



City of Ogdensburg Police Reform Collaborative

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Introduction

On June 12, 2020, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo signed Executive Order 203, known as the New York State Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative. This order requires every municipality with a Police Department to perform a comprehensive review of Police practices and develop a plan to improve upon them. The purpose of the Executive Order is to foster trust, fairness, and transparency to address any racial bias and disproportionate policing of communities of color.

The City of Ogdensburg was incorporated in 1868, and has continually maintained its own Police Department ever since. Currently the Police Department serves a population of about 10,000 residents as well as an outlying population that comes to the City to work, shop, or recreate. The City is also unique in that it is a border City with a direct connection to the Country of Canada and is a short distance to Ottawa, the Capitol of Canada. This brings visitors from very diverse backgrounds.

The Ogdensburg City Police Department serves the Law Enforcement needs of all City residents, as well as the visitors to this community. We strive to do so in a professional manner, respecting the rights of all without regard to race, color, nationality, creed, gender or sexual orientation. Our policies and procedures are developed and carried out with that goal in mind. Recognizing the fact that any organization always has room for improvement, a plan was implemented to complete a comprehensive review and revision of the Department's policies and procedures. This effort is to ensure the Ogdensburg Police Department is compliant in both Federal and State mandates, and recognized best practices. Once established and implemented, policies and procedures will be continually reviewed and updated based on current case law along with the continual evolution policing.

Planning

The City of Ogdensburg formed and convened a Police Reform Community Stakeholder Committee comprised with a broad spectrum of community members and City Administration. Members included the City Manager Stephen Jellie; Chief of Police Robert Wescott; St. Lawrence County District Attorney Gary Pasqua; St. Lawrence County Public Defender James McGahan; Father Christopher Carrera of the Ogdensburg Catholic Diocese; Mary Joly Wills, a retired school teacher and current Director the St. Lawrence County People Project; Tom Luckie, the Executive Director of the Ogdensburg Boys & Girls Club; Ogdensburg City School District Superintendent Kevin Kendall; Anthoni Pope, a recent college graduate and resident of the City; and Tyler Carrow, a Registered Nurse who works in the mental health field, and resident of the City.

Committee Input:

Meeting # 1

The first meeting gave community stakeholders the opportunity to ask questions of the Police Department. A variety of Police Department policies and procedures were discussed. A public survey to be posted on the City's website was created with input from the committee. The purpose was to give the community a chance to give input to the committee on the process and address larger concerns they

may have with the Department's policing efforts. This survey was advertised in local news sources to reach a wide audience. The following questions were asked:

1. *What, if any, positive or negative interaction have you had with the Ogdensburg Police Department?*
2. *Based on your personal experiences you may have had with the Ogdensburg Police Department; how do you feel the Department responds to incidents that may include community members who could be the target of bias?*
3. *Have you ever officially filed a written complaint about your experience with a member of the Ogdensburg Police Department, and if so, how do you feel it was handled?*
4. *Beside the typical Law Enforcement duties, the Ogdensburg Police Department performs, are there other functions you feel are unnecessary, or best handled by another agency?*
5. *What is your understanding of the role that the School Resource Officer plays in our City School District?*
6. *Are you familiar with any of the Community Policing efforts the Ogdensburg Police Department currently participates in? If so, please describe.*
7. *Do you believe the Ogdensburg Police Department is responsive to the needs of the whole Community? Please explain.*
8. *How do you feel the Ogdensburg Police Department can better strengthen the relations between the Department and the Community?*
9. *For the purposes of this survey, could you please provide your demographics:*
Age:
Gender:
Race:
Religious Preference:
Are you and Ogdensburg City Resident:
10. *Please provide any other comments, concerns or suggestions.*

Meeting #2

Questions from the committee to the Police Department resulted in open dialog on a variety of topics, including:

- Proposed new Use of Force Policy was reviewed and discussed
- Table of Contents to current policies and procedures were introduced to allow committee members to review and decide on any current policy they may want to review
- The current process the Department is undertaking to completely review, update and implement a comprehensive updated set of policies and procedures
- Officer training and handling of calls for service involving Emotionally Disturbed Persons or Persons in crisis
- Current newsworthy incidents involving other Police Departments
- Taking police custody of children
- School Resource Officer

Community members of the committee asked that another meeting be held where Ogdensburg Police Officers of different ranks, as well as younger members of the Department attend. The committee

stated the purpose was to ask questions of the Officers to understand a typical day for an Officer and ask about training ideas, and other topics.

Meeting #3

The purpose for the meeting was for the community members of the committee to ask questions of the Officers they felt would be helpful for the process. Each Officer had a chance to address the committee and each committee member had a chance to ask questions of any Officer they chose. This resulted in open dialog between all in attendance.

The Officers who attended included all ranks. Department Administrators; Union leaders of both Police Unions; Road Patrol and Investigations; and male and female officers participated.

The committee discussed the next step of setting up, open public meetings where the public could attend in person, or via weblink, to openly participate, offer comment, offer suggestions, ask questions, and be part of the process. This was openly advertised in local news outlets and the City's website.

Also, at the conclusion of this meeting, a sub committee was formed within the stakeholders to review the public surveys. The purpose was to review survey results, then bring recommendations to the Stakeholder Committee.

Public Comment Meetings:

Two open public meetings were then held. Both an afternoon and an evening meeting were each held to accommodate citizens' schedules. Citizens were available to attend both public meetings in person in the Ogdensburg City Council Chambers, or on-line via a weblink.

During both meetings, progress of the Stakeholders Committee meetings was discussed with the public. The survey subcommittee gave results of the surveys and discussed any reoccurring themes or topics of concern.

A variety of Officers attended both meetings making themselves available for questions and comment from the public and committee members.

Meeting #4

Prior to meeting #4, the Reform Committee was forwarded the draft Introduction and Action Plan that was developed as a result of the committee and public meetings. It was available for comment during the meeting by the committee.

Also, a further revised second draft of the Use of Force policy and a draft Use of Force Review Board policy was given to the committee.

Further Public Comment and Ratification:

The City will make available for public comment, the draft Introduction and Action Plan. This will be posted to the City's website, and also put on the March 22, 2021 City Council Meeting Agenda as a presentation. The public will have a chance to make comment at that meeting.

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