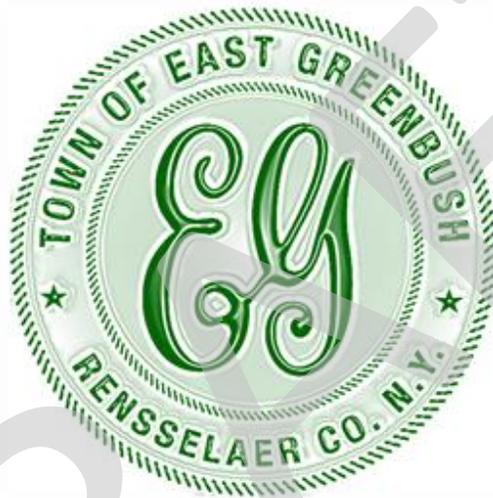


The Town of East Greenbush

POLICE REFORM AND REINVENTION COLLABORATIVE

DRAFT PLAN



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March 7, 2021

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TOWN OF EAST GREENBUSH

Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative: Draft Plan

March 7, 2021

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Town of East Greenbush Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative met from December, 2020 through March, 2021. It consisted of nine members, including the Supervisor, Deputy Supervisor, the Chief of Police, Assistant Police Chief and five members of the community. As required by Governor Cuomo's Executive Order #203, we undertook a comprehensive review of police force deployments, strategies, policies, procedures and practices and developed a Plan to recommend improvements in these areas.

The Resources & Guide for Public Officials and Citizens (Resource Guide) prepared by the Governor's Office was provided to assist municipalities with the task. The Resource Guide framed its discussions around four principles:

Determining the role of the police in our community;
Employing smart and effective policing standards and strategies;
Fostering community-oriented leadership, culture and accountability; and
Recruiting and supporting excellent personnel.

Accordingly we structured the Recommendations of the Plan in response to these four issues. The recommendations that make up the Plan are listed here:

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Determining the Role of the Police in Our Community

- Improve mental health services to help the Police handle mental health crises;
- Increase participation in Diversion Programs offering defendants the opportunity to avoid the criminal justice system.

2. Employing Smart and Effective Policing Standards and Strategies

- Reimagine Training Options to build knowledge. promote empathy and enhance protective mindsets;
- Deepen collaboration with the community.

3. Fostering Community-Oriented Leadership, Culture and Accountability

- Create a Community Advisory Committee;
- Clarify the process for filing complaints against the Police;
- Establish a Use of Force Review Board which will include the Town Board liaison to the Police Department;
- Require the Use of Force Instructor to submit an Annual Report to the Chief of Police analyzing all use of force incidents;
- Add precepts of procedural justice to Community Relations Policy;
- Post Chief of Police's Monthly Reports to the Town's website;
- Urge the State of New York to assemble and report traffic stop data by race at the Municipal level;
- Provide more opportunities for officers to be engaged in decision-making about policies and program needs.

4. Recruiting and Supporting Excellent Personnel

- Expand recruiting efforts;
- Implement an Officer Wellness Program.

I. INTRODUCTION

On June 12, 2020, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo signed Executive Order #203 which decreed that all local government entities which have a police agency “... must perform a comprehensive review of current police force deployments, strategies, policies, procedures, and practices, and develop a plan to improve such deployments, strategies, policies, procedures, and practices for the purposes of addressing the particular needs of the communities served by such police agency and promote community engagement to foster trust, fairness, and legitimacy, and to address any racial bias and disproportionate policing of communities of color.”

The Executive Order requires that the chief operating officer of a municipality such as ours must convene, in consultation with the Chief of Police, a group of stakeholders from the community to review current Police Department practices and policies and create a plan to adopt and implement recommendations resulting from its review and consultation. The plan must be offered for public comment to all citizens in the locality, and must be adopted by local law or resolution by the Town Board no later than April 1, 2021.

The Resources & Guide for Public Officials and Citizens (“Resource Guide”) prepared in August 2020 by the Governor’s Office was provided to help municipalities complete this task. The Resource Guide emphasizes that an effective police department must engage with the community in a meaningful and multifaceted way and show respect for individuals during interactions with the police, in addition to their role as protectors of public safety. To assess the effectiveness of our department, a group of interested elected officials, police officials, and residents undertook a comprehensive review of our Police Department and its relationship to our community as mandated by the Governor’s Executive Order.

The East Greenbush Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative (“The Collaborative”) consisted of nine members from our community:

Jack Conway, Town Supervisor
Elaine Rudzinski, Chief of Police
Tina Tierney, Deputy Town Supervisor
Jonathan Reickert, Assistant Police Chief
Maria Barrington
Robin Cole
Roger Johnson
Aaron Matthews
Ingrid Werge



To prepare the recommendations that constitute our Plan, we investigated four critical issues raised by the Resource Guide:

- What functions should the police perform?;
- Employing smart and effective policing standards and strategies;
- Fostering community-oriented leadership, culture and accountability;
- Recruiting and supporting excellent personnel.

The Collaborative evaluated current practices of the Police Department by studying written policies, reviewing training topics and materials, analyzing data collected by the Department, and conducting two surveys, one to gauge the community's perception of their relationship with the police, the other to consider key issues from the point of view of the Officers and Dispatchers.

All written policies were not reviewed, just the ones relevant to the task at hand. Having a department that has been accredited by the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) gave us the confidence to isolate the subset of key policies that best relate to the Governor's Executive Order. The selected policies cover the issues of bias, use of force, community policing and mental health. Of special interest were the policies concerning use of force, bias and hate crimes, crisis intervention in mental health situations, and accountability.

Training materials that relate to these policies were also reviewed in the context of the overall training requirements of the Department. To understand the data collected by the East Greenbush Police Department ("EGPD") and determine whether it is sufficient we reviewed statistics and details on the use of force, indices of crimes reported to EGPD, the call volume of our Emergency Communications Center, and the number and types of arrests made by our officers. Data on arrests was broken down by race and gender to determine whether any discernible bias could be detected.

As part of the Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative, the Town of East Greenbush invited the public to take a "Community Survey on Public Safety and Law Enforcement." The survey was designed to gather opinions and experiences from members of the community and was intended for East Greenbush residents, or individuals who work or operate a business in East Greenbush. The Town of East Greenbush also invited the members of our Police Department and our Emergency Communications Division to complete a confidential survey designed to gather information on their feelings, opinions and experiences. The community survey yielded 405 responses; the Police survey was completed by 28 members of the Department, 18 police officers and 10 dispatchers.



THE TOWN OF EAST GREENBUSH

The Town of East Greenbush is situated in western Rensselaer County along the eastern shore of the Hudson River and borders the Towns of Schodack, North Greenbush, Sand Lake and Bethlehem and the City of Rensselaer. East Greenbush is the most populous Town in Rensselaer County. The Town's location near the region's main population and job centers of Albany and Troy has resulted in an attractive location for commercial and residential growth. Many of the region's primary transportation routes, including Interstate 90 (I-90), U.S. Route 4 and U.S. Routes 9 & 20 (Columbia Turnpike) traverse the Town, allowing for easy access to nearby employment centers and access into East Greenbush from neighboring communities. This locational advantage has allowed East Greenbush to rise as an employment center in its own right, with large employers, including Regeneron Pharmaceuticals, Inc. and the University at Albany School of Public Health.

Agriculture was the primary pursuit of the Town until the end of World War II, when the prominence of the automobile gave way to the suburban settlement patterns prevalent today. The Town offers a diverse landscape that includes historic neighborhoods, scenic vistas, Hudson River waterfront, rural and agricultural lands, excellent schools and recreational resources that contribute to the Town's character.

According to the American Community Survey, the population of East Greenbush is 16,403, an increase of 17% since 1990. It is a middle class community with a median household income of \$76,113; more than 78% of its housing units are owner-occupied. According to the 2010 Census the racial composition of the Town is:

White	91.3 %
Asian	3.7 %
African American	2.6 %
Hispanic	2.4 %



II. EAST GREENBUSH POLICE DEPARTMENT

“The East Greenbush Police Department fosters a culture where all individuals are treated equally. Our community members come from a wide range of socio-economic statuses, races, ethnicities, genders and religions. All are treated with the respect they deserve. It is expected that the administration and supervisors will address any members appearing to favor one group over another, even inadvertently. The public support our agency enjoys has taken decades to build but can only take a moment to destroy. Being keenly aware of that fact keeps our membership striving each day to bring the best service possible.”

- Chief of Police Elaine M. Rudzinski

On May 4, 1964, the Town Board formally adopted a Resolution creating the East Greenbush Police Department under the direction of Harold Pearlman, then the only full time Constable. The department had only one car; during busy spells the officers were expected to use their own cars. In 1972, the first Civil Service Chief of Police, John M. Burns, a former City of Troy Police officer, was appointed. Chief Burns served until January 1, 1990 when Detective Sergeant Christopher P. Lavin was selected to be the new Chief of Police. In 1986, the Police Department relocated to the basement of the new Town Hall building at 225 Columbia Turnpike, where it still resides. In June 2019, Chief Lavin retired and the Town Board chose Detective Sergeant Elaine M. Rudzinski to be the new Chief, marking the first time in the history of Rensselaer County that a woman was appointed to the position of Chief of Police. Chief Rudzinski is dedicated to the concept of community policing and had instituted a new series of events for her officers to engage with the public in congenial social settings before the Covid-19 pandemic put an end to those types of gatherings.

STAFFING

The East Greenbush Police Department currently consists of 25 full-time officers, 8 full-time dispatchers and 9 part-time dispatchers. The Emergency Communications Center provides rapid response and 911 services 24 hours a day year round. The Communication Division responded to 24,904 calls for service in 2019 and another 24,702 calls in 2020. The Communication Division is responsible for all public safety communications in the Town of East Greenbush. They receive requests and information that must be processed and prioritized and then dispatched to Police, Fire and Emergency medical units via a computer-aided dispatch system. All dispatchers undergo extensive, ongoing training that includes CPR, Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) and critical incident dispatch. In 2020, the Town signed a Memorandum of Agreement with Rensselaer County to provide backup 911 and radio communications for the whole County. In addition to dispatching calls for police services and helping to ensure the safety of officers on patrol, the Emergency



Communications Center processes calls for service for the Town's Department of Public Works and Building Department.

In the 25-person Police Department there is a Chief, Assistant Chief, 1 Detective Sergeant, 4 Sergeants and 18 Officers. Generally speaking, staffing levels are dictated by contractual obligations and officer safety requirements. Administrative and supervisory staffing is consistent with the National Incident Management System and NYS Emergency Management Office recommendations for proper span of control. Various officers are assigned to specialized units consisting of Accident Reconstruction and Investigation, Firearms, Evidence Processing, Bike Patrol, UAS (Drone), a K-9 team, Shared Services Response Team, Community Policing and Crime Prevention Officers, Car Seat Technicians and a Social Media unit. These are deployed as circumstances require. The department's Administrative Division is responsible for maintaining training, personnel and departmental records, and helping to manage budget responsibilities and day-to-day operations. This division is instrumental in ensuring that policies and procedures are kept up-to-date and in line with contemporary standards.

NEW YORK STATE ACCREDITED AGENCY

On December 7, 2017 the East Greenbush Police Department achieved the distinction of becoming a New York State Accredited Agency in a ceremony hosted by the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services. The ceremony was attended by the Supervisor, Chief of Police Lavin, our Accreditation Officer James Condo and EGPD's administrative assistant Stephanie Scheibly. This put our Department on the list of only 25% of departments in New York State that have been accredited. This reflects the excellence of our Department and its commitment to maintaining up-to-date policies and a well-trained police force.

As an accredited agency EGPD policies have been developed, reviewed often and updated when necessary. The Department utilizes the services of Lexipol and its partner Police One for policy, procedure and on-going training updates. As laws, case law, accreditation standards and best practices change, our policies are updated to reflect these changes. For example, following the passage of the Say Their Name legislative package, policies were updated to reflect the changes in the law. With the partnership with Lexipol the department is able to provide legally defensible updated policies to the members. Each member must review and acknowledge the policy once it's sent to them via Lexipol's Knowledge Management System (KMS) in order for it to be placed in their policy manual.



EVENT ACTIVITIES

The Police Department responds to calls of an extremely diverse nature. Table 1 presents selected data on the type of police calls recorded during 2018 - 2020. The information in Table 1 is not a comprehensive list of calls but is presented to illustrate the types of activities that EGPD generally undertake in the course of its duties. In addition to the event activities listed below, officers respond to fire and EMS calls and are often first on the scene to immediately assist persons in need. The Department also provides shared services consisting of equipment, training and police services with the Rensselaer, Schodack and North Greenbush police departments. As demonstrated in Table 1, calls for service range from civil matters and criminal complaints to hazardous situations where life and property are threatened.

TABLE 1: SELECTED EVENT ACTIVITY: COMPARISON 2018 – 2020*

EVENT DESCRIPTION	2018	2019	2020
<i>Property/Location Watch</i>	4,416	6,678	7,716
<i>Traffic Stop</i>	2,499	4,975	3,064
<i>Service to Community</i>	393	1,278	2,916
<i>Suspicious Person/Vehicle/Activity</i>	678	622	650
<i>Traffic Accident</i>	778	758	558
<i>Burglary/Alarm/Hold Up</i>	550	501	455
<i>Investigation/Follow Up</i>	478	438	430
<i>Animal Complaint</i>	467	422	413
<i>Wellbeing Check</i>	356	378	403
<i>Shoplifter</i>	227	261	379
<i>Larceny</i>	264	211	250
<i>Harassment – Not Active</i>	217	209	224
<i>Traffic Hazard</i>	207	235	222
<i>Lockout</i>	269	264	200
<i>Parking Violation</i>	105	243	194
<i>Domestic – Active</i>	147	140	181
<i>Property Lost or Fund</i>	176	174	172
<i>Disturbance</i>	135	141	167
<i>Assist Police</i>	172	209	166
<i>Reckless Driver</i>	189	214	166
<i>Wanted Person/Fugitive</i>	362	334	134
<i>Psychiatric Suicide Attempt</i>	144	127	104
<i>Service to Community</i>	94	83	87
<i>Domestic – Not Active</i>	69	64	64
<i>Sex Offender Registry Verification</i>	63	52	61
<i>Drug Activity</i>	46	59	45
<i>Overdose/Ingestion/Poisoning</i>	29	36	36
<i>Shots Fired</i>	20	19	35
<i>Attempt to Locate</i>	85	62	35
<i>Unattended Death Investigation</i>	14	20	33
<i>Missing Lost Person or Child</i>	48	41	30
<i>Driving While Intoxicated</i>	56	72	28
<i>Sex Offense (Rape)</i>	13	12	4
TOTAL	13,766	19,331	19,622

* Table 1 does not present a comprehensive list of activities but presents the types of activities that EGPD generally undertake in the course of its duties.



To highlight the variation and complexity of situations, over the last three years EGPD has responded to 375 psychiatric/suicide calls; 171 of these calls resulted in mental health transports to the hospital. If a person in crisis is a clear threat to themselves or others and refuses to seek treatment voluntarily, officers make an arrest and have the person transported to Samaritan Hospital in Troy, N.Y. In many cases, EGPD officers respond to calls that might be more appropriate for social workers or mental health professionals. To address these situations, EGPD has collaborated with the Rensselaer County Office of Mental Health and surrounding police agencies to create the Law Enforcement Mental Health Referral System (LEMHRS). To assist officers in their response, each officer is equipped with a laminated card and handouts which contain contact information for mental health, substance abuse and other community resources. For additional training, EGPD is participating in the Emotionally Distressed Persons Response Team (EDPRT), 40 hours of classroom and reality-based role playing exercises, designed to assist in communicating with people in crisis. EDPRT's mission is to teach officers to handle emotionally distressed and mentally ill individuals in a way that will preserve their dignity and maintain their safety. EDPRT also provides resources and referrals so that treatment options are made available to people who need them. Other resources are available from the Rensselaer County Office of Mental Health and assistance from the Northern Rivers Mobile Crisis Team (when available). Such resources are often not available and these situations will continue to require that the primary response be provided by our EGPD officers.

The list of event activities must be analyzed according to the amount of time and degree of difficulty of certain types of calls. Take, for example, domestic violence calls which are listed in Table 1 as two categories – Domestic Active and Domestic Inactive. The distinction is between calls in which an active domestic violence situation is underway and those that are reported after the fact. In the last three years EGPD has averaged 222 domestic violence (Active and Inactive) calls per year. These calls typically involve complex interpersonal dynamics, require multiple officers to respond, and contain a certain amount of danger for all involved. As with mental health calls, police officers require special training to know how to handle these calls but there are so many variables involved that training can only prepare officers for some of the stresses associated with domestic violence.



OTHER POLICE DEPARTMENT STATISTICS

The number of arrests and offenses has increased each of the last three years as shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2: NUMBER OF ARRESTS AND OFFENSES 2018-2020

YEAR	BADGE ARRESTS	OFFENSES PER ARREST	TOTAL OFFENSES
2018	401	2.03	816
2019	462	2.18	1,005
2020	693	1.79	1,241

Males are more likely to be arrested than females although the percentage of women arrested in 2020 increased significantly. It's tempting to think that Covid-19 played a part in the increase but without additional information that's merely speculation at this point. Table 3 shows these statistics.

TABLE 3: ARRESTS BY GENDER 2018-2020

YEAR	MALE	PCT.	FEMALE	PCT.	OTHER
2018	264	.658	137	.342	0
2019	294	.636	168	.364	0
2020	380	.548	306	.442	7

During the period of 2018-2020, 73.2% of those arrested were Caucasian, 26% were African American .08% were "Other." The percentage of African Americans arrested is significantly higher than the number of African American residents in Town. The complaint driven arrests at the box stores reflects the higher level of diversity of shoppers at the box stores. An analysis of arrest data for 5 months in 2020 showed that there were 112 arrests at Walmart. Almost 45% of these arrests were white males or females; 11% were African American males; 36% were African American females; 4% were Hispanic males and 5% Hispanic females. Table 4 lists arrests by race.

TABLE 4: ARRESTS BY RACE 2018-2020

YEAR	WHITE	PCT.	BLACK	PCT.	OTHER	PCT.
2018	323	.805	74	.185	4	.010
2019	354	.766	103	.223	5	.011
2020	451	.664	224	.330	4	.006



COMMUNITY POLICING

Chief of Police Elaine M. Rudzinski, a lifelong resident of East Greenbush, has initiated and emphasized community policing through a series of programs that have since been interrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic. In a department that serves a population and businesses dispersed over 24 square miles, much of the essential work of policing is done by motor patrols. Officers will often park their cars in neighborhoods and shopping plazas and patrol on foot to create greater visibility and increase their interpersonal interactions with people. The EGPD has part-time units that include a Bike Patrol, a Child Safety Seat program, and a unit that focuses exclusively on community policing. Officers also participate in as many community events as possible, and in 2020 the EGPD participated in numerous Covid-19 birthday and graduation parades. The Department hosts a senior holiday luncheon, delivers meals, attends block and Halloween parties, supports the Special Olympics with fundraisers, and receives funding to host a Shop with a Cop day for underprivileged children at Target Stores.

The Department places importance on regularly visiting various community groups to engage with the community regarding safety issues. Officers routinely visit senior groups, Boy Scout and Girls Scout troops, daycare centers, and school classrooms to brief them on developing issues that may affect them, and to establish and maintain personal relationships with as many people as possible. In 2017, EGPD created a Facebook page and followed with Instagram and Tik Tok accounts in 2019. Social media, the Ring Neighbors application, and the Nixle Alert System have been effective and efficient methods for communicating with the community.

An integral component of the EGPD's community connections is the close relationship established with the East Greenbush Central School District. The Department provides a highly trained School Resource Officer (SRO) at Columbia High School through a Memorandum of Understanding with the district. In 2004 a school shooting incident occurred at Columbia High School; members of the community remain wary of the potential of danger for students and have expressed appreciation for the presence of EGPD. In addition to the SRO program, patrol officers are stationed at the entrances to the elementary and parochial schools. These interactions provide officers with opportunities to visit with students, to foster positive relationships with young people, and provide students with an opportunity to become familiar with the officers.



POLICE PROCEDURES

USE OF FORCE

Debates about the proper use of force by the police have raged in the wake of several high profile deaths of African Americans during encounters with the police. It is imperative that all municipalities with a police force take this opportunity to check and double-check their policies and protocols on the use of force. Force, when used by police officers in the field, must be applied only in special circumstances dictated by policy and training.

EGPD officers receive annual training in in Defensive Tactics, Immediate Rapid Deployment, Firearms, High Risk Vehicle Stops, and the use of Tasers and Pepper Spray. The Defensive Tactics training includes appropriate de-escalation techniques, handcuffing and restraint techniques, the use of control devices, and policy review. Immediate Rapid Deployment training is a reality and scenario-based training in which officers are trained in the most up-to-date tactics and techniques to handle acts of violence, with a focus on active shooter events. Mandatory, bi-annual Firearms training requires officers to qualify with all department issued weapons. The Firearms session includes a review of policy and case law pertaining to the use of force. High Risk Vehicle Stops training is another reality and scenario-based training, and is conducted with the shared services departments. The Taser training includes safe handling, justification for deployment, and safety considerations during a deployment. Pepper Spray training, a less intensive session, urges careful consideration of the risks inherent in the use of pepper spray. All sessions emphasize de-escalation and focus on reducing or eliminating the need for the use of these tactics. The Department does not train on chokeholds; they are not authorized unless deadly physical force is being used against an officer.

Since July, 2019, Executive Law §837-t requires police departments to report certain uses of force to the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) which, in turn, publishes an annual report on all departments in New York. Out of thousands of citizen contacts over a two-year reporting period (2019-2020), EGPD had seven (7) incidents where force was used on a subject. All other subjects were restrained with the use of hands only. Of the seven uses of force incidents, five occurred while officers were executing an arrest, two during traffic stops. In five cases, the subject was Caucasian; in two the subject was African American. All subjects were male and their ages ranged from 24-38. In six of the cases, the use of force consisted of the brandishing of a firearm. In the seventh case, the force deployed was that of an impact or electronic control weapon (brandished, used or deployed). No firearm has been discharged by an EGPD officer since an active shooting event on Interstate Route 90 in 2009.



All use of force events are reviewed by the shift supervisor, the use of force instructor, the Assistant Chief, and the Chief of Police. The review process determines: if the use of force was necessary, if more force than necessary was used, and if there was anything the officer could have done differently to avoid the use of force. Through this independent review process any violation of policy, training, or departmental culture is noted. Administrators and supervisors also seek to identify “red flags”, such as one officer having an inordinately high number of force incidents. Any “red flags” would prompt further investigation to determine if a corrective action is needed, or to identify a policy or training deficiency.

The Shared Services Response Team is the SWAT team and is a use of force resource. It is comprised of officers from the four Shared Services agencies overseen by a Chief’s Panel from the participating agencies. Team leaders use a Risk Assessment Matrix to ensure that certain criteria are met before a decision is made to deploy the team. High risk arrest warrants may be executed by this team if certain conditions exist. There is no prohibition on the execution of “no-knock warrants,” per se, but team leadership has generally opted to “surround and call out” rather than entering a property unannounced. There are several reasons for this, but the safety of all parties involved is the greatest concern. The decision to enter unannounced is not taken lightly.

ACCOUNTABILITY FOR MISCONDUCT

Each year, all EGPD officers undergo performance evaluations by their immediate supervisor using formalized standards to gauge the member’s attitude, demeanor, dependability, initiative, judgment, job knowledge, communication, and relations with others. Members must adhere to the policies, guidelines, values, and culture that are set by the leadership. Sometimes an employee fails to uphold these standards.

There are several ways to initiate the complaint process: a phone call, an email through the department website, a private message through social media, or a station visit. When there is a question about an officer’s conduct or attitude, citizens are directed to either a supervisor or the Chief’s office. All written complaints are forwarded to the Chief’s office for review. Citizens are advised of the formal complaint process and are invited to document their complaint using standardized paperwork. All complaints are addressed but in the most serious cases, formal investigations are conducted.

After a final determination is made on a founded complaint, an analysis is conducted on whether the officer requires remedial training or discipline and whether the department policy needs to be updated or clarified. The complainant is advised of the outcome of their complaint. Depending on the outcome of an investigation, an officer may receive informal counseling, formal counseling, formal discipline, or termination. In some cases, remedial training is provided.



III. COLLABORATIVE ACTIVITIES

The Community Survey

As part of the Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative, the Town of East Greenbush invited the public to take the "Community Survey on Public Safety and Law Enforcement." The survey was designed to gather opinions and experiences from members of the community and was intended for East Greenbush residents, or individuals who work or operate a business in East Greenbush. Survey responses were collected from Thursday, January 14, 2021 through Friday, February 5, 2021 through the use of Google Forms. Information about the survey was posted in a Supervisor's Report in The Advertiser, and the survey link was posted on the Town website and social media pages several times throughout the response period. The survey included six demographic questions followed by 25 multiple choice questions to assess the following five key components that concern our local law enforcement agency:

- Safety
- Community involvement
- Procedural justice
- Performance
- Contact and satisfaction

Participants were asked to answer the questions thinking only about the East Greenbush Police Department (EGPD), and to focus on specific local issues and observations about the EGPD rather than national trends or issues. Items came from the "Community Survey on Public Safety and Law Enforcement" developed by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) as well as input from the East Greenbush Committee on Police Reform and Reinvention.

Police Department Survey

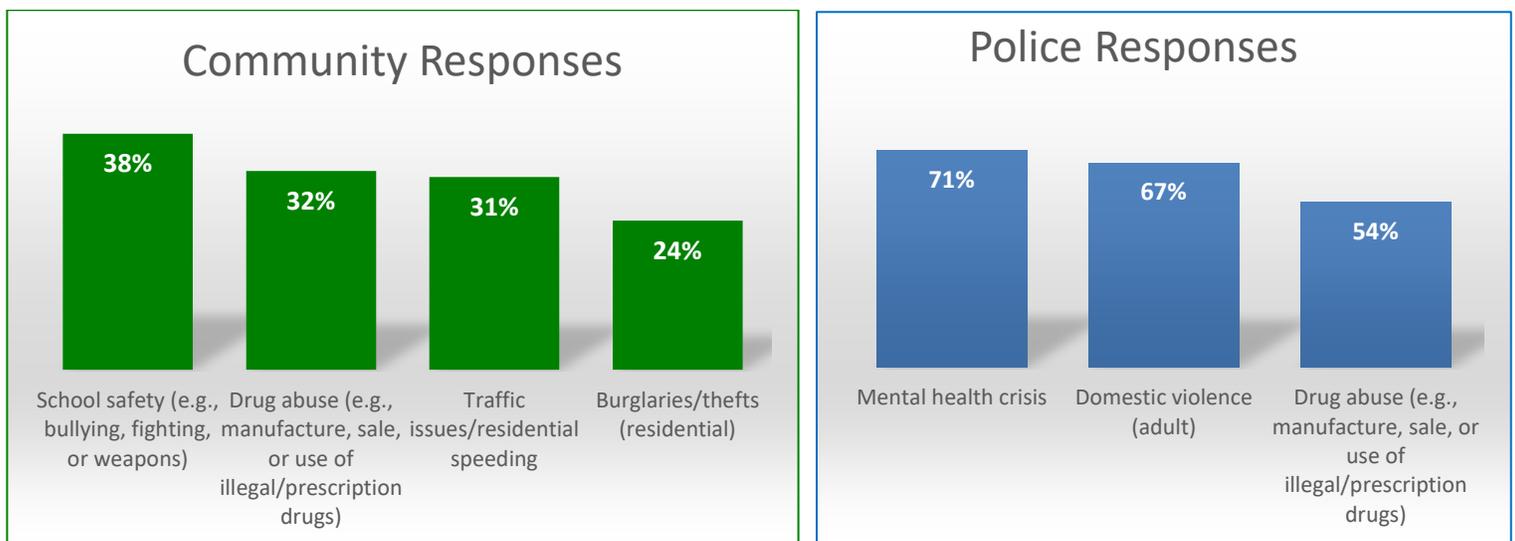
The Town of East Greenbush also invited the members of our Police Department and our Emergency Communications Division to complete a confidential survey designed to gather information on their feelings, opinions and experiences. Anonymous participation was solicited with the intent that the responses could help the Town understand the experience of an employee of the East Greenbush Police Department. The 51 multiple choice survey items came from the Pew Research Center National Survey of Law Enforcement Officers as well as from our Committee. Survey responses were collected from Thursday, January 14, 2021 through Friday, February 5, 2021 using a Google Forms link that was provided to employees by Chief Rudzinski. In all, 28 members of the East



Greenbush Police Department responded to the survey. 18 are police officers and 10 are emergency dispatchers.

What Are the Issues That Most Concern the Community?

Both the Community Survey and Police Survey asked respondents to indicate which three issues concern them the most. There were different answers from each survey; a side-by-side comparison tells an interesting tale.



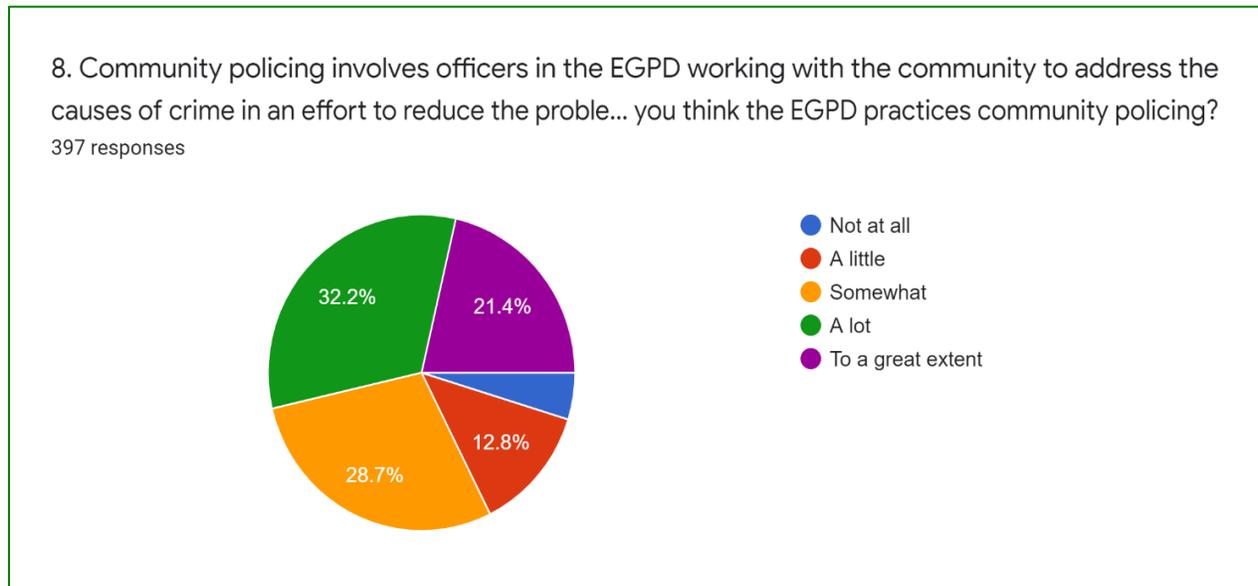
The number one issue for members of the community is school safety. Specific concerns include bullying, fighting and weapons brought to school. The number one concern for law enforcement personnel was mental health. Throughout this Plan there are references to the difficulty that police officers face during mental health crises. Police Department personnel saw domestic violence as their number two concern. There's anecdotal evidence to suggest that domestic violence calls have increased during Covid-19 quarantines and this may help explain why dealing with domestic violence is of the utmost concern for police personnel right now. Another explanation is because of the complexity of policing a domestic violence situation and the sad reality that we receive too many of these calls.

The number two concern for the community is drug abuse (e.g. manufacture, sale or use of illegal/prescription drugs). Drug abuse comes in third on the Police Survey so this is clearly an issue that is on everyone's mind. The community's number three concern are traffic issues and residential speeding. For the community, residential burglaries and thefts also rated as a significant concern.



Community Policing

The success of the Department in establishing a strong relationship with the community is evidenced by the responses to the Community Survey administered as part of the Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative. The responses to Questions #8 in the survey speak to the issue. Question #8 asks to what extent community members perceive EGPD as a community police force.



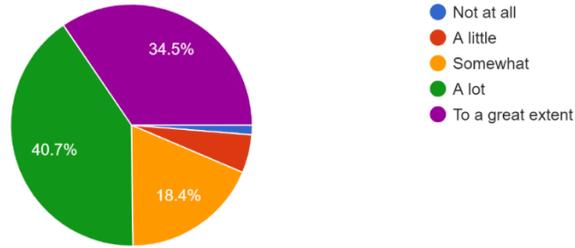
More than half of the respondents (53.6%) think that EGPD practices community policing to a great extent or a lot. Another 28.7% felt that the Department is doing some community policing; 17.7% were more critical on the subject. On balance, these responses show a Department that has done a good job with community policing but can do better. Chief Rudzinski understood this when she accepted appointment as Chief of Police, and was well on her way to improving the already good relationship our officers have with the public even further when the Covid-19 pandemic curtailed activity and created a unique and serious set of challenges for police departments.

A second set of measures to test the success of community policing in East Greenbush asked for respondents' perceptions of the quality of what is known as "procedural justice." Procedural justice focuses on the manner in which law enforcement interacts with the public, and how these interactions shape the public's trust of the police. Procedural justice doesn't refer to explicit community activities engaged in by police departments but how members of the community are treated by the police in encounters that can often involve suspected transgressions of the law. Questions #9-12 of the

Community Survey ask whether residents believe the police are fair, respectful, responsive and trustworthy.

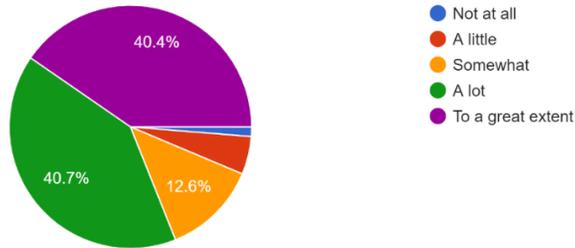
9. To what extent do officers in the EGPD treat people fairly?

391 responses



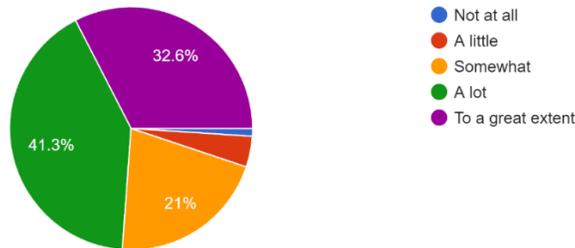
10. To what extent are officers in the EGPD respectful?

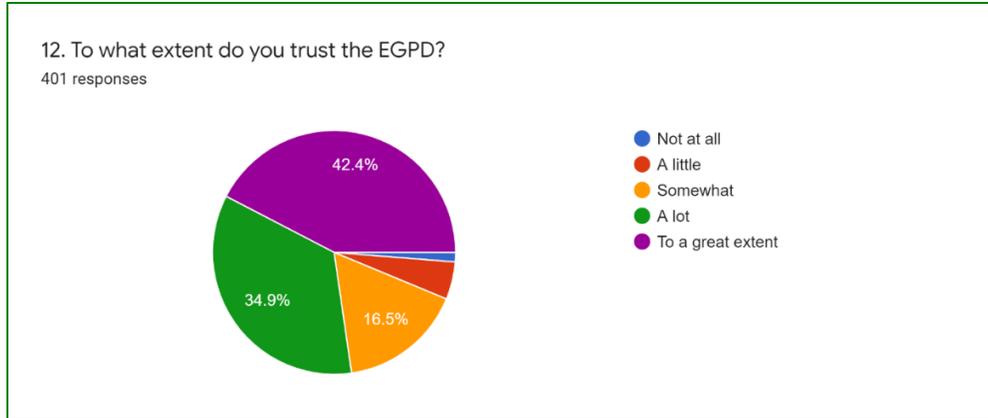
396 responses



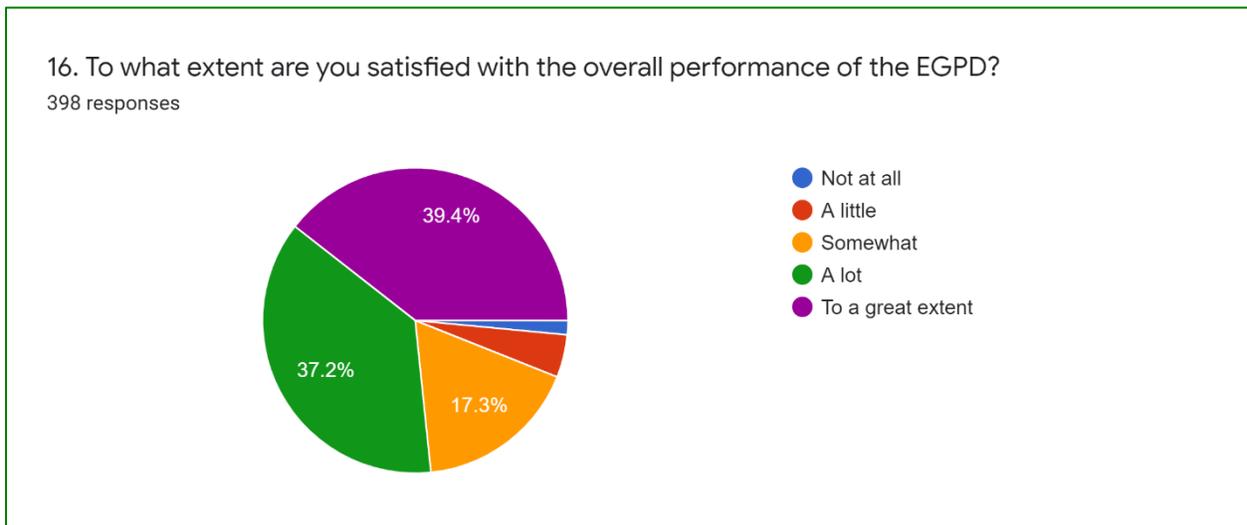
11. To what extent is the EGPD responsive to the concerns of community members?

390 responses





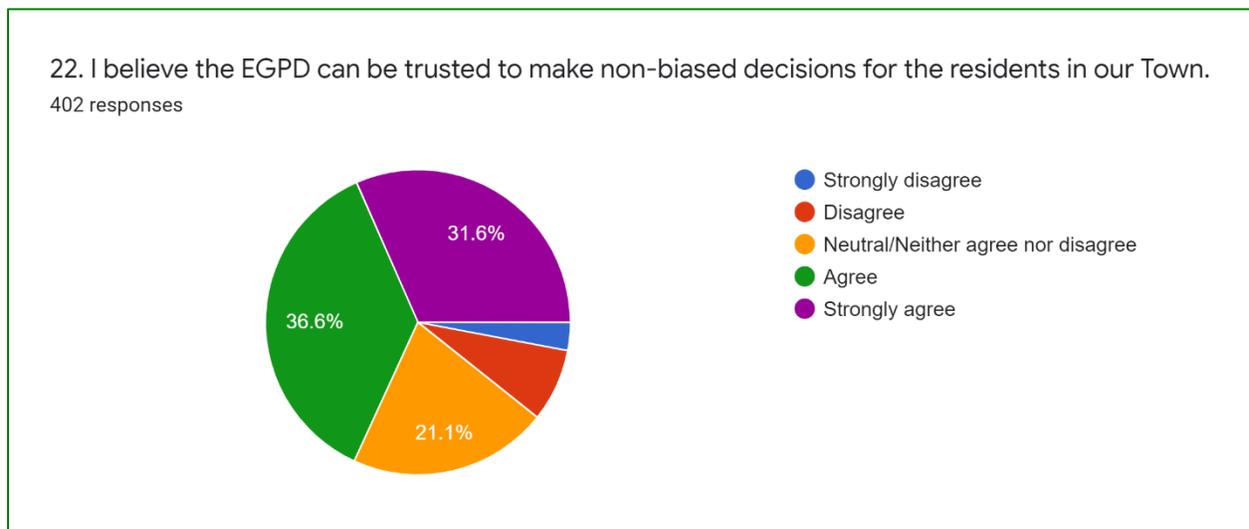
The responses to questions #9-12 paint a picture of a police force in relative harmony with the community it serves and protects. More than three-quarters of survey responders believe that EGPD treats people fairly. An even higher number – (81.1%) - think that officers are respectful to people to a great extent or a lot. Slightly more than three-quarters of people surveyed trust the police to a great extent or a lot; slightly less than three-quarters, although a still impressive 73.9%, think our officers are responsive to their concerns. Viewed objectively, these numbers show that the community’s relationship with the police is a good one. For the most part, people like their police force. This statement is borne out by the responses to Question #16 where people were asked if they were satisfied with the overall performance of EGPD. More than three-quarters of people who answered the question said they were satisfied with the police to a great extent or a lot. Those who were only a little satisfied or not satisfied at all totaled only 6.9% while 17.3% were somewhat satisfied.



Questions of bias are central to the Governor’s Executive Order #203. Municipalities must make every effort to recruit properly, evaluate officer performance carefully, provide rigorous training, and be vigilant on the question of bias in policing. Bias can be an



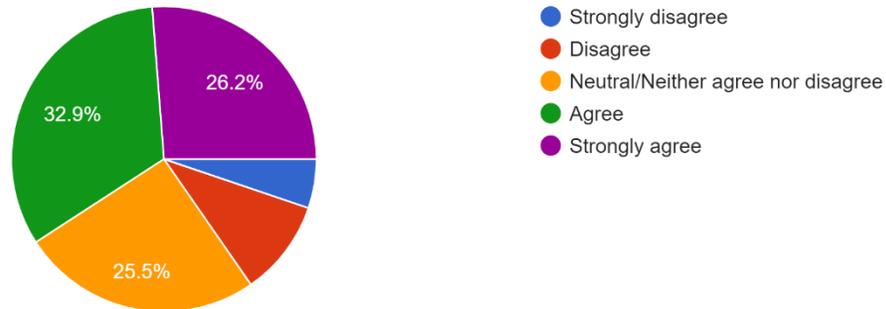
unconscious (and sometimes conscious) motivator in cases of official misconduct. More than two-thirds of the respondents (68.2%) agreed or strongly agreed that the Department makes non-biased decisions on behalf of Town residents. Neutral and negative responses constituted 31.8% of the total. The Community Survey also included a question about whether there were any differences in the way that minority residents were treated. A majority (56.1%) agreed or strongly agreed that EGPD treats minorities the same as non-minorities. Virtually one-third (32.9%) of the survey respondents took a neutral position. The endorsement of the personal characteristics of officers – trust, respect, fairness – exceeds that of the answers to question of bias. This is indicative of the complexity of the subject and the need for departments and supervisors to remain vigilant, not because officers are more prone to bias than anyone else, but because all people are prone to bias. In law enforcement, bias can have deadly effect.



From a community perspective, a critical aspect of the belief that the police will be fair concerns whether people believe that the Department can do the difficult work investigating complaints against one of their own officers. Question #21 of the Community Survey posed the question:

21. I am certain that the EGPD will handle and fully investigate a complaint against one of their own officers for police misconduct.

404 responses



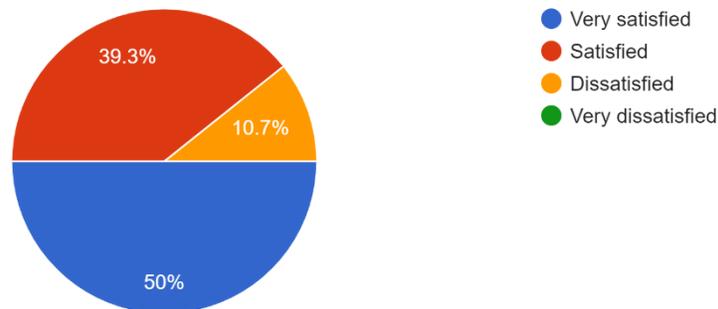
The responses to Question #21 are interesting in that a majority (59.1%) agreed or strongly agreed that a complaint against an officer would be “handled and fully investigated.” The number of respondents who were neutral or didn’t believe a complaint would be properly handled (40.9%) is not insignificant. More encouraging were the responses to Question #22 which asked if EGPD can be trusted to make non-biased decisions for the residents of our Town.

Police Perspectives

In all, 28 members of the East Greenbush Police Department responded to the survey. Of these, 18 are police officers and 10 are emergency dispatchers. As a group they expressed satisfaction with the Department as a good place to work. Nearly 90% said they were either satisfied or very satisfied with the EGPD as a workplace. Only 8% think the disciplinary process is unfair.

1. Please rate your overall satisfaction with the Department as a place to work.

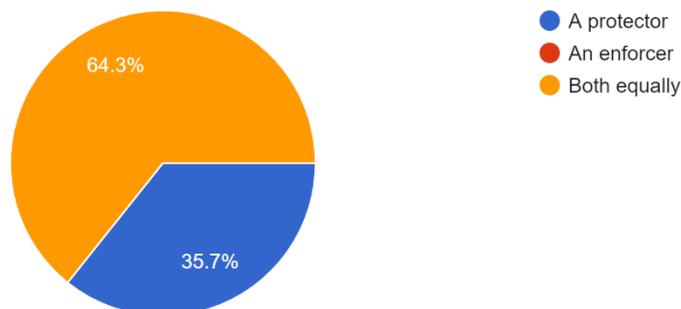
28 responses



More than 85% believe they're treated with respect by their supervisors and most believe that training and knowing best practices in law enforcement are important. A key philosophical principle of contemporary police reform is that police officers should learn to see their role in the community as protectors rather than enforcers. Our survey results show that employees of the Department all believe that the role of protector is essential but some recognize that law enforcement, by definition, also requires police officers to enforce the law, sometimes in difficult situations.

12. Even if you think both are important parts of your work, do you see yourself MORE as...

28 responses



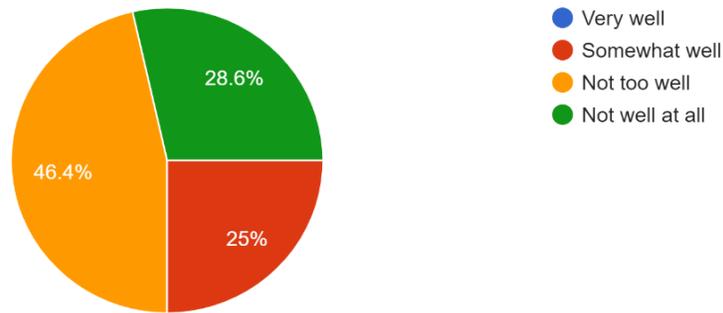
Whereas the Community Survey showed the strong level of support for the work that our officers do to protect the community, the officers themselves don't think the public has a complete understanding of the risks and challenges they face in their jobs. When asked the question, 75% said the public understands the risks and challenges either not too well or not well at all. At the same time, all respondents to the Police Survey acknowledged that they had been thanked by a member of the public for their service. To show the strong



emotions, positive and negative, that policing evokes, 85.7% of them admitted that they had been verbally abused while on duty.

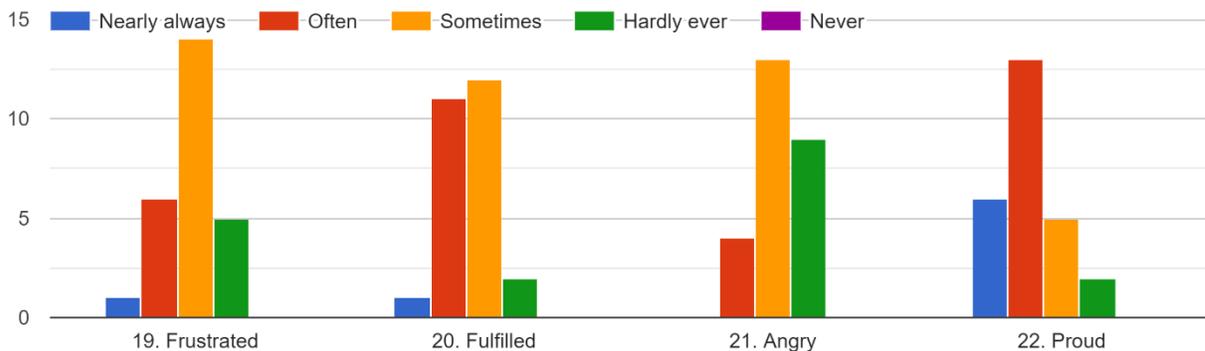
13. How well do you think the public understands the risks and challenges that law enforcement officers face on the job?

28 responses



A series of questions asked how, as law enforcement professionals, they feel about their job. Most are sometimes frustrated, sometimes fulfilled, sometimes angry, and often proud of their jobs. The graph below shows that the typical law enforcement official runs through the same gamut of emotions that most people experience in their jobs. Since police work involves so many interactions with the public, some of which are potentially violent, gauging the feelings of officers is necessary so that proper forms of assistance can be provided to support them if they need it.

How often, if at all does your work as a law enforcement officer make you feel...



One issue highlighted extensively in the NYS-issued resource guide is the use of body cameras. Just over three-quarters of the respondents favored the use of body cameras. An even 40% thought that people would be more likely to cooperate with officers if they had body cameras but only 32% thought that people would more likely to act appropriately if they knew there would be evidence of the encounter.

One critical segment of the survey centered on the national controversy over the killings of African Americans by police officers. After the death of George Floyd, a movement erupted that included a radical critique of the role of police departments in our big cities. A national conversation emerged about the use of force by police, the possibility that racial bias had overtaken training and technique, and whether tighter civilian control of police departments was warranted. We were interested in how our officers had been affected by these events and we wanted this to begin a frank conversation on a difficult set of subjects.

More than 90% thought the demonstrations to protest the deaths of African Americans who died during encounters with the police were motivated in part by longstanding biases against the police. Most (81.5%) thought these national events made their jobs harder. Just over half of our respondents thought that officers are more reluctant to stop and question suspicious people. A majority agree that the Department has taken steps to improve relations with African Americans but interactions with African Americans have nevertheless become more tense. Nearly all of them are more concerned about their own safety than before. A majority of respondents (56%-44%) believe that officers are now more reluctant to use force.

By a vast majority, the officers and dispatchers who completed the survey believe the deaths of African Americans who died during encounters with the police in recent years are isolated incidents while 19% of respondents indicated the deaths are signs of a broader problem. By an even larger number (92.3%), respondents feel that our country has made the changes needed to give African Americans equal rights with non-African Americans.

Our Police Survey showed that EGPD employees believe the guidelines on use of force are useful in their ongoing work as police officers. More than half found the guidelines to be very useful (54.2%). Question #32 asked if officers should be required to intervene if another officer is about to use unnecessary force. Of the 24 responses to this specific question, 23 (95.8%) believed that an officer should intervene in that situation. This means that they understand that they have a responsibility to uphold the law even if it means they might have to confront or correct another officer.



31. How useful are your Department's use of force guidelines when officers are confronted with actual situations where force may be needed?

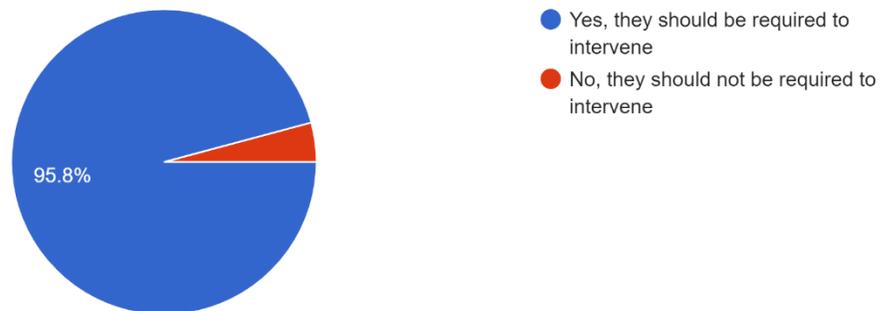
24 responses



Question #32 asked if officers should be required to intervene if another officer is about to use unnecessary force. Of the 24 responses to this specific question, 23 believed that an officer should intervene in that situation.

32. Do you think officers should or should not be required to intervene when they believe another officer is about to use unnecessary force?

24 responses



It was important to gauge the opinions of employees of our Police Department, police officers and dispatchers alike, because the police perspective is often lost in discussions that fail to see that the problems and solutions of community policing need healthy and safe police officers to be successfully implemented. Through the Police Survey we were able to measure the attitudes and perceptions of our Police Department, and this was a great asset in helping to understand the nuances of their relationship with the community. Just as a community is not a monolith with every member having the same interests and experiences, so a police force is comprised of individuals who see their roles in different ways. Our Department provides intensive training to ensure that policies and procedures are followed



consistently but individual differences remain in how officers experience and respond to the stresses and strains of the job.

One issue that we confronted throughout the preparation of this Plan is to try to understand how we can accurately evaluate the impact that training has on individuals. For example, we know that Bias in Policing training and policies are essential but how do we know if they're effective in changing attitudes and perceptions? This Police Survey doesn't solve that problem but it can serve as the beginning of an important conversation about the effectiveness of our Training Program. Another benefit of the Police Survey is that it helps us identify issues that can potentially have a real effect on morale. We hope to conduct this survey on an annual basis so we can add this instrument to other on-going efforts to evaluate the effectiveness of training and alert us to internal issues that may have a negative impact on our police officers and dispatchers.



IV. THE PLAN

This Plan is structured to respond to the four guiding issues raised by the Governor’s publication “New York State Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative Resources and Guide for Public Officials and Citizens” These are:

- 1) Determining the role of the police in our community;
- 2) Employing smart and effective policing standards and strategies;
- 3) Fostering community-oriented leadership, culture and accountability;
- 4) Recruiting and supporting excellent personnel.

1) DETERMINING THE ROLE OF THE POLICE IN OUR COMMUNITY.

Stakeholders critical of the current scope of police responsibilities have proposed two types of reform. First, some argue that the police should not be involved in responding to non-criminal conduct. Second, some propose that curtailing police activities that pose a risk of overreaction to minor offenses.

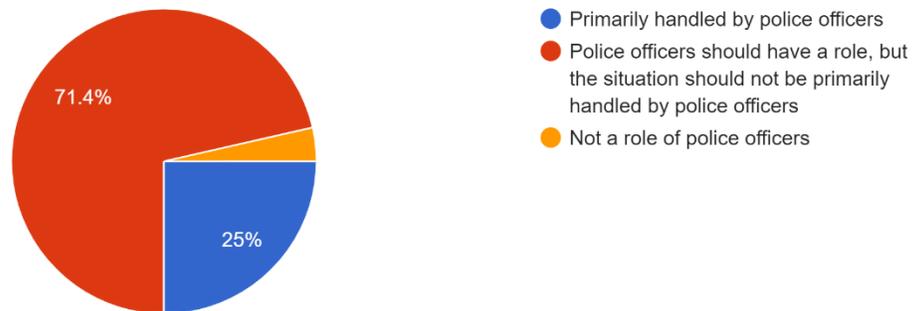
RECOMMENDATION: Improve Mental Health Services to Help the Police Handle Mental Health Crises.

In many cases, the East Greenbush Police Department responds to calls that may be more appropriately handled by social workers or mental health professionals. What role should the police play in mental health calls? What forms of collaboration and cooperation are available to provide assistance? There are some excellent initiatives designed to help police officers in these situations but the staffing and logistics of these efforts doesn’t lend itself to the round-the-clock assistance required by police departments.

In the last three years, EGPD responded to 375 psychiatric/suicide calls. If a person in crisis is a clear threat to either themselves or others and refuses to seek treatment voluntarily, officers make an arrest and have the person transferred to Samaritan Hospital in Troy, New York. Of the 375 calls, 171 resulted in mental health transports to Samaritan Hospital. When asked in the Police Survey if mental health crisis calls should be handled by the police, 71.4% of our officers responded that police officers should have a role but that the situation should not be handled primarily by the police.



34. Do you think responding effectively to people who are having a mental health crisis should be...
28 responses



To implement this recommendation, our Collaborative made the following additional recommendations:

- Pursue and lobby for expanded shared services in Rensselaer County to respond to mental health calls, including increasing the availability of social workers and mental health specialists, and exploring the possibility of establishing a regional mental health stabilization center for continued care.
- Implement the Law Enforcement Mental Health Referral System (LEMHRS) within our shared services arrangement. This will allow officers to make immediate referrals of cases for appropriate services from the Rensselaer County Office of Mental Health. Currently under discussion, we expect LEMHRS to be in place by June, 2021.
- Develop an education and response proposal in collaboration with mental health professionals that lists all available resources and contact information. This is currently included as an aspiration in our Department policy entitled “Crisis Intervention Incidents’ and this Plan proposes that it be operationalized as soon as possible.
- Explore participating in Health Hub overdose and intervention services. The Health Hub is operated by Catholic Charities Care Coordination Services. It establishes a single point of entry for people who have experienced a recent overdose or at risk of experiencing an overdose. Services include enhanced targeted outreach, crisis intervention, case management and harm reduction services.

RECOMMENDATION: Increase Participation in Diversion Programs Offering Defendants an alternative to the Criminal Justice System.

Diversion Programs are a form of pre-trial sentencing that offers defendants the opportunity to avoid the criminal justice system if they are willing to participate in remedial programs that can help remedy the behavior that led to the initial arrest. These programs are generally thought to include relief to the courts, police departments and probation offices and offer better outcomes for the defendant. Most Diversion Programs require defendants to receive information aimed at preventing recidivism, provide restitution to their victims, complete community service, and avoid getting in trouble again for a specified period of time. Successful completion of a Diversion Program may lead to a dismissal or reduction of charges while failure can lead to a restoration or increase of original penalties. We currently participate in available drug courts but can improve our screening process to make more referrals possible.

Diversion programs are an important component of restorative justice, an approach that sees crime as an act against the victim and shifts the focus to repairing the harm that has been done to the victim and community. The concept of restorative justice includes a belief that the offender also needs assistance and seeks to identify what needs to change to prevent reoccurrence of the original offense.

2) EMPLOYING SMART AND EFFECTIVE POLICING STANDARDS AND STRATEGIES.

The Governor’s Resource Guide emphasizes that effective policing requires standards and strategies that advance the goals of protecting the community, engaging with people in a meaningful way, and demonstrating respect for individuals during law enforcement interactions. Effective policing recognizes that the relationship between police standards and strategies and the community must be built on a foundation of positive, trust-based relationships with all segments of the population. Central to this relationship is the concept of procedural justice. According to the Resource Guide “procedural justice focuses on the manner in which law enforcement interacts with the public, and how these interactions shape the public’s trust of the police.” In other words, the public’s sense of how trustworthy a police department is depends as much on the interactions that people have with the police as the outcomes of individual criminal cases.

RECOMMENDATION: Reimagine Training Options to Build Knowledge, Promote Empathy and Enhance Protective Mindsets.

When the panel that reviewed our application for accreditation finished its review it congratulated EGPD on its “robust” training program. We make sure that our officers are



effectively trained to use their equipment, understand changes in the law, and relate to the people they protect and serve. Recent discussions of the changing nature of police work, including the Governor's Executive Order #203, place a firm emphasis on the need to eliminate racial inequities, modernize police practices, and better address the particular needs of communities of color to promote public safety, improve community engagement and foster trust. These conversations encourage us to search for ways to reimagine training strands that build knowledge, promote empathy and enhance protective mindsets.

To implement this recommendation, we offer the following additional recommendations:

- Evaluate the effectiveness of implicit bias and anti-racism training. The Chief of Police will provide the Town Board with an annual report on training and activities specifically designed to reduce and prevent bias.
- Expand our use of on-line training opportunities offered by entities such as PoliceOne Academy (online law enforcement training) and the State Division of Criminal Justice Services. One example of such training that may prove beneficial is Hate Crime Identification.
- Expand participation in the Emotionally Distressed Persons Response Team (EDRPT) training program and seek to build in-house capacity in this area. The EDRPT training consists of 40 hours of classroom and reality based role playing, and its goal is to handle emotionally distressed and mentally ill individuals in a variety of situations.
- Explore non-traditional training opportunities. In a later recommendation we look at expanding recruitment efforts by establishing partnerships with colleges and universities. These partnerships may result in new kinds of training offered in the form of college courses or seminars.
- Develop metrics to understand the effectiveness of existing training programs.

RECOMMENDATION: Deepen Collaboration with the Community.

Community engagement can be effective in forming trust and promoting public safety. By deepening a mutual understanding of the concerns and experiences of both the police and our community we can collaborate and identify meaningful solutions.



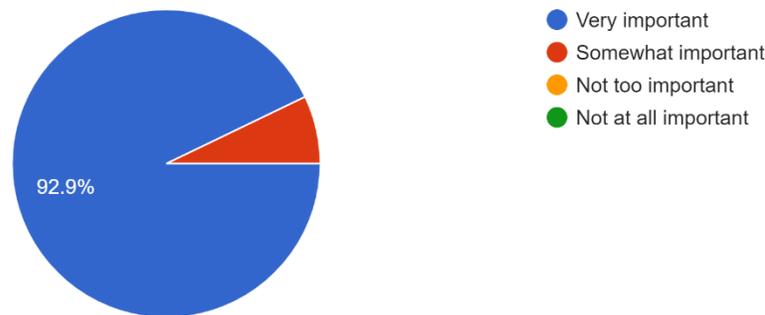
To implement this recommendation, we offer the following additional recommendations:

- Host “Conversations to Connect our Community;”

These events will provide community members and law enforcement an opportunity to interact in a safe and structured setting with the goal of 1) increasing empathy and understanding about the lived experiences of diverse constituents of the town; and 2) increasing empathy and understanding about the lived experiences of law enforcement. After months of isolation, members of our community and police need safe public spaces in which to interact, tell their stories, and listen to different perspectives. This objective addresses not only the need for community relationship development, but also the need among police to feel that their experiences are understood. These “conversations” could begin with a welcome from a host to describe the purpose, format, listening guidelines of conversations. Small tables could be set up to accommodate small groups of 4-6 individuals. Each table could have a volunteer facilitator who is a content expert. Table topic conversations would align with the goals and could include a rotation to explore three topics: Experiences of East Greenbush Police; Processing our Collective Grief; and Diverse Perspectives in East Greenbush.

10. In order to be effective at their job, how important is it, if at all, for law enforcement officers to have detailed knowledge of the people, places, and culture of the areas where they routinely work?

28 responses

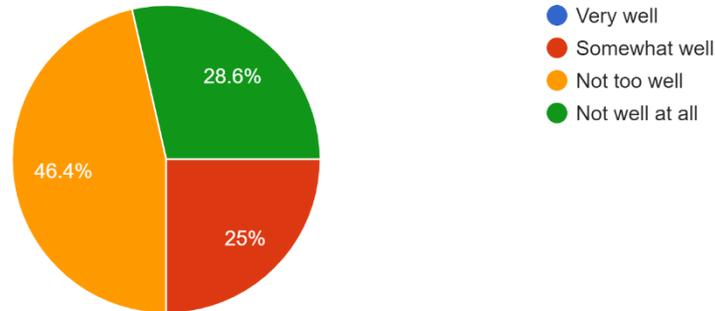


- Host an annual community forum to share information and engage the public in a conversation about the Police Department.



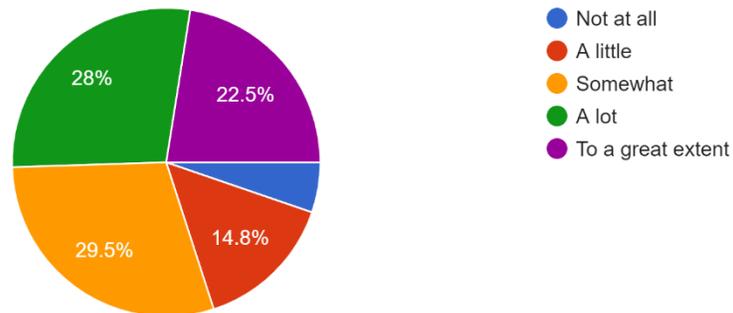
13. How well do you think the public understands the risks and challenges that law enforcement officers face on the job?

28 responses



6. To what extent does the EGPD regularly communicate with community members (e.g., websites, e-mails, or public meetings)?

400 responses



- Sponsor Assemblies at Columbia High School in conjunction with the School Board, District Administration, and Student Council to Discuss safety initiatives and create more connections with the students. In our Community Survey, when people were asked what issue concerned them the most, more people chose School Safety than any other of the choices. As mentioned above, Columbia High School had a shooting incident in 2004; this event is seared into the community's consciousness. After the February, 2018 shooting incident at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, the students at Columbia High School organized an assembly that included presentations by several police departments and other public

officials. Many people, students and parents, commented later that the assembly helped them to heal after news of such a traumatic event.

3) FOSTERING COMMUNITY-ORIENTED LEADERSHIP, CULTURE AND ACCOUNTABILITY.

One of the primary goals of police reform is to ensure that community policing is an intrinsic part of the culture of a department and a high priority in the policies and practices implemented by department leaders. To achieve this, a balance must be found between community participation in conversations concerning the police department and the ability of the department to do its work in a transparent and accountable manner.

RECOMMENDATION: Create a Community Advisory Committee.

The creation of a Community Advisory Committee is already a stated goal of the Department's Community Relations Policy, which states that "the committee should convene regularly to provide a public forum for gathering information about public safety concerns in the community." The group that met as the Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative to produce this Plan can serve as a model for how a Community Advisory Committee can work.

To implement this recommendation, we make the following additional recommendations:

- The Community Advisory Committee shall conduct an annual review of the implementation of this Plan.
- The Community Advisory Committee shall conduct an Annual Survey and review data on public concerns and Department policies to consider whether our training program needs to be adjusted.

RECOMMENDATION: Clarify the Process for Filing Complaints Against the Police.

Currently complaints about police officers can be submitted to the Chief of Police, the Town Supervisor, and in rare cases, the Town Clerk, when a Notice of Claim is filed. All complaints are taken seriously and each one is followed up by either the Chief of Police or Town Supervisor. This recommendation is designed to increase transparency. The public would be notified of the process for filing a complaint against officers or the Department, and the notification would include a description of the process followed to investigate valid complaints. The public notice will also include information on how they will be notified of the outcome of the complaint and what manner of appeal is open to them.



RECOMMENDATION: Establish a Use of Force Review Board to Include the Town Board Liaison to the Police Department.

A critical issue in today's headlines is the use of force by police officers. National attention has focused primarily on the use of deadly force. The last time a member of the East Greenbush Police Department discharged his/her service weapon in the line of duty was December, 2009. In EGPD's Department Policy "force" is defined as "the application of physical techniques or tactics, chemical agents, or weapons to another person. It is not a use of force when a person allows him/herself to be searched, escorted, handcuffed or restrained." The Use of Force policy itself acknowledges that there is no way to specify the exact amount of reasonable force to be applied in any situation but it requires members of the Department to make such decisions in a "professional, impartial, and reasonable manner." Officers may only use the amount of force that reasonably appears necessary given the facts and circumstances perceived by the officer at the time of the event to accomplish a legitimate law enforcement purpose.

We want to make it clear that each use of force by our officers is currently subject to multiple layers of review. Any use of force must be documented promptly, completely and accurately in the appropriate report. An officer's supervisor must be notified as soon as is practicable. The supervisor is expected to obtain the basic facts from the involved officer(s), ensure that any injured parties are examined and treated, and, if possible, obtain a recorded interview with the person upon whom force was applied. The supervisor will also ensure that photographs are taken of any injuries incurred and identify any witnesses not already included in the officer's report. Most importantly, the supervisor will evaluate the circumstances surrounding the incident and initiate an administrative investigation if he/she believes that the Use of Force policy has been violated or if there is any other reason to believe that an investigation is appropriate. If a weapon is involved, or a death or serious bodily injury results, the Department's Records Manager must file a report with NYS-DCJS.

The Use of Force Review Board proposed here will be convened when the use of force results in serious injury or death. It will also investigate and review the circumstances every time a firearm is discharged, whether on-duty or off-duty. This does not apply to firearms discharges associated with training, termination of sick or injured wildlife, or recreational use. The Board will include police personnel, ranging from the Assistant Police Chief to the Training Coordinator to the Instructor for the type of weapon, device or technique used. The Chief of Police may also include other police personnel and a representative from the Police Union. In addition, the elected member of the East Greenbush Town Board with liaison responsibilities for the Police Department will sit on this Review Board.



The Use of Force Review Board will determine if the member's actions were consistent with Department policies and procedures. The Board may also recommend additional steps, including disciplinary investigations or training reviews. The Chief of Police will review the Board's findings to ensure that Department policies and procedures were followed, and will make the final determination whether additional reviews are necessary.

RECOMMENDATION: The Use of Force Instructor Shall Submit to the Chief of Police an Annual Report Analyzing All Use of Force Incidents.

The preparation of an Annual Report on the Use of Force will allow us to identify any trends in the use of force by our department. It will also provide the Chief of Police with information that will allow her to consider adjustments in training, equipment or policies, and will help the Use of Force Instructor become aware of officers who may need additional training. The Use of Force Annual Report will not include the names of officers, suspects or case numbers and will be used solely to allow the Department to understand this crucial issue.

Due to the significance of the issue, and the need for the public to trust that their police department will only use the amount of force necessary to resolve an issue, we will establish a Use of Force Review Board which will include the Town Board liaison to the Police Department.

RECOMMENDATION: Add Specific Precepts of Procedural Justice to Community Relations Policy.

The East Greenbush Police Department places a high priority on community policing, and the Chief of Police monitors and adjusts the relationship between community and Department on a regular basis. Training programs emphasize the need for good community relations and the Department's official policy on Community Relations is detailed and reviewed on a regular basis. Reviewing Governor Cuomo's Executive Order #203 and the Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative Resource Guide, we feel that the precepts of procedural justice could be added and highlighted to better effect in the Department's Community Relations Policy.

As stated above, procedural justice refers to the manner in which the police interact with members of the community when on official police business, and how those interactions shape the public's views of the police, their willingness to obey the law, and actual crime rates. Traditionally, considerations of relations between the police and the



community focused on outcomes, and issues of bias were addressed by analyzing the number and types of offenses or the length of sentences, and the demographic characteristics of those charged, convicted or sentenced. Recent studies have shown that the trust of a community is determined in large part by common perceptions of how people are treated by the police before they enter the court system. Procedural justice requires that the police treat all people with dignity and respect and give them a voice during law enforcement interactions. They should also practice neutrality and transparency in their decision-making and convey trust worthy motives.

This recommendation proposes that the following language be added to the Department's Community Relations Policy:

"It is the policy of the East Greenbush Police Department to adhere to the four central principles of procedural justice when interacting with members of the public. These are: treating people with dignity and respect; giving citizens a voice during encounters with the police; observing strict neutrality in decision making; and conveying trustworthy motives. Research has shown that these principles contribute to relationships between the police and the community in which (1) the community has trust in the police department as honest, unbiased, benevolent and lawful; (2) the community feels obligated to follow the law and the dictates of legal authority; and (3) the community feels that it shares a common set of interests and values with the police."

RECOMMENDATION: Post Chief of Police's Monthly Reports to the Town Website.

Each month the Chief of Police issues a report to the Town Board concerning police activities for that month. The report indicates how many calls for service were received by the police during the month. Statistics for the Department are presented under the following headings: Criminal Investigation; Stolen Property/Recovered Stolen Property; Highway Safety Enforcement; Rescue Missions; Response Time and Administrative. In addition, the monthly report provides financial activity for the month, including breakdowns of revenue and expenses.

Everyone agrees that government should be transparent and accountable. Transparency promotes accountability by providing information to the public about what their government is doing. Transparency is an obligation for local governments. For it to have maximum value, information must be presented in a timely and accurate form. Posting the Chief of Police's Monthly Reports to the Town website, www.eastgreenbush.org, will serve these objectives.



RECOMMENDATION: Urge the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services to Assemble and Report Traffic Stop Data by Race at the Municipal Level.

Data on traffic stops can warn us to a possible bias in the way different ethnic or racial groups are treated. Careful analysis is required but without good municipal and comparative data this analysis would be incomplete or incorrect. NYS-DCJS does a good job of compiling and publishing statistics for the work done by police departments.

RECOMMENDATION: Provide More Opportunities for Officers to be Engaged in Decision Making About Policies and Program Needs.

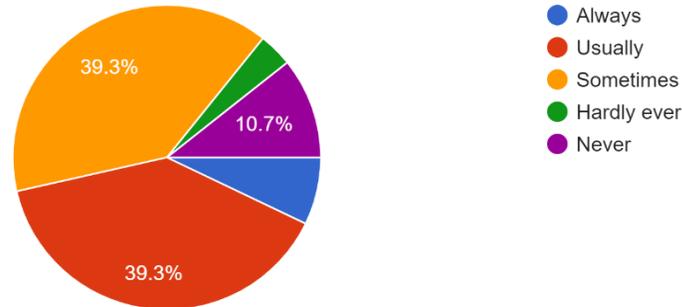
Our Department has been open to proposals from officers about new programs they would like to see adopted to add to our law enforcement repertoire. Individual officers have taken the initiative to research and design programs that have been approved by the Police Department and the Town Board. For example, a bike patrol was created in this way and now that the Albany-Hudson Electric Trail has been completed we have an effective way to patrol it. Other officers have brought forth proposals to purchase and deploy a drone and establish a K-9 unit in our Department. Both of those programs are now in an advanced stage of development and will shortly become realities. As Question #7 from the Police Survey shows, EGPD officers do not have a profound sense of being left out of the decision-making process but it may be possible to increase their participation and provide a greater sense of empowerment for officers.

To place this recommendation in context, police work is a chain-of-command business. We're not proposing an egalitarian structure for making decisions about programs and policies. We are suggesting, however, that it's a valuable resource for the Department to provide outlets for the knowledge and experience of individual officers to contribute to better ideas for the whole group.



7. How often are employees in your Department asked for their input on decisions that will affect them?

28 responses



With this recommendation we are committing to finding additional ways for the voices of our officers to be heard with regards to program needs and policies. Currently, policies are reviewed with officers who are specially trained in the area covered by the policy.

4) **RECRUITING AND SUPPORTING EXCELLENT PERSONNEL;**

RECOMMENDATION: Expand Recruiting Efforts.

Increasing diversity in our Police Department is not an easy task. We're bound by Rensselaer County Civil Service rules and, for a number of reasons, fewer people are taking the Civil Service exam for Police Officer. These reasons include the fact that over the last few years police officers have been targeted, sometimes for no reason other than that they're wearing the uniform, and the negative publicity surrounding events like the murder of George Floyd. Another factor is the increase in employment opportunities for work in the field of cyber security. The most recent list for Rensselaer County had only ten names on it, none of them women.

To implement this recommendation, we make the following additional recommendations:

- Create collaborative formal partnerships with high schools, trade schools, Hudson Valley Community College and four-year colleges and universities. Work with educators and students to understand what is needed to attract candidates to take the Civil Service exam for Police Officer. Create personal and professional relationships based on advances in community policing to



show students how fulfilling it can be to work in and serve your community. One added benefit of establishing these relationships is that it may be possible to leverage these partnerships to provide non-traditional training opportunities for the Department.

- Explore participation incentives such as paying for tuition for college credits and/or certifications. Like all employers, police departments must make employment a more attractive alternative in the competitive job market. Budget constraints exist for all departments so we'll have to be creative but incentives can be developed.
- Make a promotional video with commercial production values to enhance recruiting efforts. A number of departments have created promotional videos that extol the virtues and values of policing, reveal exciting features of the Town, and educate viewers on the paths one might take to become a police officer. The video can emphasize the increasing importance of having minorities and women serving as police officers.
- Make recruiting police officers an integral part of the Town's Human Resources Manager's job. Traditionally the police department has handled all of its own recruiting but bringing the Human Resources Manager into the equation adds another skilled component to promotion, recruitment and professional development. This can include attendance at job fairs, participation in internship programs, and finding other ways to advance the goal of recruiting a diverse and excellent set of candidates for our Police Department.
- Make greater use of social media for recruiting purposes. The East Greenbush Police Department currently does an excellent job of utilizing social media platforms like Facebook, Tik Tok, and Instagram. These allow the Department to communicate important emergency information to the community and receive tips on criminal investigations and missing persons. They also help the Department promote its participation in community activities. We will develop a strategy for making greater use of social media for recruiting.
- Explore Spanish-speaking Civil Service lists.

RECOMMENDATION: Implement an Officer Wellness Program

Being a police officer is an extremely stressful experience. Police officers witness and respond to many forms of unpleasant behavior, and are required to deal with scenarios – shootings, suicides, car accidents, etc – that the average person typically does not encounter



even once in a lifetime. And though there are various forms of assistance available to officers who have suffered a traumatizing event, including counseling and peer support, a systematic approach to officer wellness is necessary to ensure that all aspects of an officer's emotional and physical well-being are addressed on a regular basis. The best wellness programs address stress management, healthy habits, resilience development, emotional health, improved communications and relationships, sleep optimization, work-life balance, trauma and post-trauma stress, suicide prevention and peer support. Grant funding is available (e.g. International Association of Chiefs of Police – IACP) to help establish an Officer Wellness Program since this is an endeavor that would require additional financial support.

To supplement this recommendation, we make the following recommendations:

- Create opportunities for mental health and wellness checks, support and activities and explore ways to encourage participation.
- Celebrate successful programs and exemplary behaviors; share this information with the public.
- Provide crisis intervention and victims services training to better handle mental health calls and learn to identify stresses in their own life.
- Provide trauma education especially during Covid to help deal with mental health and addiction-related calls.
- Employ a chaplain or chaplains on a more regular basis.

This Plan was created by the East Greenbush Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative, a group that included the Chief of Police and Assistant Police Chief. Many of the issues raised in the Resource Guide are of crucial importance, yet several were not reflective of the experiences of our community members or the officers in our small Town. Nevertheless we asked every question and critiqued every answer. This report and the recommendations put forward are the result of an extensive and frank discussion of the issues facing communities and police departments.

East Greenbush is a safe community, and the East Greenbush Police Department has the support of the people who live here. We believe that the East Greenbush Police



Department does a good job policing our community, and the results of the Community Survey bear that out. Since Chief Rudzinski assumed office we have added a drone unit, a K-9 program, and re-activated our bike patrol. Her efforts to launch a new series of community events hit the roadblock of Covid-19 but she has many good ideas about how best to move forward. The development of this plan provided the Chief with an opportunity to review the existing policies and procedures and consider ways to improve. Public safety is the number one priority of the EGPD. This Plan will help the Department to better succeed in their efforts to run a transparent, publicly accountable Police Department that retains the trust of the community.

This Plan was truly a collaborative effort. Each member was heard and all contributed in substantive ways to the development of the Plan. Thank you to the EGPD for its materials, cooperation, explanations, and insights. Thank you to the community members who gave of their time and talents, both in considerable measure.

