

Board of Trustees  
 Village of Tarrytown  
 Special Meeting No. 7  
 Police Reform Town Hall Meeting  
 Public Hearing #2  
 Via Zoom Video Conference  
 February 9, 2021  
 7:00 p.m.

PRESENT via Zoom Video Conference: Mayor Butler presiding; Trustees: Brown, Hoyt, Kim, McGovern, Rinaldi and Zollo; Village Administrator Slingerland; Assistant Village Administrator Ringel; Police Chief John Barbelet; Village Attorney Kathy Zalantis and Village Clerk Booth

Members of the Public interested in viewing the meeting should visit <https://www.tarrytowngov.com/home/events/33451> for instructions on how to join & participate.

Welcome and Introduction – Police Reform and Reinvention Committee Chairman Trustee Doug Zollo

Trustee Zollo welcomed everyone to the Tarrytown's Police Reform Town Hall Public Hearing #2. After the killing of George Floyd in May of 2020, it became apparent nationally there had to be a reckoning of police interaction and the killing of predominately black me in the United States. Immediately after the killing of George Floyd, Governor Andrew Cuomo signed an executive order #203, called New York State Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative. Every municipality in the state, in order to continue to receive state support for their police department, was ordered to review employment, strategies, policies, procedures, and practices of their police departments. Every municipality had to convene a committee. Tarrytown formed two committees, a steering committee, which was made up with the Village Administrators, Village Government Officials, Police Chief and the PBA President, two faith based ministers from churches in Tarrytown, whose congregants are predominately black, a member from the NAACP from the Town of Greenburgh and a member from the local DA's office. There was also a stakeholder's committee which was made up of a very diverse group of resident volunteers. We held 6 or 7 meetings through the fourth quarter of 2020. A survey was sent out and the response was quite good. A draft proposal was compiled after the meetings which was sent to the Board of Trustees for review at the end of 2020. Tonight is the second and last public hearing to get input from the public on the draft report. Anything relevant that comes out of this meeting and the first public hearing will be made part of the draft report. The Board of Trustees and the Police Reform Committee will be meeting to review the public comments and make a recommendation to the Board of Trustees on February 17, 2021. Then the Board of Trustees will meet and finalize the report and then the Board of Trustees will certify it either by resolution or law and it will be sent to the state by the deadline of April 1, 2021.

Village Administrator Slingerland – Summary of Committee Recommendations

Administrator Slingerland thanked everybody for being here and for taking the time to attend and share your comments with us. In summary, there's going to be a three minute time limit for each speaker with no second chance to speak. All comments should be addressed to the Board of Trustees. Staff will not be reading comments into the record for people who are unable to attend. You may submit your comments by email to the Village to [administrator@tarrytowngov.com](mailto:administrator@tarrytowngov.com) or send your comments directly to Administrator Rich Slingerland, Assistant Administrator Josh Ringel or Village Clerk Carol Booth. The draft Police Reform Report has been published and available to the public. The publication date of the report we have available right now is dated January 8, 2021 and the preliminary recommendations from the committee, which include 14 general recommendations and 5 targeted recommendations that are also kind of an echo of the list of 14.

The 14 general recommendations that are before the public, the committee and the Board of Trustees for consideration:

1. Review and maintain training to remain current with the times and needs of our community
2. Pursue and finish the accreditation process which is already underway.
3. Complete the installation and implementation of body worn cameras by our police officers. The accreditation process and the body worn cameras have been underway before the committee was created.
4. Expand outreach from a current passive level at retail and restaurant establishments to active meetings with homeowners associations or tenant associations, the Chamber of Commerce and other groups.
5. Actively reach out to young people in the community. Police Chief is already working on a program to take place this March.
6. Request County and State action to create and restore funding for mental health support in substance abuse, domestic violence, identify persons with histories of mental health issues and other similar situations.
7. Review and examine the department's dare program, reviewing its effectiveness and consideration of possible alternative uses.
8. Review department policies and methods for subduing violent offenders to ensure the safest non-lethal means and methods are being utilized. As mentioned, we informed the committee that the Village has not allowed chokehold for 20 years.
9. Advocate for changes in civil service processing requirements related to the hiring and discipline of police officers as police officers. This would allow more flexibility to allow the Village to expand the number of minorities and women and also make it easier to remove or suspend an officer for willful misconduct, which would actually require a change in state law.
10. Advocate at the state level to decriminalize minor vehicle and traffic law violations.
11. Issue an annual or biannual report meaning every two years survey to the community seeking input and feedback on the police department.
12. Stakeholder Committee recommendation to create a long term Police Advisory Committee.
13. Stakeholder Committee recommendation to create a separate Citizens Police Review Board.
14. Build a dashboard presenting such statistics as arrests and ethnicity associated with those arrests for Tarrytown review and post for public view at least on an annual basis.

The Committee sent a communication to the Board for consideration of five targeted recommendations:

1. Establishment of a Citizens Review Advisory or Review Board.
2. New de-escalation, anti-bias, anti-racist training and continuation of education for all police personnel on a regular basis.
3. New programs initiated that would be dedicated to enhancing and maintain officer wellness including mental and behavioral health services.
4. The appointment of a professional community responder who could respond to mental or behavioral health and other calls.
5. The establishment or extension of a policing committee for ongoing discussions and listening sessions with the community.

#### Message from Police Chief Barbelet

Police Chief John Barbelet thanked everyone for taking the time to be a part of this process. We have had numerous meetings, conversations, surveys and discussions related to policing here in Tarrytown. He has listened with an open mind to everyone's thoughts and ideas into consideration. He had the pleasure to meet some great residents in Tarrytown who he did not know before this process. As we move forward, he will continue to listen and offer his own thoughts and opinions on what he believes is good for the community, the residents and the police department. While we may not always agree with an idea, he does and will continue to respect this course that we have all been a part of. Listening and allowing for good open discussion is a healthy practice. A part of what makes Tarrytown so great is not just its diversity, such as culture and ethnicity, but being able to have different ideologies and beliefs. He thanked everyone for their participation in

this process. He announced a youth program called Books & Badges that the Police Department will be hosting on March 6<sup>th</sup> from 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. for children ages 2 – 12. In the police reform process, we talked about engaging the community and the youth. How this came about is a Police Detective in Mount Vernon had a connection with Disney, where Disney donated a massive amount of children's books. An officer in Tarrytown came up with an idea that had stemmed from what Mount Vernon was doing called Books & Badges. So we wanted to figure out how we can incorporate the books and getting some families and young people in the community to come to the Police Department. On March 6<sup>th</sup>, we are inviting families to come to the Police Department with their children in cars, they will stay in their cars, wearing masks and it will be very safe. We will provide the children with books that were donated by Disney, we have coloring books geared towards young children, they will also get a bag that has the Tarrytown Police on it and we will have special treats and surprises for the kids. This is a way, during COVID times, for families to come to the Police Department and meet police officers, on and off duty to greet the families and children. This is just one of many ideas that we thought would help bring the police and the community together in a safe manner. We made banners to go out into the community and he asked everyone to get the word out.

Assistant Administrator Ringel noted that tonight we are seeking comments on the draft plan and recommendation. Interested speakers will have three minutes and speakers must raise their hands by pressing the raise their hand icon or by pressing star nine if calling in by phone. Now is the time to start getting into the queue. The meeting is being translated into Spanish in real time.

Kimberly Marcus, Barnes Road, thanked everyone on the committee and all the Trustees for their hard work. She supports all of the recommendations, especially, the CCRB and mental health for police officers, and having someone on staff, like a social worker, who can work with people with mental health issues. She also supports the police dashboard and thinks that it should also include hate crimes.

Jonathan Gleit, Barnes Road, thanked everyone for all their hard work. He doesn't believe he saw in the report a policy for duty to intercede, meaning if an officer observes another officer acting in a way that is violent or discourteous, that the officer who observes should have to have the duty to affirmatively act to intercede with the officer who's doing the misdeed. He supports the CCRB. Will it be based on some type of state standard? Will it be modeled after New York City CCRB?

Assistant Administrator Ringel noted that the Village does have a duty to intervene policy.

Laurie Feinstein, Edgemont, Town of Greenburgh, noted that she is aware of the wonderful work your police reform committee is doing because she serves on the Greenburgh Human Rights Committee. She noted on a new issue that happened with a nine year old African American child who was held and restrained who is having some form of a family crisis where the family called the police to help them and then that child was handcuffed and tackled and it was very disturbing to people, in particular the African American community in Greenburgh. What happens nationally affects the psychology of us locally. She asked if Tarrytown has thought how to respond differently to children in crisis and what kind of training goes on with that.

Reverend Judith R. Williams, Pastor, noted that her question and concern was covered by the previous speaker regarding the nine year old. She also wanted to know if the treatment of little children when it comes to police matters is being included in police training. She asked if should could get flyers for the books and badges so she can get the word out to everyone.

Lynn Goodman, N. Washington Street, Chair of the Greenburgh Human Rights Advisory Committee, noted that if you read the police reform reports of other towns throughout the state, you'll see the same suggestions: Include mental health experts on the Crisis Response Team, create an independent civilian complaint review board, don't use weapons, force or restraints except when needed to protect the lives of the public or the officer, don't use intimidation except when absolutely needed, imbed anti-racism and procedural justice training into everyday practices, hire and retain only empathetic

community minded police officers. The call for reform is not an indictment of a particular department, it's a recognition that certain policing methods used for decades have caused more harm than good and it needs to be changed. The following are her suggestions: More diversity on the force of the 34 sworn officers, only three are women. You need more women and more diversity. Diversity strengthens the department. Add a mental health expert to the team. When responding to a mental health emergency, include a mental health expert as often as possible. Create a community review and advisory committee. Complaints should not be sent to the police department as is the practice now, they should be sent to and reviewed by an independent civilian entity. More must be done to support the mental health of police officers to create safe spaces where they can talk to peers and regular mental health check-ins should be mandatory. Interactions with the police can be stressful and traumatizing, black people especially have suffered trauma and loss from generations of overly aggressive policing. Maybe this didn't happen a lot in Tarrytown, but Tarrytown does not live in a bubble. Everybody must be trained to understand the perspectives of black and brown and non-mainstream people. We have to rethink how we deal with quality of life crimes and misdemeanors.

Rebecca Rothe, Beekman Avenue, noted that she supported the five recommendations made by the committee. She emphasized the importance of meeting the needs of individuals in a mental health crisis and that they should be met by someone who is thoroughly trained and qualified to de-escalate the situation, so that the individuals get the help that they need.

Lauren Cannata, Benedict Avenue, noted full disclosure, her husband is Rob Cannata who is a member of the police reform committee. She thanked everyone for putting the time to do such important work. She believes that all of the recommendations are worthy, she wanted to name a few that stand out as a resident of Tarrytown. Prioritize de-escalation and anti-bias and anti-racist training. Make sure the police officers get the support that they need so they can continue to support and take care of our community. To establish the CCRB. We have seen this as a model that has worked not only in New York City, but in numerous cities, towns and communities around the nation. She thinks it's proven to be extremely beneficial. She thinks that Tarrytown should lead the way with this and establish it. She thinks the Tarrytown Police Department are great and supporting them is important, but there's always room for growth. She asked how the plan for the recommendations will be communicated to the community.

Elyssa Rothe, Van Wart Avenue, thanked everybody on the call today, she is really grateful and proud to be part of a town that has so much community engagement on this important topic. She supported the five recommendations by the committee, especially number 3, dedicated to mental health services for the officers who are on duty as well as the rest of the five that are more dedicated to de-escalation and addressing mental health issues and ensuring we have trained and qualified staff to address people who are in a mental health crisis.

Matt, Van Wart Avenue, noted that he also supports all five recommendations, with emphasis on number 4, the appointment of a professional community responder who could respond to mental health or behavioral calls. He believes that residents should be able to request that this responder be sent to an incident in place of an officer. There should be guidelines on whether the department sends the community responder in place of a conventional officer.

Jeanie Kogan, Washington Street, noted that she is a local activist and a social worker. When she has black friends visit her house, they feel like they are being looked at as criminals. So anti-racism work is for everyone. Police brutality isn't everybody's problem. When people are upset about police, it's not attacking police's humanity, it's that people are tired of black people getting killed. How are you going to make sure that the police force will be accountable to the CCRB and that they are not going to be stopped by police unions. Tarrytown is mostly white, how are you going to make it desirable and safe for black indigenous people and people of color to participate in this process. She loves the idea of police needing mental health support. Police officers have to deal with trauma, rates of suicide, divorce and substance abuse in police are very high. We need to change

the police culture. If you combine guns, fear in very dangerous situations and racism, it makes sense that black people get killed, it takes a lot of unlearning work to do.

Sara Simonetti, Hamilton Place, thanked everyone on the committee and all of the members of the Board for their time and effort. She has had some encounters with the Tarrytown Police Department and they were respectful and courteous. She never had an issue. However, they are always uniformed and armed. She feels that if they were not always uniformed and armed it would change her mindset. She feels that they would be more approachable to her if they were not uniformed or armed. It is the ideology that a police officer in uniform is present because of some crime or some potential crime. Regarding mental health and training and de-escalation training comes mindfulness training and meditation practices have shown to be successful. She thinks that regular reviews and more regular communication could be very helpful to make progress within the police department.

Ed Kharem, noted that he is in support of the recommendations. His only question is why not? Why not, because it can only have a positive outcome. All of this can be a benefit for police and the community. What is there to lose? What tends to happen is when something happens, then reform takes place. Why not do it in the opposite order, where we can essentially avoid the incident. Let's do it before someone gets hurt and there is a negative interaction. It's easy to say that those things only happen in the city, but it could happen anywhere because these issues can manifest themselves anywhere.

Katie Scully, School District, read a letter from the school district and noted that she thinks that the school district is such a wonderful bridge between Sleepy Hollow and Tarrytown. The letter is from Natalie Szerberger who couldn't be here tonight. "After reading through the report, she wanted to share a few thoughts from the perspective of an educator, advocate and attorney who runs a national racial justice center. She currently partners with the Tarrytown Sleepy Hollow school district to support their equity inclusion and racial justice efforts. Some specificity is warranted around de-escalation, anti-bias, anti-racist and continuing education for all police personnel on an annual or bi-annual basis. The department could invest in training one or two staff members to then lead the training to others in the department or invest in training and coaching by an outside facilitator. Part of becoming anti-bias and anti-racist is spending time in cycles of learning and unlearning reflection and action. There must be opportunity to process which specific practices and policies could be enacted or shifted as a result of new learning in these trainings. There is a correlation to the analysis of disaggregated, stop detainment and arrest data and that there should be a reduction in the racial and other disproportionality in this data. With body cameras, there needs to be parameters and expectations set for activation and usage. Data should also be tracked to see if there are changes in behavior and interactions with the community over time as a result of wearing these body cameras. Overall, the most important piece that these mandated changes are results in specific, measurable and adaptive changes that act in furtherance of advancing racial justice and community reactions. In review of this report, the final five recommendations for a Citizen's Review Board, the anti-bias, anti-racist training, mental health focus for officers, the opportunity for community responder to support needs of citizens, these and the criminalization of mental health issues and the establishment of policing committee feels the most connected to a more equitable and racially justice form of policing. She highly recommends these five recommendations to better serve the community and meet the goals of the governor's expressed commitments."

Francis Giampiccolo, Hamilton Place, member of the police reform committee, thanked everyone involved in the process, it was very worthwhile and something that was needed. He was a police officer in Tarrytown for 36 years and retired this past June. He noted that he agrees with a lot that has been said, but he takes a different view on the CCRB. He doesn't believe it is necessary here in Tarrytown. When there was misconduct by a police officer, the Police Chief, the Administrator and the Board of Trustees were always involved in any kind of disciplinary action. So there is already something in place to handle discipline. What type of training would the people have who would be members of the CCRB? What type of training are they going to have? That's important and he doesn't believe that it is needed today in the Village of Tarrytown. But what he does think is important is to partner with the Town of Greenburgh to have fly cars with paramedics to

respond to all of the Villages with either a health care professional and/or mental health or even with social workers that will respond and take care of whatever the mental health problem or domestic dispute that may occur. He thinks having a Human Rights Commission would be very important and benefit the Village of Tarrytown. He believes that de-escalation training should be continued. We live in a dangerous world and he believes that all police officers should be uniformed and armed.

Robin Warner, Mechanics Avenue, member of the police reform committee, noted that she wanted it to be clear that there's quite a few black people on the police reform committee. It is not just white people on the committee. She believes that the police officers should be uniformed and armed, they are out in the streets. She thinks that is part of their uniform. She thinks the Tarrytown Police Department does a great job.

Alberta Williams Jarane, owner of two businesses on Main Street, noted that she supports the five recommendations. Let's never lose sight as to why we are here in the first place, people like George Floyd and many others who were murdered by police. It's no mistake that social media with video in particular gives our nation a lens into the injustices that otherwise would have remained unseen and silent. If you let certain voices in our police department and on our Boards and beyond who would have you believe that Tarrytown doesn't have these problems, means we are not listening. If we are to be the forward thinking innovative, creative and simply the place we advertise we are, then let's do this work each and every day. When we hear voices in our community that believe that our police force is a paramilitary force and we all see the back the blue flags around the town, that reminds us that our work is not done. These displays and voices make her afraid in her own home, but she will never be afraid to speak to you because she chooses to do the work. You too must make that same commitment. Just because it hasn't happened here in Tarrytown doesn't mean it can't or that it won't.

Phoebe Nielsen, Wood Court, Senior at Sleepy Hollow High School, noted that she supports the work that the police reform committees has done already. The committee's recommendation of revising and revisiting the DARE program is especially important to her. In her experience in the program in fifth grade, it was largely fear based and she was given a lot of misleading information about drugs and alcohol and combined with police presence in the classroom, it was a very intimidating atmosphere for a fifth grader. What concerned her is that she was led to believe that drug users were somehow less than other people or less deserving of safety and security and if you decide to do drugs, it means you are a terrible person. It discouraged empathy towards drug users. She emphasized the importance of the committee revisiting this program as part of the reform initiative and promoting a more restorative approach to drug education and a less punitive one that leads to less criminalization.

Loretta London, Wilson Park, member of the police reform committee, noted that she is very grateful for everybody involved in this process. She reminded everyone that this is a process of improvement. This is just the beginning. We had many meetings and many great comments were made. She can't wait to revisit all the things that we are planning to do and set some timelines. But to assure everyone that this is a process of improvement. Not everything is black and white, this is very gray. We are on the right track. She appreciates all the work from everyone.

Sayako Aizeki-Nevins, Hanford Place, Senior at Sleepy Hollow School, thanked everyone for doing all this great work. She emphasized the continuation of this work, through independent advisory board for policing and through the creation of a committee just to further these discussion. As a student, she would like to see more efforts to involve young people in this work by creating a dedicated space for young people to discuss what community safety could look like for them as well as trying to involve young people in the committee like this one.

Dylan Besescu, grew up in Sleepy Hollow, noted that he was in high school when police officers were introduced on a regular duty to the high school, it had a chilling effect on the learning environment there. He among others, spoke to the Board of Education then and said that not only statistically, this was not likely to mitigate the harms that would be done by putting a police officer in school, but it presented a wide range of statistics showing that

this was bad racially, it was bad educationally, it was bad socially and it was bad criminal logically. Police officers in the schools created an even worse environment educationally for the school district and for students. At the very least, he asked that they limit the role of those officers in the school and that they reduce the number of officers. He hopes someday that we learn the lessons that others schools have learned that police officers shouldn't be in schools at all.

Bhavya Reddy, Sleepy Hollow resident, thanked all the committee members who put a lot of time and effort into this entire process, especially the black and other residents of color who shared their personal experiences in this public forum, even when it wasn't always the most comfortable or compassionate place to do that. She supports the final recommendations in the report to continue the process of examining the role of policing within our community. Her question is how this process will make us safe. She was glad to hear that we will include a professional community responder position on the county level, to focus on appropriate responses to crisis. However, she would like to learn how Tarrytown will expand that approach to other safety issues and focus on actual concerns expressed by residents. For example, one of the most striking results from the police survey was the fact that traffic and speeding was a concern of half of all the Tarrytown respondents. What are the root causes of traffic and speeding in our communities? How can we prevent them? These questions are well within the scope of the process the governor laid out. She hopes that any future assessments around this question of safety take an even more holistic view of what safety and security mean, including things like extreme weather events, food insecurity and white supremacy. She asked that they avoid criminalizing individuals for systemic issues. For instance, instead of asking about homelessness, or transit related problems, like panhandling, let's instead reframe that into something like a lack of affordable housing. She hopes our community includes Sleepy Hollow and other neighbors who can work together on these issues. With regards to the 5 recommendations, seeing more police officers on the streets does not make everyone in the community feel safe. She asked that you listen to the BIPOC youth about what would actually make them feel safe, as opposed to assuming that even more contact with police is what they need.

Trustee Zollo noted that the next meeting will be held on February 17<sup>th</sup> with the Board of Trustees and the Police Reform Committees. The public is invited to and welcome to listen in, but the public will not be invited to speak during that meeting. After that meeting, the report will go to the Board of Trustees for a final certification through either resolution or law and then the report will be sent to the state. He thanked everybody, we had a lot of great comments tonight.

Police Chief Barbelet, commented on a few things, one being duty to intervene. The duty to intervene used to be two sentences, we have now created a whole general order to just duty to intervene, which means that if an officer is observing another officer breaking rules that we have in place, he/she is obligated to report it and to step in and call a supervisor. He/she would be protected under what we call a whistleblowers clause in the department. We have sent officers to be professionally trained in duty to intervene and de-escalation. They have submitted reports on how the training went and then they will train the entire department on those two very important topics, which also includes implicit bias, anti-bias and policing and body worn cameras. We have already started the training process and it's not going to be one and done. We have reallocated and dedicated resources for training, this is a priority and will continue to be a priority. The police department with the Board of Trustee's approval have already taken some very progressive steps. We started doing this well before the governor even put out his executive order. The police department undergoes very good training regarding mental health for law enforcement. It may be difficult to budget for a mental health worker 24/7, however, the fly car from the Town of Greenburg is definitely an option and we also spoke about mobile crisis team, where we can pull our resources together with neighboring Villages to have an expert in mental health to serve the Villages whether it comes from the town or the county.

Jill Sternberg, Altamont Avenue, thanked the Board of Trustees and the police for engaging authentically in this process. She believes it's important to add specificity into the recommendations, because that's how we hold one another accountable. She would like to encourage the police to have a website with all policy and procedures including their

handbook, statistics and police training and for that information be publically available. She personally does a lot of anti-bias, anti-racism, restorative justice and conflict resolution training and she is at the point now where she doesn't want to do training anymore unless she knows how it's going to be implemented. She encourages the police department to build into whatever training plans you make, as to how you're going to follow that training and how you are going to use it. We have a Village with people of different perspectives. We don't want everyone to have the same perspective. She thinks it's important that the police also respect all perspectives. She thinks it would be beneficial to try to develop some dialogue, not just police and community, but bringing people with different perspectives together so that we can build a respectful relationship where everyone feels that their humanity is valued in the town.

Mayor Butler thanked everyone who called in today, the conversations were quite enlightening. As the month of February is Black History Month, he recommended a good book to read called "Caste, the Origin of our Descent," by Isabel Wilkerson. It's a must read and will bring a lot of what we are talking about into focus. One of the words he heard tonight is the word "process." This is definitely a process. He is certain that with all of this input, we will find common ground. One of the things that we will ask the committee is to look into funding resources. He asked that along with the recommendations that people provide some kind of funding resources, which could come from the county or the state.

Trustee Zollo noted that due to limited resources, we have reached out to the county about reinstating the assistance with mental health issues.

Administrator Slingerland noted that is correct. There used to be a group out of Westchester Medical Center, called the Mobile Crisis Team and County Executive Latimer has spoken about restoring it in some fashion through the creation of a taskforce of mental health professionals and counselors who would be available to the various municipalities. He thinks that the Town of Greenburgh has also talked about having that kind of resource available. He will be happy to see how this can be best implemented in cooperation with the various municipalities, including the Village of Tarrytown.

Trustee Zollo asked Trustee Hoyt to explain the fly car from the Town of Greenburgh regarding the advanced life support. This would also help with mental health issues, they can assist by providing a mental health worker, with a fly car that will respond as quickly as possible.

Trustee Hoyt explained that with every EMS call in the Village, we dispatch a fly car from the Town of Greenburgh who comes to the call with a paramedic. Although they are very reliable, there is an occasion that their paramedic is not available.

Trustee Rinaldi thanked, in particular, the young people who called in tonight to get their perspective and they were incredibly articulate. It was great to have them engaged in this process.

#### ADJOURNMENT

On the motion of Trustee Zollo, seconded by Trustee Rinaldi meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:25 p.m. by vote of seven in favor, none opposed.

Carol A. Booth  
Village Clerk



