

A stylized map of Ossining, New York, showing a network of streets and roads. The map is overlaid on a blue gradient background that represents water. The text is positioned on the left side of the map.

Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative

VILLAGE OF OSSINING, NEW YORK

March 5, 2021

matrix 
consulting group

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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 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 this report incorporates the points raised in subsequent reviews.

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, faith-based members 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 their 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 10th, a Spanish language session was held.
 - On a Saturday morning, December 12th, a general community meeting in English was held.
 - On Thursday evening, December 17th, a meeting sponsored by the Ossining chapter of the NAACP was held.
 - On Thursday evening, January 7th, a meeting was sponsored by the Ossining LGBTQ Alliance and co-sponsored by the LOFT LGBTQ+ Community Center.

- Finally, on Tuesday, January 19th, 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 20th and December 2nd. 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 6th and January 13th. 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 6th, 20th and the 27th 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.

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 interaction in 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, (2010 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 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 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 an very good relationship with the community and stated they also do many business and community check ins.

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. In all, there are 42 recommendation areas which were identified by the Working Committee and the community for police reform and reinvention – some of these areas had multiple specific recommendations. Many of these changes can be implemented quickly by the Village and its police department if they are accepted for adoption, 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 Governor. Prior to that, the Plan developed by the Working Committee with the assistance of Matrix Consulting Group, will be reviewed by the Village Board of Trustees. These suggested recommendations may be adopted in whole or in part by the Village Board; additional recommendations may be added to the Reform Plan submitted to the Governor.

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 1st 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.

- 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.

Governance, Oversight and Transparency

Remove OPD representation on the CPCR, for a total of civilian five seats with one civilian alternate. 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.

Consider hiring an outside investigator to review complaint cases.

Add to the code that the Village Counsel or their deputy is in attendance at every meeting. The board of trustees should receive a quarterly update on complaints from the 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 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.

Add language to the Village Code that specifies the location of CPCR meetings as being on Village property other than OPD facilities.

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

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

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

Specify that investigation of complaints will begin within 10 business days of the complaint being filed, and will complete within 30 days of being filed, unless OPD submits a justification for the delay in writing.

Specify that investigation of complaints will begin within 10 business days of the complaint being filed, and will complete within 30 days of being filed, unless OPD submits a justification for the delay in writing.

CPCR 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.

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

Adopt changes to the Village Charter and the Westchester County Police Act to create a new police board of commissioners that consists of five community members and two Board of Trustees members. References in the Village Code to "Village board who sit as commissioners" would be changed to reference the newly created commission.

Appointment to the new police board of commissioners should follow one of two routes: (1) Mayor nominates, and Village board approves appointments to the board; (2) Initially, for the first full term of the board, the mayor nominates and Village board approves appointments to the board. Thereafter, members are directly elected.

Individuals on the police board of commissioners should serve three-year terms, with the board ideally prioritized to represent the diversity of the community.

Upon the creation of a new commission, a majority of the initial/acting board should be comprised of individuals from the working committee.

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

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

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

Tying in with the suggested recommendations on governance, police commissioners on a newly created board should have a role in reviewing policies.

Policies and Procedures

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 free of charge at the police department or Village hall.

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

The department should modify its general orders to include OPD officers will not respond with ICE unless they are called to the location. 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.

While the police department has a 'duty to intervene' policy, it should develop a specific 'duty to report' misconduct by department personnel.

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

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 Village needs to evaluate the role of police officers in the schools and whether a presence is desired at all.

Internal Operations and Practices

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.

Develop officers to receive crisis intervention training (CIT).

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.

Work with the Police Department to implement new or improve existing community policing efforts including police officer liaisons with community groups, greater presence at community events, improved and more meaningful presence in Ossining schools, and additional foot beats when the public health situation allows.

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.

Develop a police officer mental health program that includes officer counseling with a tele-therapy option, and an early intervention program.

Hiring and Training

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

Work with Ossining High School to start a program to introduce high school students to the Ossining Police Department.

The 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.

Utilize existing community resources to better understand how to connect with residents.

Develop a plan to hire more bilingual officers or encourage fluency.

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

The Westchester County Police Academy should be encouraged to implement enhanced training consistent with the enhanced training recommended for Ossining's officers.

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	Omar Lopez
Jennifer Cabrera	MaryPat Long
Juan Encarnacion	Frank Luis
Ben Ervin	Rodolfo Moran
Maria Teresa Garcia	Mary Phifer
Victoria Gearity	Christina Picciano
Althema Goodson	Jackie Shaw
Gabrielle Hamilton	Kevin Sylvester
Shaun Jones	Joan Whitaker
Rika Levin	

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. The 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 7th and a second on Tuesday, January 19th 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 influence young peoples' views and opinions of police officers. Many young people are 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 Latin 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 online. 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 emphatic, 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 includes 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 includes 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 and 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:

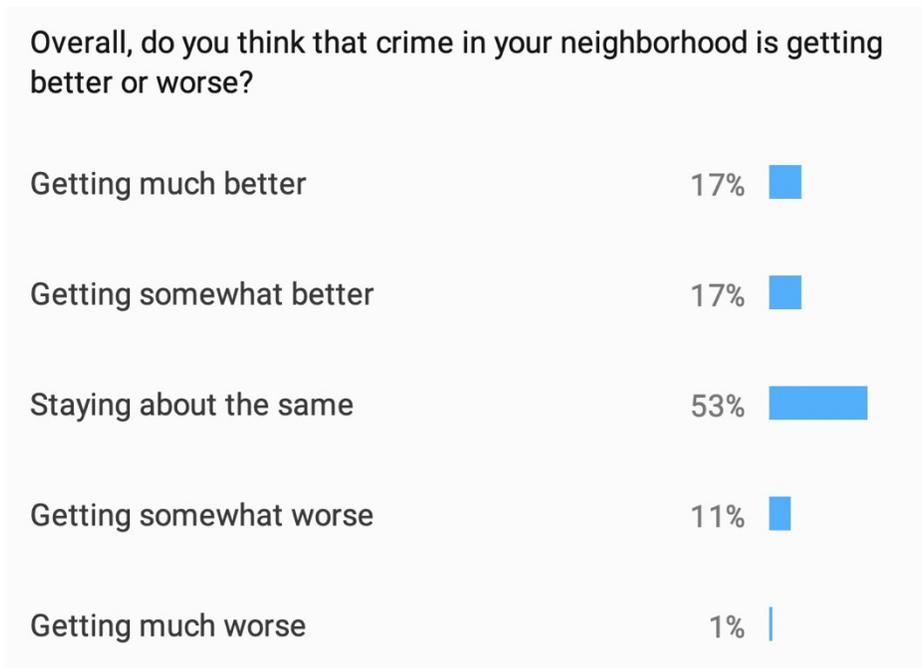
	WHITE		BLACK		LATINO	
	Agree	Disagr.	Agree	Disagr.	Agree	Disagr.
3 I am satisfied with the overall performance of OPD.	92%	8%	69%	31%	82%	18%
4 I feel safe in my community when I am outside alone during the day.	98%	2%	98%	2%	95%	5%
5 I feel safe in my community when I am outside alone during the night.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

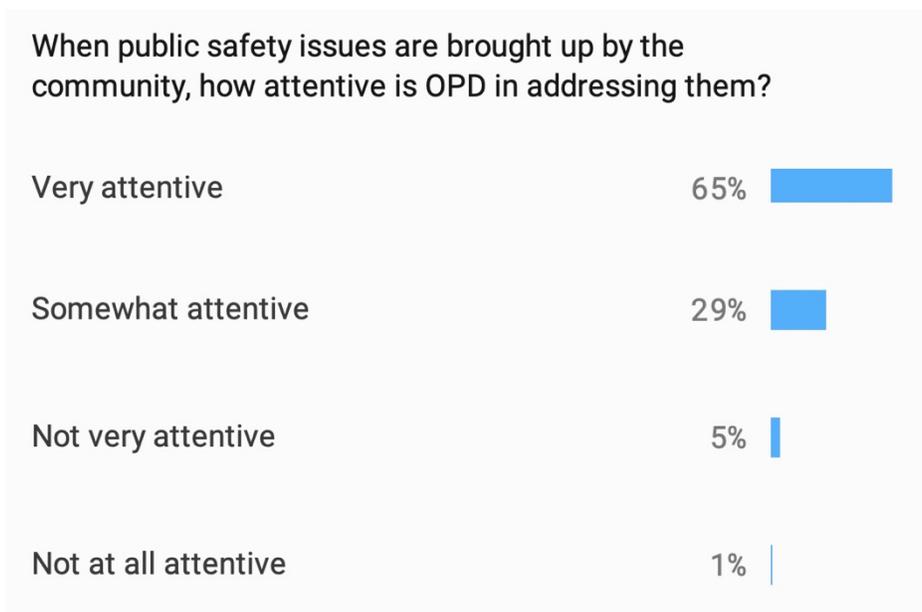
3. Multiple Choice Questions

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



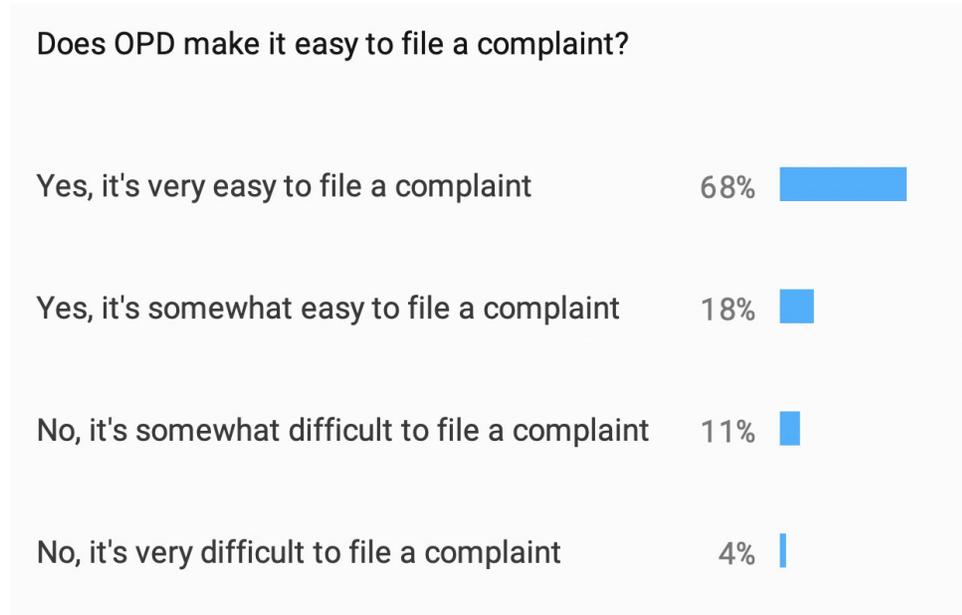
The vast majority of respondents (88%) believe that crime is either staying the same or getting better, with very few people thinking that it is getting much worse (1%).

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
• Social media posts and engagement	• Claims of racial bias toward non-white community
• Community outreach and involvement	• More officer diversity, particularly Spanish speakers
• Officers are locals and from the community	• More traffic enforcement and visibility in general
• Support for the chief	• Accountability and transparency

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 longer 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 and the work of Working Committee members.

Oversight, Governance, and Transparency

Oversight

Issue

Structural and procedural issues limit the ability of CPCRB 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.

Recommendation #1

Remove OPD representation on the CPCRB, for a total of civilian five seats and one alternate. Votes would be taken using a simple majority.

Currently, OPD has two of the seven seats on the CPCRB, 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 one alternate.

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.

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.

Recommendation #3 Consider hiring an outside investigator to review complaint cases. Currently, CPCR cases are informed by internal department investigation of the complaint cases.

In order for the CPCR 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.

Recommendation #4 Add to the code that the Village counsel or their deputy is in attendance at every meeting. The Board of Trustees should receive a quarterly update on cases from the counsel or CPCRБ chair.

In the past year, it has become practice that the Village counsel or their deputy attend CPCRБ 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 CPCRБ process, as well as improved confidence in the legality and fairness of CPCRБ proceedings.

Recommendation #5 In the post-COVID environment, CPCRБ 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.

As a result, the Village Code should be amended to permanently provide the option to attend CPCRБ 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

Recommendation #6 Add 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

Recommendation #7 Add language to the Village Code that specifies the location of CPCRB meetings as being on Village property other than OPD facilities.

In order to further trust in the CPCRB as being an external board for oversight, it is not appropriate for the meeting to be held at the police department. Thus, a location that is still Village property, but not associated with the police department, protects this function. Likewise, this mitigates any potential concerns that an OPD location could be used as a means of influence on the board's processes.

Priority Low

Timeframe One year

Costs None

Outcomes Slightly improved trust in CPCRB proceedings and reinforces the independence of the CPCRB.

Issue **Complaint processes can be restrictive, and processes do not ensure that all complaints are reviewed by the CPCRB in a timely manner, as appropriate.**

Recommendation #8 Remove a rule that bars the CPCRB from reviewing complaint cases where either the OPD employee or complainant is the subject of an ongoing criminal investigation.

Barring the CPCRB 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 CPCRB'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 CPCRB 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

Recommendation #9 Increase the maximum amount of time an individual has to file a complaint from 90 to 120 days. Any internal department policies or procedures that reference this timeline should be amended accordingly.

Subject to any contractual provisions subject to collective bargaining that impede this change, the window for individuals to file complaints should be expanded to make the process less difficult. This is particularly relevant in situations where there is fear for whatever reason on the part of the complainant, or they do not otherwise feel comfortable filing the complaint immediately following the incident in question.

Priority Medium

Timeframe	One year
Costs	None
Outcomes	Complaints are easier to file, and fewer complaints are rejected for no reason other than the time in which they were filed following the incident.

Recommendation #10 Prohibit including or addressing criminal records for complainants. This would prevent disclosing any information that may sway CPCR 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.

Recommendation #11 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.

Recommendation #12 Specify that investigation of complaints will begin within 10 business days of the complaint being filed and will complete within 30 days of being filed unless OPD submits a justification for the delay in writing.

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

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.**

Recommendation #13 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 CPCR, improved onboarding process

Recommendation #14 It is a longstanding practice that OPD provides training for new CPCR 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 first recommendation and provide a framework for achieving all training needs within a reasonable, but expedited timeframe.

Priority	Medium
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Timeframe	Immediate
Costs	None
Outcomes	Plan and defined expectations for completing CPCRb onboarding and training requirements

Governance

Issue **Need for effective and attentive civilian governance of the police department.**

Recommendation #15 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.

Recommendation #16 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.

Recommendation #17 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

Recommendation #18 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 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.

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

- Transparent reporting from OPD in how job opportunities and recruitment are conducted.
- Regular reporting to board/commission 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/commission.
- The status of the implementation of the police reform plan suggested recommendations on a monthly basis at Village Board meetings.

- The Village Board and the OPD must ensure that these statistics are made available to the comments 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 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

Recommendation #20 Names and contact info for all police personnel that are ranked lieutenant and above should be listed on the 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 **OPD policies are not publicly available and there are no means by which the public can provide input on new policies and changes to existing policies.**

Recommendation #21 The Village should support efforts 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 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.

Recommendation #22 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

Issue

The police department responds to locations of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) operations.

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 unless called because of a local or state law criminal matter.

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

Issue

The police department does not have a policy that requires reporting misconduct by police department personnel.

Recommendation #5 While the police department has a 'duty to intervene' policy, it should develop a specific 'duty to report' misconduct by department personnel.

Though it is expected that police department personnel will report misconduct, there is no specific policy that requires it. Developing a policy that requires police personnel to report misconduct further enhances accountability at all levels of the department by requiring action when misconduct is observed.

Priority	High
Timeframe	3 months
Costs	Staff time
Outcomes	A policy that requires action when misconduct is observed.

Issue **The police department developed GO 3.91 Interactions with Transgender and “Non-Gender conforming Individuals” without input from the LGBTQ+ community.**

Recommendation #6 The police department should work with the LGBTQ+ community to rewrite GO 3.91 and expand on an LGBTQ+ policy.

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.

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.**

Recommendation #7 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.

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"> • Determining the need within the Village – next 6 months • Determining the regional interest – 6 months afterwards • Creating the program, staff, equipment – Year 2
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 longer term outcomes.

Recommendation #2	<p>Develop a officers to received 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

Recommendation #3	<p>Develop an emergency responder registry to assist police and fire responders in making a more appropriate response.</p> <p>Police officers often respond to calls in which the medical and mental health environment 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).</p> <p>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</p>
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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.

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.

Police Officers' Mental Health

Issue **Police officers work in a stressful business in which split second decisions can have life or death consequences. In spite of this, mental health support for police officers is neglected.**

Recommendation #4 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 that can be accomplished in an organizational wellness program with little or no cost, including:

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- 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 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

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- 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. Community stakeholders should be involved in the vetting and assignment process for the community representatives to ensure trust in the process.

The main purpose of the coalition would be to ensure the defined application and concept of community policing. Important aspects of community policing pertinent 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 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.
- Without 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.
- 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).

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.

Relationship with ICE

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

Recommendation #6 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.

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.

Hiring and Training

Issue **Department demographics do not reflect the community in hiring and promotions.**

Recommendation #1 Department demographics should reflect the community in hiring and promotions.

To better serve and represent the community, OPD should work to diversify their workforce by trying to increase the number of community members who apply to become police officers. Developing a goal with defined strategies to increase local recruiting could help OPD to better reflect the community they serve. Additionally, OPD should work to ensure their senior leadership is reflective of their community and leadership programs can be implemented to cultivate prospects. Lastly, all police personnel should be at least 25 years of age when hired.

Priority Medium
 Timeframe Ongoing
 Costs Not determined
 Outcomes A police department that reflects community demographics

Issue **The department does not have a recruiting/police introduction program at Ossining High School.**

Recommendation #2 Start Recruiting Program / Police Department Introduction at Ossining High School.

Police department officers are active at schools and there is an opportunity to start a police department / recruiting program at the high school which could help the department with future 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.

Priority	Low
Timeframe	Ongoing
Costs	None
Outcomes	More police department applicants from Ossining.

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

Recommendation #3 The police department 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

- 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.

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.

Relationship with the Ossining Union Free School District

Issue **The Ossining Police Department has School Resource Officers in Ossining High School whose roles are not clear and whose presence can appear intimidating and unfriendly to students of color.**

Recommendation #5 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 a 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.
