department should implement new or improve existing community policing efforts.

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Utilize existing community resources to better understand how to connect with residents. For example, the LOFT LGBTQ Community Center has conducted training with other local offices and municipalities.

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## **Hiring and Training**

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Work to increase diversity in department hiring and on promotional processes.

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Start Recruiting Program/Police Department Introduction at Ossining High School. Develop a plan to hire more bilingual officers or encourage fluency.

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The Ossining Police Department should develop a multi-year training plan that includes greater emphasis on anti-racism in policing, de-escalation, procedural justice, added cultural competency and handling protests.

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The Westchester County Police Academy should be encouraged to implement enhanced training as recommended for Ossining officers.

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## **List of Working Group Members**

This study took many hours of work on the part of community members who were selected and served on the Working Committee and its various Subcommittees. Over a period of more than four months (October 2020 – January 2021) of evening meetings, plus between meeting research, the ideas and commitments here came together. The members of the Working Committee should be recognized for this effort.

Kendall Buchanan  
Jennifer Cabrera  
Juan Encarnacion

Omar Lopez  
MaryPat Long  
Frank Luis

Ben Ervin  
Maria Teresa Garcia  
Victoria Gearity  
Althema Goodson  
Gabrielle Hamilton  
Shaun Jones  
Rika Levin

Rodolfo Moran  
Mary Phifer  
Christina Picciano  
Jackie Shaw  
Kevin Sylvester  
Joan Whitaker

There was a transition from Mayor Gearity to Mayor Levin at the beginning of 2021 with the latter's election as Mayor of the Village.

It is also important to recognize the support that this process had from the Ossining community in many ways – over 200 people participated in one or more community listening sessions, over 800 provided input to the process through a community survey, and finally, many stakeholders were interviewed for input and ideas. This community support is recognized here.

## 2. Community Listening Sessions

As an essential element of the Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative process, members of the Ossining community were invited to voluntarily participate in a series of five (5) Public Engagement Sessions. The purpose of the public sessions was twofold: 1) to solicit meaningful feedback from Ossining residents on a wide range of topics related to police-community relationships and, 2) to solicit input on whether there were community perceptions of needed operational reforms and discuss opportunities for change. The public sessions were two to three plus hour virtual conversations facilitated by the consultant team over Zoom.

Three of the public engagement sessions were open to the public and were held on the following dates:

- **Thursday, December 10, 2020, at 7:00 PM:** This session was geared toward the Spanish-speaking population and was conducted in Spanish.
- **Saturday, December 12, 2020, at 11:00 AM:** This session was geared toward the general public.
- **Thursday, December 17, 2020, at 6:00 PM:** This session was geared toward the African-American/Black community. (Co-Hosted by the Ossining NAACP)

Two additional sessions were held on a sponsored basis – one was sponsored by the Ossining LGBTQ Alliance and the LOFT LGBTQ+ Community Center on Thursday evening, January 7<sup>th</sup> and a second on Tuesday, January 19<sup>th</sup> with students from Ossining High School. In order for community members to share in a safe inclusive environment, participation in these meetings was by invitation, (the OHS meeting included student leaders and members of the student equity committee). During the course of these two meetings, a wide range of topics related to police services and engagement were discussed with the attendees.

The public listening session discussions were focused on the following three major topics areas:

- **Legitimacy and Trust**
- **Engagement and Communication**
- **Community Priorities**

During the community sessions, emphasis was placed upon actively listening to the voices, experiences and thoughts of the Ossining community. All sessions were well attended, with community members actively engaged in the dialogue. For each topic area, questions were offered to consider. Community participants were encouraged to address any of the questions within that subject area during that portion of the Community Session. The questions were primarily intended as prompts for the topic areas. Community participants were also encouraged to share about other experiences related to the specific topic areas that may not have been included within the questions that were offered by the Consultant.

Through the community engagement process, the consultants reached over 220 Ossining community members. Collectively, the experiences, perceptions, beliefs, attitudes and opinions of those community members became a major source of “data” for assessing the public’s satisfaction with and confidence in the Ossining Police Department (OPD). In the pages that follow, the feedback received through this collaborative community engagement process is summarized.

## Summary of Key Themes

While a substantial majority of the participants were critical of the OPD’s interaction and engagement with members of the Ossining community, many attendees also expressed having had positive interactions, especially with the Chief, and were very appreciative of these efforts. Additionally, participants were largely complimentary of the community-policing events in place in Ossining, such as attendance at block parties, coffee with a cop, the motorcycle unit’s parade, drive-by birthdays, and movies in the park.

### Topic 1      **Legitimacy and Trust**

Legitimacy and Trust was defined as “the extent to which members of the public view law enforcement as legitimate, which in part can be measured in terms of the civilian community’s willingness to obey and cooperate with the police. Legitimacy is linked to the degree of community support for, and cooperation with – law enforcement’s efforts to address crime.”

Key questions that were posed for Legitimacy and Trust were:

- 1. What is your expectation in regard to an officer’s personal demeanor engaging with you, when you are calling the department for assistance or in making a complaint?**
- 2. What are your thoughts in regard to transparency and the police department?**

### **3. If you filed a complaint, what was your experience in how it was handled and investigated?**

#### **Key Themes**

#### **1. Overall Distrust of Law Enforcement.**

For many in the African-American community there is distrust due to generations of injustices predominantly experienced by African-American men. Those experiences continue to particularly traumatize this community. Throughout the years, there have been recurring instances of perceived unnecessary contact, misconduct and misuse of power, with the most typical forms of misconduct (as reported by attendees), being verbal abuse (e.g., being generally discourteous and rude, making disrespectful comments); stopping people without sufficient cause, “over-policing”/policing more frequently the less affluent, and discriminating by race. In addition, many in the community are still healing from the death of Chris Anthony Malone, fatally shot by police in Ossining in 1998. This, together with a perceived lack of transparency and inclusion to help advance progress in reforming the organization, has resulted in the diminishing trust of Ossining police officers with many in the African-American community.

Within the immigrant (mostly Latinx) community, many members perceive an “increased involvement” of the OPD in immigration enforcement. The lack of transparency/clarity about the relationship between Ossining police officers and ICE has significantly heightened the fears and distrust many Latinx residents have of the police.

Many young participants have a negative perception of the police. First-hand and reported experiences have negatively impacted and influenced young peoples’ views and opinions of police officers. Many young people have said they were ‘scared’ of police officers. At the High School, many students were unclear about the roles and responsibilities of the School Resource Officer (SRO) with many feeling threatened, especially students of color, residents who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community, and students with special needs (e.g., disabilities). In addition, there were some concerns expressed about the type of training received by an officer to become an SRO.

#### **2. Overall Reluctance to Contact Police for a Public Safety or Community Problem.**

Members of the Latinx community are less likely to contact police officers due to fearing that officers will use this interaction as an opportunity to inquire into their immigration status. There are situations where it is not clear for people if they should call police for

help. They feel that officers should be trained to instill more confidence in the members of the Latinx community.

The fear or lack of willingness to contact police is not confined to immigrants. Community members from other ethnic groups of color, including many within the African-American community, expressed a similar lack of willingness to contact the police based on negative experiences. On the one hand, there is a shared sentiment that police will not follow-up on their issue, and there is a perception that some police are dismissive and not engaging.

### **3. Reluctance to Report Police Misconduct and File Complaints.**

Many Ossining residents reported finding it very difficult to file complaints or comment on a negative police-citizen interaction. Currently, complaints cannot be submitted on-line. The complaint form in Spanish is translated poorly (though it is being reworked). Typically, a Spanish-fluent staff member is not at the front desk.

While the Village has a Civilian Complaint Review Board in place, it has not been promoted. Many people do not know that this Board exists, and many do not know how to use this resource.

Many people believe that there is very little follow-up by OPD with these investigations, and that not enough complaints make it to the Board. As a result, the perception is that police officers are not being held accountable for their actions. This lack of accountability is also a contributor to the feeling of mistrust.

## **Topic 2 Engagement and Communication**

The topic of Engagement and Communication focused on how the Ossining civilian community perceived the Ossining Police Department's interactions with the public and transmission of information to the community.

Key questions that were posed for Engagement and Communication were:

- 1. What is your expectation in regard to an officer's personal demeanor engaging with you when you are calling the department for assistance or in making a complaint?**
- 2. What are your thoughts in regard to transparency and the police department?**
- 3. If you filed a complaint, what was your experience in how it was handled and investigated?**

## Key Themes

### 1. **Disconnectedness from the OPD.**

Although many OPD officers live in the Village, many Ossining residents feel that officers do not know residents well enough, nor are aware of the diversity of the population they serve. Other residents expressed that there is a lack of familiarity by police officers with the history, culture, and traditions of their communities, as well as the unique needs of people suffering from mental health issues, LGBTQ+, teenagers, etc.

### 2. **Lack of Consistency.**

There is a perceived lack of consistency of officers from many residents. While the Chief is viewed as supportive, empathetic and positive, many other officers are not viewed as positively. There is also perception of inconsistencies in police responsiveness and engagement, depending on who is the officer responding to a call for service.

### 3. **The Need for More Effective Police Engagement to Keep the Community Informed.**

There is a need for more creative and culturally-sensitive ways for officers to be engaged with community members of ethnic communities of color. Although a number of community-policing events are hosted by the OPD annually (e.g., block parties, coffee with a cop, etc.), the majority of meeting attendees expressed that they have only heard about these events, but have not having participated due to culturally or socially not relating to these particular events. Outside of these events, there is little engagement.

The community would like to see more open forums, talk-back community sessions, sit-downs and other types of face-to-face forums that can help promote open dialogue that is not one-sided, in a safe space. This would allow police officers to get to know community members better. In turn, this could help correct the current misperceptions of who they are and what they do.

### 4. **Dissatisfaction with the Quality of Police Service Provided to Populations with Special Needs.**

There are perceived issues with the handling of first responder roles appropriately due to not understanding the community. Similarly, there are concerns regarding police responses to incidents involving people suffering a crisis episode (e.g., after an ICE arrest) or exhibiting mental health issues. Many community members feel that police are not well trained to de-escalate situations and to provide the type of empathetic,

compassionate, emotional and psychological support needed in these types of situations. As a result, some of these encounters are very traumatizing for the residents.

## **5. Lack of Police Outreach**

Many community members feel that although the use of technology and social media have helped police to reach out to more people and places than in the past, many residents also feel that OPD should make greater efforts to reach out to hard-to-reach communities. Only one officer is reported to be actively involved with the Hispanic community, regularly visiting local churches and talking to Spanish-speaking groups about police practices.

In addition, police need to improve their communication skills to get their message across in a more effective and sensitive manner. While active on Facebook, the current OPD page on the Village website is not updated and is not working well as an effective outreach tool. Some residents feel that the OPD Facebook page should address a range of social issues for which a police response would be helpful; it should tag different community groups; and all of its content should be available in Spanish. In January 2021, OPD created a new Facebook page, Policia de Ossining, to provide Spanish language content. The two Facebook pages are run by different individuals and do not provide the same content.

## **Topic 3 Community Priorities**

The topic of Community Priorities focused on what the Ossining civilian community perceived the Ossining Police Department's public safety Community Priorities to be, and if those Community Priorities align with their own priorities as civilian Community Members.

Key questions that were posed for Community Priorities were:

- 1. What public safety priorities does the community want the department to focus on?**
- 2. Are the issues that the Ossining Police Department focuses on aligned with your priorities as a resident of Ossining?**

## **Key Themes**

- 1. Defining Community Priorities**

Many community members do not feel that OPD has a good understanding of the values and priorities of Ossining residents. Due to the perception of a lack of transparency and open communication, many community members are not aware of what the priorities of OPD might be. Currently, there are no official groups or meetings where members of the public can attend to listen and add into the discussions.

## **2. Address Systemic Issues within Police Training and Recruitment**

**Training:** Many community members feel that police officers need additional training. Specifically, many residents would like for police officers to have additional training on crisis intervention, use of force, implicit-bias, cultural diversity and human relations.

**Recruitment:** Many community members feel that the make-up of the OPD is not reflective of the diversity amongst residents: leadership is generally white and male and there is inadequate Spanish speaking representation within the police. Their priority would be for the department to hire more people of color, bi-lingual and female and LGBTQ+ officers.

## **3. Counseling for Police Officers**

A majority of community members expressed the importance for OPD officers to seek and receive psychological assistance. There is a strong acknowledgment that officers' jobs are stressful and that those officers should be able to access psychological services, undergo psychological tests and know that they have someone they can talk to. There is a feeling with some community members that officers should attend therapy, so that citizens can trust that they are in good hands.

## 3. Results of the Community Survey

### 1. Introduction

The project team developed a survey to gather input on policing issues in Ossining, as part of a greater effort that included open and focused meetings, interviews with key stakeholders, and the Working Committee.

Anonymous online surveys present the opportunity for input to be expanded greatly, enabling anyone with a smartphone or computer to participate in the study. Additionally, in public meetings, some individuals may not feel comfortable expressing opinions about OPD, particularly if they feel those opinions are not shared by their peers at the meeting. An anonymous online survey can significantly mitigate or bypass these issues.

The survey was developed by the project team and revised with input from the Working Committee, which included the Chief and an officer from OPD.

The survey is structured as follows:

- Demographic questions
- Agree/disagree (Likert scale) statements
- Multiple choice format
- Open-ended responses

The survey was publicized through the Village's social media pages (particularly Instagram, website and the Mayor's newsletter, as well as various posts by community groups and email newsletters.

In total, 839 respondents took the survey. Although not all finished the survey, nearly every question has around 700 answers, including those that selected "No Opinion" in the multiple-choice sections. Nonetheless, given Ossining's population of 25,086 (2019, Village of Ossining only), this can be considered an exceptionally high response rate.

### 2. Agree/Disagree Questions

#### (1) Introduction

The initial series of questions following the demographics section uses a Likert scale, which presents respondents with a statement and asks them to rate whether they agree or disagree with each.

Respondents were given a series of statements and asked whether they strongly agree (**SA**), agree (**A**), disagree (**D**), strongly disagree (**SD**). The following subsections group these questions together thematically, examining issues of accountability and trust, general performance and community engagement.

Respondents were also able to decline to answer a question by selecting 'No Opinion'. In keeping with research on best practices for these types of surveys, these selections are not shown in the percentages. The total number of responses for each question is however shown.

## (2) Accountability and Trust

Several questions dealt with issues of trust in the police department to hold itself accountable, investigate complaints, safety when requesting service, and other topics. The responses are shown in the following table, showing the percentage of respondents that answered the question selecting strongly agree (**SA**), agree (**A**), disagree (**D**), or strongly disagree (**SD**):

|   | SA  | A   | D   | SD | #   |
|---|-----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 7 If I had an emergency, I would feel safe calling 911 to request an OPD officer.                         | 68% | 28% | 3%  | 1% | 680 |
| 8 If I were to file a complaint against OPD, I am confident that it would be investigated as appropriate. | 42% | 41% | 12% | 6% | 587 |
| 10 If I were to file a complaint against OPD, I am confident that it would not result in retaliation.     | 41% | 38% | 15% | 6% | 575 |
| 12 I trust OPD officers to make fair decisions.   | 44% | 42% | 11% | 4% | 627 |
| 13 If an OPD officer did something wrong, I am confident that they would be held accountable.             | 40% | 37% | 16% | 8% | 597 |
| 14 Police services in Ossining are headed in the right direction.   | 50% | 40% | 7%  | 3% | 613 |

Overall, responses were largely positive, with Strongly Agree and Agree comprising over 75% of the responses in every question. The questions where the most doubt was

expressed involved complaints, particularly whether they would result in retaliation and whether they would be appropriately investigated.

There was significant divergence, however, in the responses by race. These disparities in attitudes toward accountability and trust were wide enough such that it is critical that they be highlighted.

For the purposes of clarity, Strongly Agree responses have been combined with Agree, and likewise with Strongly Disagree and Disagree to examine responses by race/ethnicity:

|   | WHITE |         | BLACK |         | LATINO |         |
|---|-------|---------|-------|---------|--------|---------|
|   | Agree | Disagr. | Agree | Disagr. | Agree  | Disagr. |
| 7 If I had an emergency, I would feel safe calling 911 to request an OPD officer.                         | 96%   | 4%      | 88%   | 12%     | 92%    | 8%      |
| 8 If I were to file a complaint against OPD, I am confident that it would be investigated as appropriate. | 87%   | 13%     | 60%   | 40%     | 75%    | 25%     |
| 10 If I were to file a complaint against OPD, I am confident that it would not result in retaliation.     | 81%   | 19%     | 63%   | 37%     | 73%    | 27%     |
| 12 I trust OPD officers to make fair decisions.   | 90%   | 10%     | 68%   | 33%     | 72%    | 28%     |
| 13 If an OPD officer did something wrong, I am confident that they would be held accountable.             | 80%   | 20%     | 51%   | 49%     | 66%    | 34%     |
| 14 Police services in Ossining are headed in the right direction.   | 92%   | 8%      | 79%   | 21%     | 86%    | 14%     |

Virtually every group feels safe calling 911, and largely agrees that policing is headed in the right direction in Ossining – a critical proxy measure of the public’s confidence in leadership and governance.

In several other areas, however, there are wide disparities between white respondents and other groups – particularly Black respondents.

- **80% of white respondents agree that if an OPD officer did something wrong, they would be held accountable (a 60-point gap), but only 51% of Black**

**respondents agree** – a gap of only 2 points. For such a fundamental measure of trust that OPD will hold itself accountable, this is a striking finding.

- Likewise, more than one-third (37%) of Black respondents do not agree that filing a complaint against OPD wouldn't result in retaliation against them. This is compared with just 10% of white respondents and as many as 28% of Latinx respondents.
- Similar degrees of sentiment are expressed toward trust in OPD officers to make fair decisions, as well as whether complaints would be appropriately investigated.

### (3) Community Engagement

The responses are shown in the following table, showing the percentage of respondents that answered the question selecting strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D), or strongly disagree (SD):

|  | SA  | A   | D   | SD | #   |
|--|-----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 1 OPD values input from the community.                         | 50% | 37% | 9%  | 3% | 611 |
| 2 OPD understands the unique aspects of my community.          | 49% | 40% | 8%  | 4% | 616 |
| 6 OPD works to build relationships within the community.       | 58% | 33% | 7%  | 2% | 645 |
| 9 OPD is engaged with the community.                           | 60% | 33% | 5%  | 2% | 649 |
| 11 OPD treats all members of the community with respect.       | 49% | 34% | 12% | 5% | 599 |
| 15 OPD officers show concern for all members of the community. | 50% | 35% | 11% | 4% | 616 |

Clear majorities agree with all statements, indicating high levels of community support for the department's interaction and engagement efforts.

Although each category has 70+%, and generally 85+% support, of note is the divergence of support for the last two questions, which deal with questions of whether concern and respect are given to all members of the community.

Interestingly, this divergence in the latter two questions is not expressed among the Black community, as in the questions under the trust and accountability category, but rather among white respondents (to a degree), and significantly among Latinx respondents:

|  | WHITE |         | BLACK |         | LATINO |         |
|--|-------|---------|-------|---------|--------|---------|
|  | Agree | Disagr. | Agree | Disagr. | Agree  | Disagr. |
| 1 OPD values input from the community.                         | 91%   | 9%      | 69%   | 31%     | 77%    | 23%     |
| 2 OPD understands the unique aspects of my community.          | 93%   | 7%      | 65%   | 35%     | 78%    | 22%     |
| 6 OPD works to build relationships within the community.       | 94%   | 6%      | 68%   | 32%     | 85%    | 15%     |
| 9 OPD is engaged with the community.                           | 96%   | 4%      | 63%   | 37%     | 92%    | 8%      |
| 11 OPD treats all members of the community with respect.       | 86%   | 14%     | 61%   | 39%     | 75%    | 25%     |
| 15 OPD officers show concern for all members of the community. | 89%   | 11%     | 63%   | 37%     | 74%    | 26%     |

Overall, responses are largely consistent across the category, with about a 20-point gap among Black respondents. 4% of white respondents disagree that OPD is engaged with the community, while as many as 37% – though still far less than half – of Black respondents feel the same.

**(4) Overall Safety and Satisfaction**

Three questions were asked regarding overall favorability of OPD’s performance, as well as the respondent’s own perception of their safety, both at night and during the day.

Responses were highly favorable across all three statements, as shown in the following table:

|   | SA  | A   | D   | SD | #   |
|---|-----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 3 I am satisfied with the overall performance of OPD.                   | 52% | 37% | 9%  | 3% | 652 |
| 4 I feel safe in my community when I am outside alone during the day.   | 64% | 34% | 2%  | 0% | 680 |
| 5 I feel safe in my community when I am outside alone during the night. | 38% | 46% | 12% | 4% | 650 |

Only 2% of respondents do not feel safe during the day, compared to 16% at night. Differences across racial groups were, with some exception, favorable as well:

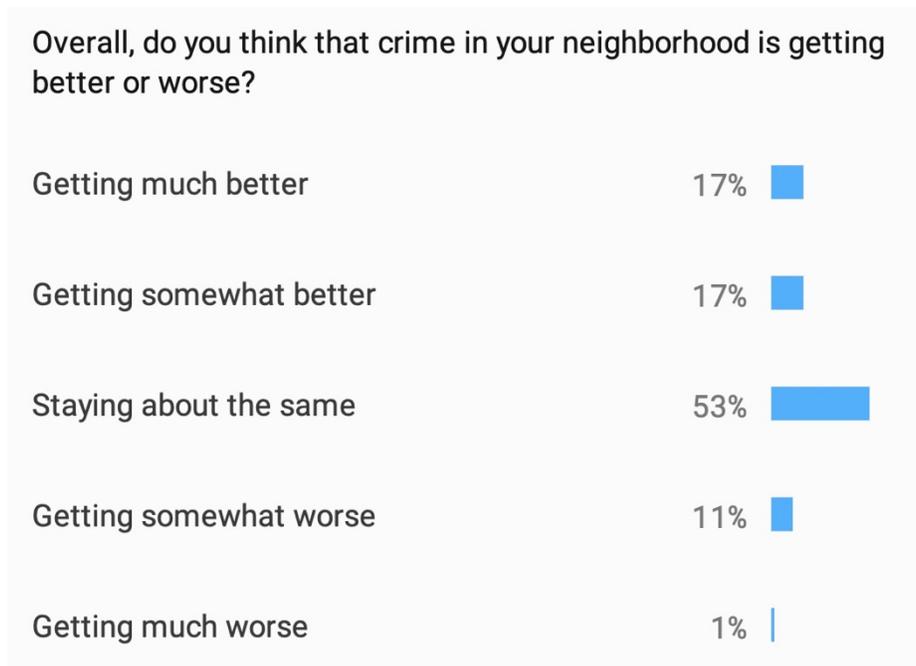
|   | WHITE |         | BLACK |         | LATINO |         |
|---|-------|---------|-------|---------|--------|---------|
|   | Agree | Disagr. | Agree | Disagr. | Agree  | Disagr. |
| 3 I am satisfied with the overall performance of OPD.                   | 92%   | 8%      | 69%   | 31%     | 82%    | 18%     |
| 4 I feel safe in my community when I am outside alone during the day.   | 98%   | 2%      | 98%   | 2%      | 95%    | 5%      |
| 5 I feel safe in my community when I am outside alone during the night. | 87%   | 13%     | 91%   | 9%      | 70%    | 30%     |

Two findings emerge from this outside of the otherwise very positive responses to this category:

- Far fewer Black respondents are satisfied with OPD’s performance.
- Latinx respondents feel significantly less safe at night compared to their peers.

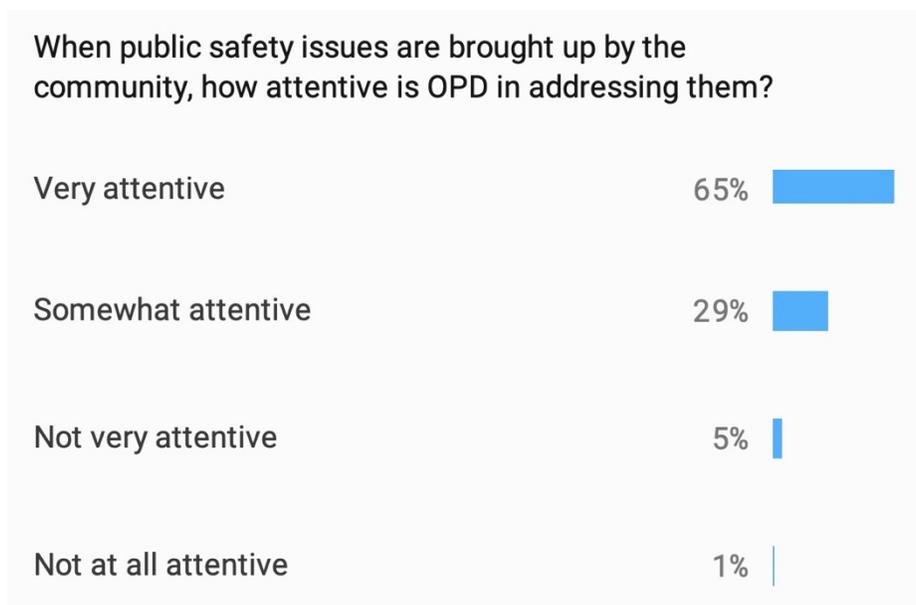
### 3. Multiple Choice Questions

Respondents were presented with several multiple-choice questions on issues of responsiveness and progress in improving community safety:



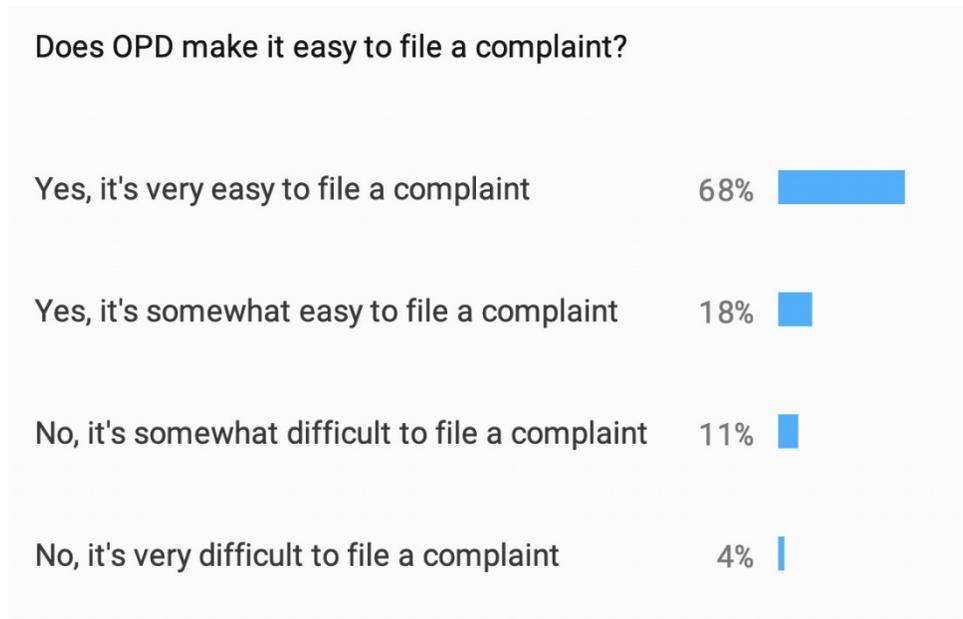
The vast majority of respondents (88%) believe that crime is either staying the same or getting better, with very few people thinking that it is getting much worse (1%).

OPD's responsiveness was also rated extremely highly:



94% of respondents say that OPD is either very or somewhat attentive in addressing public safety issues that the community brings up – an extremely high appraisal of the department's performance.

The survey also asked about filing complaints, with an additional option (not shown) for respondents that do not know how to file a complaint:



Most who know how to file a complaint say that it is easy, with more than two-thirds of respondents saying that it is very easy to do so.

#### 4. Service Level Satisfaction

Respondents who have had contact with OPD were asked to rate their satisfaction with the service they received. This was done across three Yes/No questions that also had an option for "Not applicable", although that option is omitted from the statistics in this subsection.

Among respondents reporting at least one contact with OPD in which they requested service for either an emergency or non-emergency event:



The responses demonstrate high levels of service with the vast majority of experiences involving the officer acting respectfully, addressing the problem and explaining their actions or procedures – a core element of procedural justice.

## 5. Open-Ended Responses

Three questions were asked at the end of the survey that provided respondents with the opportunity to write open-ended responses into text boxes, allowing for their viewpoints to be more freely expressed. The exact text of the prompts given to respondents were as follows:

- *(Optional)* What are some of the foremost positive qualities or strengths of the Ossining Police Department?
- *(Optional)* What are some of the most significant opportunities for improvement in the Ossining Police Department?

- (Optional) Please provide any additional information on any of the topics covered in the survey.

The project team conducted a sentiment analysis of the written responses, using a set of criteria to subjectively categorize each set of responses – i.e., the totality of sentiments expressed across all three prompts.

- **Very Positive:** Highly favorable, enthusiastic support for OPD.
- **Fairly Positive:** In general, positive attitudes toward the police department and how it operates.
- **Neither/Neutral:** Equally balanced positive and negative attitudes, or responses that are neither favorable nor critical.
- **Fairly Critical:** Has specific criticisms of OPD that, on balance, outweigh any positive sentiments expressed by the respondent.
- **Very Critical:** Strong disapproval of OPD and how it operates.

If a respondent expressed wanting to see more staff added to the department or more staff deployed to specific enforcement issues, **this feedback was *not* characterized as being critical**. This is because these types of sentiments are still supportive of police in that the respondent wants to see *more* of it.

The breakdown of responses across each set of open-ended response questions are shown in the following table, both overall and by race/ethnicity:

#### Overall Sentiments Expressed in Open-Ended Responses

|         | Very Critical | Fairly Critical | Neither/ Neutral | Fairly Positive | Very Positive | Total Resp. |
|---------|---------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|---------------|-------------|
| White   | 3%            | 7%              | 17%              | 47%             | 26%           | 235         |
| Black   | 5%            | 5%              | 20%              | 60%             | 10%           | 20          |
| Latinx  | 6%            | 11%             | 17%              | 46%             | 20%           | 54          |
| Other   | 5%            | 5%              | 10%              | 52%             | 29%           | 42          |
| Overall | 4%            | 7%              | 16%              | 48%             | 25%           | 351         |

**In general, the sentiments expressed in the open-ended responses are highly positive**, with the positive appraisals and ideas far more commonly and more vigorously offered than those that could be characterized as more critical or negative. The

sentiments are also more or less consistent across different races/ethnicities, in contrast with the response to the multiple-choice questions.

The most common sentiments involved community outreach and the chief's presence on social media, whereas opportunities for improvement often focused on either a need for greater presence in the community or racial bias issues:

| Qualities/Strengths  | Opportunities for Improvement   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social media posts and engagement</li> </ul>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Claims of racial bias toward non-white community</li> </ul>      |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community outreach and involvement</li> </ul>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More officer diversity, particularly Spanish speakers</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Officers are locals and from the community</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More traffic enforcement and visibility in general</li> </ul>    |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support for the chief</li> </ul>                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accountability and transparency</li> </ul>                       |

As can be seen by the total number of responses to each question in the sentiment analysis table, which is nearly half of the response rates to the multiple-choice questions, a significant drop-off occurred in the open-ended section. This could be due to a number of reasons, including survey fatigue, the time required to write a medium or long-form post, the fact that these questions were labeled as being optional, doubt in the value/impact of doing so, or concerns of self-identification. This is common in surveys conducted by the project team in other communities.

## 4. Police Reform and Reinvention Initiatives

The following sections provide the results of over four months of effort by the Working Committee and the Matrix Consulting Group team to develop short term and long-range initiatives for Police Reform in Ossining. To reach this point took many hours of work on the part of Working Committee members in meetings and background research in support of the Committee's work as well as its various Subcommittees. Reaching this point in the process is also heavily reliant upon the contributions of the community.

Subcommittees of the Working Committee were created so that there could be greater focus on key areas of police reform outlined in Executive Order 203. Subcommittee meetings were held in December 2020 and January 2021 to discuss a wide variety of issues and propose reform initiatives to the Working Committee as a whole and ultimately to the Village Board and the community. The subcommittee areas of focus were:

Governance, oversight and transparency

Internal operations and practices

Policies and procedures

Hiring and training

The goal of the Working Committee was to create a Police Reform and Reinvention plan that is implementable within a reasonable period of time. While a comprehensive review of police services was performed, the creation of mostly higher priority initiatives which could have the greatest impacts received the most focus.

The structure of the reform initiatives for each area of policing is to:

- List an issue
- Discuss the need for change and how a reform can be implemented
- Identify its priority, cost factors and implementation period
- Identify outcomes or improvements associated with the change

The sections of the report which follow, provide the results of the input from the community, the work of Working Committee members and the Village Board of Trustees. The Trustees met on March 10, 2021 and on March 17, 2021 in a process of reviewing the suggested recommendations, accepting many, modifying a few and tabling others for future consideration.

## Oversight and Transparency

### Oversight

#### Issue

**Structural and procedural issues limit the ability of CPCRБ to serve as an external oversight body that promotes accountability and trust.**

**The community survey found that half of Black respondents and one-third of Latinx respondents do not believe that if an officer did something wrong, that they would be held accountable. This underscores the need to develop public trust in the accountability process.**

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#### Recommendation #1

Remove OPD representation on the CPCRБ, for a total of civilian five seats and two civilian alternates. To maintain the role of their in advising the Board, OPD will appoint two *non-voting* Police Department. Votes would be taken using a simple majority members of voting members.

Currently, OPD has two of the seven seats on the CPCRБ, with full voting powers, as well as two additional alternate members. One of the OPD members is an officer, and the other a sergeant – each has an alternate at their respective rank level. Civilians currently have one alternate member.

At the core of civilian oversight is that it is external from the police department. The online community survey results show that many Black and Latinx residents do not believe that if an officer did something wrong, that they would be held accountable. External oversight is effective because it builds trust in and further legitimacy in OPD’s own internal accountability process, while retaining officer due process. The idea behind a civilian board’s effectiveness is simple: If a community member’s own peers independently come to the same conclusion as the police department, then doubts as to whether it was conducted appropriately and fairly are greatly reduced.

For this to work in practice, the board needs to be truly external and fully composed of civilians. Otherwise, it is still at least

*partially* an internal investigation, thus furthering doubts as to whether the board's decisions are impartial.

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| Priority  | High   |
| Timeframe | Six months   |
| Costs     | None   |
| Outcomes  | Increased trust in the police accountability process and in the fairness of oversight decisions, as well as alignment to best practices. |

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**Recommendation #2** Edit the definitions of substantiated, unfounded, unsubstantiated complaints in order to make the distinction clearer without changing the intent in order to address confusion.

Current definitions are not clear to those without background in police internal investigations. These should be simplified in order to facilitate the onboarding process for new CPCR members, as well as to make the proceeding more accessible to community members outside of the CPCR.

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| Priority  | Low   |
| Timeframe | One year  |
| Costs     | None  |
| Outcomes  | Clearer definitions will make it easier for the public to understand the findings that the CPCR came to and prevent inconsistencies in findings due to member turnover. |

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**Recommendation #3** Add to the Village Code that Corporation Counsel or their designee is in attendance at every meeting. The Board of Trustees should receive a quarterly update on cases from the counsel or CPCR B chair.

In the past year, it has become practice that the Village counsel or their deputy attend CPCR B meetings. This ensures that the proceedings are conducted legally and do not violate officer due process considerations. While not truly independent, as police officers that are the subject of complaints are Village employees, having an attorney attend the meetings is common in other review boards to provide legal support in real time.

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| Priority  | Medium   |
| Timeframe | Ongoing  |
| Costs     | \$9,600 (±5,000)   |
| Outcomes  | Increased legitimacy of the CPCR B process, as well as improved confidence in the legality and fairness of CPCR B proceedings. |

**Recommendation #4** In the post-COVID environment, CPCR B members should retain the ability to hold and attend virtual or hybrid meetings.

Measures taken to move public meetings to Zoom and other video conferencing services due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic have shown that doing so broadens the spectrum for who can participate in local civic processes.

In-person attendance requirements present difficulties to those that are working, have childcare responsibilities, and other logistical hurdles that make it difficult to attend in person – even if they would be available to make the same time slot if it were held virtually.

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As a result, the Village Code should be amended to permanently provide the option to attend CPCRb meetings virtually, even after the COVID-19 pandemic has been resolved.

Priority Medium

Timeframe Ongoing

Costs None

Outcomes Larger and more diverse pool of community members able to serve as CPCRb members, and higher rates of attendance

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**Recommendation #5** Add a provision to the Code to ensure that records pertaining to the interaction that led to the complaint (such as police reports, bodycam footage, etc.) are retained until the CPCRb has conducted its review and made a determination.

If necessary, record retention policies in place for such documentation should be modified to require records to be kept for a minimum of 120 days in case a complaint is filed.

Priority Low

Timeframe Immediate

Costs None

Outcomes All relevant documentation will be available

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**Recommendation #6** The location of CPCRb meetings should be on any Village property.

In order to further trust in the CPCRb as being an external board for oversight, the location for its meetings should be on Village property, but not necessarily the police department facility.



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**Recommendation #8** Allow for complaints to be made online.

Priority High

Timeframe Six months

Costs Staff time

Outcomes Complaints are easier to file and the process is less intimidating for complainants.

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**Recommendation #9** Specify that investigation of complaints will begin within 10 calendar days of the complaint being filed and will be completed within 30 days of being filed unless OPD submits a justification for the delay in writing to the CPCR B Chair.

Codifying specific timeframes for complaint investigations ensures that the police department and civilian review board are on the same page regarding the status of any complaints and their investigations.

Priority Medium

Timeframe One year

Costs None

Outcomes Improved coordination and trust between OPD and the CPCR B

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**Issue** **Currently, 11 categories of training curricula must be completed before a new member can review any case. This has caused significant delays in the board's ability to review complaints in a timely manner.**

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**Recommendation #10** The goal of this suggested recommendation is to ensure that the board is able to meet quorums and remain active as an

oversight, while ensuring that a plan to conduct critical training is implemented.

A set of core training areas should be defined to include use of force, vehicle stops and constitutional issues.

Training specific to a certain type of complaint should be prioritized, but not all training areas are relevant to each complaint. For instance, domestic violence training – while critical – should not be required to review a complaint that does not involve or relate to domestic violence.

These training areas would be required before a new member is able to vote on a new case. All other training areas would *not* be required to vote on a complaint, but must be completed within six (6) months.

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| Priority  | Medium   |
| Timeframe | Ongoing  |
| Costs     | None   |
| Outcomes  | Greater stability for CPCRb, improved onboarding process |

**Recommendation #11** It is a longstanding practice that OPD provides training for new CPCRb members, but the current Village code does not define who is responsible for providing the training. This is a codification of current practice.

Designed to facilitate the recommendation 10 and provide a framework for achieving all training needs within a reasonable, but expedited timeframe.

|          |        |
|----------|--------|
| Priority | Medium |
|----------|--------|

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| Timeframe | Immediate  |
| Costs     | None   |
| Outcomes  | Plan and defined expectations for completing CPCR onboarding and training requirements |

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## Transparency

### Issue

**OPD transparency and reporting practices are limited in comparison with best practices in a number of areas, including policies, enforcement data and employment.**

### Recommendation #12

OPD should make regular reports on a variety of metrics including, but not limited to:

- Transparent reporting from OPD on how job opportunities and recruitment are conducted.
- Regular reporting to Board of Trustees/Board of Police Commissioners on arrest and stop statistics, including demographic information, as well as positive interactions.
- Additionally, reporting should be made specifically on the activities of 'unmarked marked' cars to Board of Trustees/Board of Police Commissioners.
- The status of implementation of the police reform plan recommendations should be made on a monthly basis at Village Board meetings.
- The Village Board and the OPD must ensure that these statistics are made available on a timely basis.

Regular reporting on key metrics and activities of the police department is a core element of transparency. Many departments set up automatic collection of relevant data and upload datasets to online data portals, where anyone can view and download the

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information without submitting a records request, paying a fee, or contacting anyone within the department for data. In November of 2020, the OPD stated in a Facebook post that they were committed to “release demographic data for every arrest that takes place in this calendar year”. This data should also include traffic stops and other interventions as well.

In an era where information can be assembled and reported without significant time or fiscal hurdles, to protect or otherwise make it difficult to access key data on police department activities, raising concerns of trust. This is particularly true when so many other departments have taken steps to share a wide array of datasets with the public.

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| Priority  | High  |
| Timeframe | One year/Ongoing  |
| Costs     | Staff time, limited web hosting costs                   |
| Outcomes  | Increased trust, transparency, and community engagement |

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**Recommendation #13** Names and contact info for all police personnel that are ranked lieutenant and above should be listed on the Village / OPD website, in addition to the demographics of OPD police personnel overall.

It is common for contact info of police department commanders to be publicly posted on municipal websites, to stress community engagement and provide for a direct mode of input on service level issues other than contacting elected officials, the chief of police or requesting service.

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| Priority  | Medium                                      |
| Timeframe | Three months                                |
| Costs     | None  |
| Outcomes  | Additional avenues for community engagement |

**Issue** **The Village should support efforts at the County and State levels to reform indemnification of officers and to eliminate qualified immunity as a defense in civil suits against an OPD defendant.**

**Recommendation #14** The Village should support efforts at the County and State levels to reform indemnification of officers and to eliminate qualified immunity as a defense in civil suits against an OPD defendant.

Regarding the Agreement between the Village of Ossining and the Village of Ossining Police Benevolent Association, Inc, the policies should be reworded to account for confirmed instances of excessive use of force, sexual misconduct, and other incidents.

The indemnification policy should require that a police officer found to have caused purposeful or neglectful bodily harm, loss

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of life, or damage to property be able to be found liable in a civil lawsuit seeking damages.

Additionally, the Village should support efforts at the state level to reform and eliminate qualified immunity, which grants officers targeted in civil lawsuits protection from being held liable under certain circumstances. This will enable the victims of police misconduct to seek damages in civil lawsuits, and ultimately damages in financial compensation, even if criminal prosecution is not conducted.





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The police department drafted a policy that impacts members of the LGBTQ+ community that is outdated and offensive to some members of the LGBTQ+ community including transgender, gender non-conforming and non-binary individuals. Updated language and guidance from members of the community could assist the department with the development of a policy that more adequately addresses the issues covered. Suggested resources and organizations include The National Transgender Center, The NY LGBT Bar Association, The LOFT LGBT+ Community Center and the Ossining LGBTQ+ Alliance.

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| Priority  | Medium  |
| Timeframe | 6 months  |
| Costs     | Staff time  |
| Outcomes  | A policy that is updated and has input from the LGBTQ+ community. |

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**Issue**                      **The Police Department’s relationship with ICE in activities within the Village.**

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**Recommendation #4** The police department should modify its general orders to include OPD officers will not respond with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) unless they are called to the location.

Many members of the community are concerned that when officers respond to locations with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) it gives the appearance that the police department is assisting ICE operations. This could have a negative impact on the trust between the community and the police department and may result in community members not reporting crime as a witness or victim because of a fear of deportation.

The policy should be adopted to reduce the appearance that OPD is working with ICE. The new general order would not prohibit OPD from responding because of a criminal matter.

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| Priority  | High   |
| Timeframe | 3 months   |
| Costs     | Staff time   |
| Outcomes  | Increased trust in the Ossining Police Department from undocumented community members. |

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mental health technicians. Many other cities provide a similar kind of service (e.g., Salt Lake City).

Westchester County already operates a different kind of service.

The Crisis Prevention and Response Team (CPRT) is an interdisciplinary mobile team of mental health professionals (social workers, a child and family specialist and a psychiatrist). The CPRT responds to people in the community, usually visiting them at home, although they can be seen elsewhere as well. The team has offices at Saint Joseph's Medical Center in Yonkers and at St. Vincent's Hospital in Harrison.

Mobile crisis response teams are expensive to operate, whether separate or embedded within a police department. Though a larger service region and an extensive service capability, CAHOOTS is supported by the community with over \$1m per year; even a limited program of 2-3 mental health technicians to provide service during daylight hours would cost over \$300,000 per year. A community the size of Ossining would have difficulty with a mental health service of any capability. As a result, the Village should initiate a process to:

- Determine the need for a type of response and case support.
- Reach out to Westchester County to initiate more robust local response and support.
- Determine if there are regional partners (municipalities and non-profit agencies) to participate through MCOT or a new service on a cooperative basis.
- Determine financial resources needed and available.
- Based on the results of this process, create a unit.

Priority

Medium

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| Timeframe | Two years, with the following elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determining the need within the Village – next 6 months</li> <li>• Determining the regional interest – 6 months afterwards</li> <li>• Creating the program, staff, equipment – Year 2</li> </ul> |
| Costs     | Implementation and operating costs to be determined by the type of service and the extent of regional partnerships.   |
| Outcomes  | More appropriate response to calls involving mental health with more attention to case management and more positive long term outcomes.   |

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**Recommendation #2** Develop an emergency responder registry to assist police and fire responders in making a more appropriate response.

Police officers often respond to calls in which the medical and mental health environments they are responding to are unknown. Examples in which responses go wrong because officers misinterpret the actions of someone afflicted with a mental health condition are frequent (e.g., recently in Salt Lake City with Linden Cameron).

Yonkers developed an innovative program that makes first responders aware of some residents' special needs in emergency situations. Information relevant to an individual's special needs is entered into a database, with alerts, to the Yonkers Police and Fire Departments and EMS in the event of an emergency located at a resident's home. The goal of the program is to eliminate or lessen emotional trauma, fear and conflict. When first responders enter the homes of individuals with special needs, they are already attuned to any special steps or precautions they have to take prior to any interventions.

Enrollment in the registry is dependent upon self-reporting. It is voluntary and heavily promoted through social media.

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|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| Priority  | Medium  |
| Timeframe | Next six months to determine the priority of this recommendation and its cost; six months afterwards to implement to the extent possible through community volunteer efforts. |
| Costs     | Incidental costs to implement (website changes, social media promotions, database development and maintenance); changes in dispatch policy.                                   |
| Outcomes  | Improved response to calls involving mental illness and other response issues.  |

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|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| <b>Recommendation #3</b> | <p>Work with Westchester County to provide officers with crisis intervention training (CIT).</p> <p>Currently, no one in the Ossining Police Department has received Crisis Intervention Training (CIT), 40 hours of effort to be more appropriately supported and trained in mental health response.</p> <p>The advantages of CIT training are many – more tools to respond to calls safely and effectively, injury and death reduction associated with response, to focus others who are not trained on core police work.</p> <p>At least one person per shift should be CIT trained.</p> |
| Priority                 | High  |
| Timeframe                | Next two years  |
| Costs                    | \$20,000 to cover overtime associated with CIT training. Once trained, updates are incidental but new CIT trained personnel would need the 40 hours of training.  |
| Outcomes                 | More appropriate response to calls involving mental health  |

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## Relationship with ICE

### Issue

**The Ossining Police Department needs to clearly articulate to the community what its role is with respect to ICE.**

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### Recommendation #4

During interviews, community listening sessions and in the online community survey, there were many references to the Ossining Police Department's involvement with or support to ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) relating to detaining or arresting undocumented individuals in the Village.

Ossining Police Chief Kevin Sylvester has explained OPD's current approach to ICE on a number of occasions. Given the feedback from the community, there is room for improvement in this area.

A recommendation in this Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative focused on defining the role of the Ossining Police Department with respect to ICE's operations in the Village. For this recommended policy or any other policy the Ossining Police Department has with respect to ICE, that policy needs transparency with the community.

Develop a public awareness campaign in both English and Spanish to explain the Police Department's role with respect to ICE activities in the community.

Priority

High

Timeframe

This year

Costs

None

Outcomes

Improved transparency with the community with respect to an important policy affecting many residents.

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**Recommendation #5** Community policing has many definitions, however, most definitions center around partnering with the community to solve problems.

Community input received during this process has focused on the depth, consistency and creativity of community programs and community policing generally. Issues identified by the Ossining community throughout this Police Reform and Reinvention process include:

- Inconsistency in involvement by officers with some not involved at all.
- While the list of community efforts is extensive few are programmatic in nature, addressing problems in the community and support, especially in schools.
- There are no permanent liaisons between the Department and the community groups (e.g., Latinx, African-American, LGBTQ+, etc.).

Specific committee recommendations included creating a coalition of residents and police officers to work together specifically on community policing. The coalition would include three residents from various segments of the community with one police liaison assigned to each group of three.

The main purpose of the coalition would be to ensure the defined application and concept of community policing. Important aspects of community policing pertinent to Ossining would be:

- To find creative ways of community engagement in areas of social events and social service efforts such as wellness checks.
- To explore new and creative avenues of outreach with involvement in local community organizations.

The Ossining Police Department along with the coalition/liaison groups, should explore new approaches to policing in areas of the community most prone to criminal activity, and to find ways

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that would give alternatives to lower-level repeat offenders that are willing to improve their social direction.

The Ossining Police Department should seek training in the area of gang involvement and current urban youth culture to gain better understanding of today's youth.

The Ossining Police Department should explore efforts to improve the profile of policing as perceived by youth in order to promote career opportunities. Support and involvement in youth court courses that exist in the Ossining High School curriculum would help this recommendation.

As a result of this focus, the Ossining Police Department should implement new or improve existing community policing efforts in a number of areas, including:

- Create police officer liaisons (as added responsibilities) with community groups. Individual officers should have collateral responsibilities creating liaisons and regular meetings with LGBTQ+, Latinx, NAACP, faith-based groups, and others.
- With or without a well-defined school resources officer program, create an Ossining High School liaison for the purpose of working with administration, teachers, parent and student groups in regular listening sessions. This liaison is for developing greater understanding, not enforcement of criminal and non-criminal offenses or discipline. This topic is also reviewed in the "Hiring and Training" section later in this report.
- Create mentorships between officers and students (for example programs like 'My Brother's Keeper')
- Create a program like Nassau County's Youth Police Initiative which is focused on bringing together at-risk youth, who have a negative perception of police, with the local officers.

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- Have a greater / more creative OPD presence at more community special events, especially those held by more diverse community groups.
  - Coordinate information and education efforts with other Village services (e.g., recreational services).

Utilize existing community resources to better understand how to connect with residents. For example, the LOFT LGBTQ Community Center has conducted training with other local offices and municipalities.

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| Priority  | High  |
| Timeframe | Next year but ongoing development of programs into the more distant future.           |
| Costs     | Most programs take little to develop (some program materials), but mostly staff time. |
| Outcomes  | Better community engagement through a process of working more closely with residents. |

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recruiting efforts by introducing students to the Ossining Police Department.

The long-term goal of the program would be to establish relationships between the students and the Ossining Police department so that students who choose a career in law enforcement would be familiar with OPD and more likely to apply to work for OPD.

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## Issue

**Police department training lacks some current topics and focus areas.**

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## Recommendation #3

The police department should add training topics.

There are several training areas that are important to the community in which officers currently have little to no training.

To increase competency, the police department should develop a multi-year training plan that includes the following topics by priority:

- **High Priority**
  - Anti-racism
  - Crisis Intervention Training (CIT)
  - Implicit Bias
  - De-escalation
  - Handling Protests (from safety and 1st Amendment perspective)
  - Community Policing
  
- **Medium Priority**
  - Procedural Justice
  - Understanding Different Cultures/Cultural Competency
  - History of Policing Training

Emotional, psychological, and behavioral effects often associated with officer involved shooting and other critical incidents.

Priority High

Timeframe Five years for full implementation; ongoing thereafter

Costs Adding additional classes/ training above state requirements would likely result in the use of overtime to either attend class or to hire officers on overtime to cover work shifts for officers attending class.

The cost would be between \$36,000 (8-hour class) and \$181,602 (40-hour class) per year depending on the additional training hours per year. There will be additional instruction costs which vary depending on vendor/instructional provider selected.

Outcomes The additional training would help officers more effectively police their community.

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**Recommendation #4** The Westchester County Police Academy should be encouraged to implement enhanced training as defined in Recommendation #3 above.

The Westchester County Police Academy has an impact on policing in Ossining for the following reasons:

- Ossining residents interact with police officers from departments other than OPD and
  - Officers occasionally transfer to the OPD from other police departments, and
  - The police academy serves as a foundational experience for new recruits
-

As a result, training on important issues such as crisis intervention and de-escalation, for example, should be integrated into the Westchester Police Academy’s curriculum.

While the process of implementing new training will take time, the communication with the academy should begin immediately following passage of this Plan.

Since training needs to be provided on a regular basis, this recommendation should be considered in addition to the recommendation for the Ossining Police Department’s implementation of enhanced training, not as an alternative option to that recommendation.

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|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| Priority  | Medium  |
| Timeframe | Immediate   |
| Costs     | None  |
| Outcomes  | New officers will come into the community having already received training in these critical areas. Over time, all officers who train at the Westchester Police Academy will have received these trainings. New officers and transfers will only require refresher training once they join OPD. |

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## 5. Initiatives for Future Consideration

The Board of Trustees met on March 10 and March 17, 2021 to initiate a process of reviewing the suggested recommendations from this process, accepting most, modifying a few and tabling others for future consideration. Recommendations suggested by the Working Committee which have been tabled or deferred for future consideration are summarized below.

### Governance, Oversight and Transparency

#### Oversight

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**Recommendation #1** Consider hiring an outside investigator to review complaint cases.

Currently, CPCRB cases are informed by internal department investigation of the complaint cases.

In order for the CPCRB to be a fully external oversight board, an outside investigator should be retained – whether per diem or shared among other municipalities – to conduct a parallel investigation of the complaint.

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| Priority  | Medium   |
| Timeframe | Two years  |
| Costs     | Depends on whether the investigator can be shared with other municipalities. |
| Outcomes  | Increased trust and legitimacy in the complaint review process.              |

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**Recommendation #2** Remove a rule that bars the CPCRБ from reviewing complaint cases where either the OPD employee or complainant is the subject of an ongoing criminal investigation.

Barring the CPCRБ from hearing complaints where either the person making the complaint or the target of the complaint is the subject of a criminal investigation could potentially exclude from the CPCRБ's review a significant portion of complaints, particularly those involving use of force or other critical events.

This rule severely limits the scope of the CPCRБ in rare cases involving severe incidents where having a civilian oversight board provides the greatest benefit to public trust. To this point, in cases such as a complaint involving serious use of force, should such an event occur, to specifically exclude them from civilian oversight could create adverse impacts to public trust.

Internal policy investigations and criminal investigations can and do occur simultaneously in parallel, and so it is feasible for civilian complaint review to operate in parallel as well.

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| Priority  | High   |
| Timeframe | Six months   |
| Costs     | None   |
| Outcomes  | Greatly improved trust in police accountability following critical incidents where a complaint is made |

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**Recommendation #3** Prohibit including or addressing criminal records for complainants. This would prevent disclosing any information that may sway CPCRБ members before they review all the information necessary to make a determination.

|          |     |
|----------|-----|
| Priority | Low |
|----------|-----|

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| Timeframe | Six months  |
| Costs     | None  |
| Outcomes  | Increased trust and legitimacy in the complaint review process. |

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## Governance

**Recommendation #4** Adopt changes to the Village Charter and the Westchester County Police Act to create a new police board of commissioners that is consists of five community members and two Board of Trustees members. References in the Village Code to “Village board who sits as commissioners” would be changed to reference the newly created commission.

Civilian governance boards exist throughout the country to provide a dedicated, singularly-focused review of police departments that is at least partially removed from the same political environment as municipal councils (in this case, the Board of Trustees).

A balance of community representation and Board of Trustees membership is retained in order to provide legitimacy, ensure municipal leaders with a focus on policing issues can have a seat while leaving the majority of the seats for community members.

It is anticipated that several years will be required to bring this idea into practice, given the multiple hurdles that must be first overcome.

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| Priority  | High  |
| Timeframe | Three years   |
| Costs     | Unknown legal counsel costs and any additional election costs |

Outcomes                      Improved trust in the police department, more responsive and attentive governance on issues such as policies and transparency.

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**Recommendation #5** Appointment to the new police board of commissioners should follow one of two routes:

- (1) Mayor nominates and the Village board approves appointments to the board.
- (2) Initially, for the first full term of the board, the mayor nominates, and the Village board approves appointments to the board. Thereafter, members are directly elected.

In most external police governance boards around the country, a structure of mayor nomination and council approval of appointments is followed, although not exclusively. There are advantages and disadvantages of each approach, which should be considered as part of the implementation feasibility process.

|           |                                |
|-----------|--------------------------------|
| Priority  | Medium                         |
| Timeframe | Three years                    |
| Costs     | None                           |
| Outcomes  | Board stability and longevity. |

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**Recommendation #6** Individuals on the police board of commissioners should serve three-year terms, with the board ideally prioritized to represent the diversity of the community and eligibility requirements including the following:

- A maximum of three consecutive terms can be served.
- US citizenship is not required to serve on the board.
- Commissioners cannot be OPD employees or immediate family members of OPD employees.
- Individuals cannot serve concurrently on both the CPCR and commission, although they can be a candidate and/or designee for one while serving on the other.

Eligibility should be carefully constructed to widen the pool of potential commissioners as much as possible to ensure that it is possible for the board to be as diverse and is representative as the community served by the police department.

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| Priority  | High  |
| Timeframe | Three years   |
| Costs     | None  |
| Outcomes  | The foundation for a new commission that is diverse and representative of the community |

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**Recommendation #7** Upon the creation of a new commission, a majority of the initial/acting board should be composed of individuals from the working committee.

The new board of commissioners would face a number of challenges upon its creation to establish itself and use its authority responsibly and appropriately. Retaining members of the working committee ensures that institutional knowledge is

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retained from the reform process, and will help develop the initial abilities and overall stability of the new commission.

Priority Low

Timeframe Three years

Costs None

Outcomes Initial stability for the board of commissioners that is familiar with OPD, its current governance, and the issues underlying the transition to a new system of civilian governance.

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**Recommendation #8** Tying in with the suggested recommendations on governance, police commissioners on a newly created board should have a role in reviewing policies:

- Input and review of new policies from police commission
- All policies should be reviewed yearly. As per the International Association of Chiefs of Police’s article “Developing a Police Department Policy-Procedure Manual”, a policy manual should be reviewed on at least an annual basis. “This review helps to ensure the manual is in compliance with current management, operation, and legal standards.” Additionally, it will ensure policy language is not only legally compliant but also culturally competent and aware.

Providing for a process by which the new police board of commissioners would directly review and provide input and recommendations on new/modified policies is a critical step in furthering accountability and civilian governance.

This also provides an opportunity for the department to educate the public on policy-related issues, as opposed to needing to explain issues such as immigration enforcement policy in a largely reactive and town hall style capacity.

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| Priority  | High  |
| Timeframe | One year/Ongoing  |
| Costs     | None  |
| Outcomes  | Increased trust, transparency, and community engagement |

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**Issue**                      **The police department develops policies that affect the community they serve without opportunity for input from the community which can result in policies that are not responsive to community desires.**

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**Recommendation #9**    The police department should have a 30-day period for public comment before a policy is implemented except under emergency or immediate need circumstances.

The police department has drafted policies that some members of the community feel are inadequate or do not meet the needs of the community. Some departments use a 30-day comment period before a policy is implemented to get feedback from the community that can be used to update a policy or inform the community of pending policy changes that may impact police operations. There should be exceptions granted in the 30-day public review because of emergency circumstances such as court decisions or other emergencies where a 30-day public comment period before implementation could result in increased liability or out of compliance police operations.

|           |            |
|-----------|------------|
| Priority  | Low        |
| Timeframe | One year   |
| Costs     | Staff time |

Outcomes                      Increased transparency and opportunity for the community to help improve policies.

## Hiring and Training

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**Recommendation #10** During interviews, young people in the community alluded to not understanding the role of the School Resource Officer (SRO) at Ossining High School and being intimidated by his armed presence.

The Village of Ossining should assess the continued presence of officers in the school along with the OUFSD and the school community and students. Criteria and factors that should be taken into consideration are:

- SRO training
- The SRO's duties and job description.
- A review of student interactions with the SRO including a demographic breakdown

If the SRO position is deemed necessary, training should be prioritized to ensure that individuals are community-minded and engaging with students. Additionally, their duties should also prioritize patrolling the areas around campus instead of the school hallways. Research shows that School Resource Officers are more prevalent in school districts where the student majority are people of color. Studies have also found a linkage between the presence of an SRO and the school to prison pipeline for students of color.

Priority                              High

Timeframe                         This year

Costs                                 None

Outcomes                      Improved transparency with the community with respect to an important policy affecting many residents and youth.

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**Recommendation #11** Develop a police officer mental health program.

Many studies have shown that people working in law enforcement are at an elevated risk of not only physical health issues but mental health issues as well. Associated risks associated with substance abuse, family breakups, domestic and self-abuse can be great in law enforcement if wellness is not promoted and supported in the organization.

There are many things than can be accomplished in an organizational wellness program with little or no cost, including:

- Addressing mental health needs in recruitment, selection and in the academy.
- Instilling a culture of wellness in the Department through targeted support in daily briefings and supervisory support.
- Instituting debriefings for police officers after crisis calls and staff surveys.

Other steps would take additional support from the Village as well as agreement from the Police Benevolent Association. These steps could include:

- Psychological counseling available on request
- Counseling from faith-based or other community organizations
- Incentivizing physical and mental health, for example, supporting better nutritional choices, physical training, etc.
- Developing a tele-therapy option to make seeking assistance anonymous.

- Developing an Employee Assistance Program in support of wellness.
- Contacting police specific support associations such as Blue HELP.
- Develop an ‘early intervention program’ for employees needing help but not seeking it. IAPro/Blue Team is a tool which many law enforcement organizations use to identify potential problems for a police officer before they become bigger (by drawing on complaints and personnel systems).
- Require officers involved in an officer-involved shooting or other critical incidents to participate in at least one post-event debrief with a qualified mental health professional. There may be issues with requiring officers to receive counselling. As a result, this needs to be investigated and, to the extent that it is allowed, will need to be discussed with the Police Benevolent Association (PBA).

Priority High

Timeframe Next year, including the time needed to meet and confer with the Police Benevolent Association; a second year for IAPro/Blue Team

Costs Each of these measures has a cost associated with implementation. As noted above, there are collective bargaining implications which need to be addressed through meeting and conferring to the Police Benevolent Association.

IAPro alone would cost about \$15,000 to implement and about \$2,000 per year.

Outcomes Expected improvements include improved mental health support for police officers with expected (but poorly quantifiable) impacts on citizen engagement (fewer complaints), reductions in negative personal and familial outcomes.

