



Town of Stillwater
Stillwater, New York



POLICE REFORM AND REINVENTION COLLABORATIVE GROUP

Executive Summary

Gov. Andrew Cuomo issued Executive Order #203 in June of 2020 entitled “New York State Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative” to all municipalities with police agencies in New York State.

The order states in part: “Each chief executive of such local government shall convene the head of the local police agency, and stakeholders in the community to develop such plan, which shall consider evidence-based policing strategies, including but not limited to, use of force policies, procedural justice; any studies addressing systemic racial bias or racial justice in policing; implicit bias awareness training; de-escalation training and practices; law enforcement assisted diversion programs; restorative justice practices; community-based outreach and conflict resolution; problem-oriented policing; hot spots policing; focused deterrence; crime prevention through environmental design; violence prevention and reduction interventions; model policies and guidelines promulgated by the New York State Municipal Police Training Council; and standards promulgated by the New York State Law Enforcement Accreditation Program. ”

The Town of Stillwater is in Saratoga County New York with a total population of 8,972 residents. The racial makeup of the Town is 98.21% White, 0.62% Latino, 0.47% Asian, 0.41% Black/African American and 0.29 % other. The town is 43.6 square miles that is composed of small urban, semi-urban and rural communities. (2010 Census)

The Town and Village of Stillwater are protected by the Stillwater Police Department which is comprised of 14 part-time NYS certified police officers. Additional protection is provided by the Saratoga County Sheriff’s Office and the New York State Police.

An important distinction worth noting is that in September 2020, SafeWise, an independent agency, identified the Town of Stillwater as #47 in the Top 100



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Safest Small Towns in America according to data obtained through the FBI and other agencies. The Town of Stillwater was also listed by SafeWise as #4 in the safest small towns in NYS (2018) according to FBI statistics.

The Town of Stillwater Police Commission and the Stillwater Police Department have been committed to reform for some time. Using this proactive approach, we identified several areas for improvement in early 2020 and implemented several actions intended to promote advocacy for all residents as well as provide guidance for the police department moving forward.

Stillwater Town Supervisor Edward Kinowski appointed 1st Sergeant Ray Cordani, Stillwater Police Department (SPD), Commissioner of Police and Officer in Charge, and John Nett, Police Commissioner and Chair of the Town of Stillwater Police Commission to implement the articles outlined in Executive Order #203. The objective is to have a fact-based and honest dialogue about the public safety needs our community.

Key issues and questions that this plan addresses include:

1. What Functions Should Police Perform?
2. Employing smart and effective policing standards and strategies
3. Fostering Community-oriented leadership, culture and accountability
4. Recruiting and supporting excellent personnel

To accomplish these taskings, the Stillwater Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative Group enlisted the following stakeholders:

- Paul Pecor, Sergeant, SPD, Patrol Supervisor, Co-Chairperson
- John Nett, Commissioner, Chair of the Police Commission, Co-Chairperson
- Ray Cordani, 1st Sergeant, Commanding Officer & Commissioner of Police
- Jennifer Weaver, Commissioner
- Justin Macfarlane, Administrator, Stillwater Area Community Center
- Ed Kinowski, Stillwater Town Supervisor
- Judy Wood-Shaw, Stillwater Village Mayor



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- Karen Heggen, Saratoga County District Attorney
- Sara Kipp, Director, Stillwater Public Library
- Fr. Pat Rice, Pastor, All Saints on the Hudson Church
- Frank Tatum, Community Representative
- Jimel Williams, Community Representative

The Stillwater Police Department, in collaboration with the Police Commission, self-identified several opportunities for improvement. This resulted in changes that were implemented early in 2020. The Police Commission Charter was reviewed, updated, and approved. Other initiatives included the review, update and approval of all departmental Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's). This review will be ongoing.

SOPs' reviewed and approved to date included:

- Use of Force Policy
- Use of Taser Policy
- Domestic Violence Policy
- Emotionally Disturbed/Mental Health Crisis Policy
- Body Worn Camera Policy
- Mobile Audio Policy
- Body Armor Policy

In an effort to reach a wide audience and obtain as much feedback as possible from residents and visitors, the Collaborative Group developed a comprehensive survey regarding Police Reform. This survey was shared on multiple social media sites as well as the websites for the Town of Stillwater, Village of Stillwater, Stillwater Community Center, and the Stillwater Library

We received 111 responses which helped guide us through the development of the plan. Community input meetings were held online through Zoom and shared on social media. Minutes and agendas are also posted on the Town of Stillwater website.



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The following plan not only identifies areas for improvement, but also recognizes areas where the town has been proactive. This also confirms that the Town of Stillwater has not experienced the myriad of issues identified in EO#203 that more heavily populated municipalities across the state face. The plan is posted online for public comment. It will then be submitted to the Stillwater Town Supervisor for consideration and approval by the Town Board. Once this is complete, it will be transmitted electronically and by USPS.



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Police Reform and Reinvention Plan

What Functions Should Police Perform?

Determining the Role of the Police

The Town of Stillwater's Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative Group used current practices of the Stillwater Police Department (SPD), as well as input from the community, to determine what functions SPD should perform and to identify opportunities for the SPD to better serve its residents.

The functions of the SPD are to serve and protect the residents and visitors of the Town and Village of Stillwater through law enforcement, education and community outreach.

The following plan outlines the current practices of the SPD and additional opportunities identified to meet the needs of the community.

The primary activities of the Stillwater Police Department are responding to calls for service, traffic enforcement, performing high visibility patrols, completing residential and commercial property checks, performing self-initiated interventions, and participating in community outreach events.

Calls for service also consist of domestic disputes, mental health incidents, traffic related emergencies, property crimes, quality of life crimes, EMS assist calls, and public assist calls.

The Stillwater Police Department places special emphasis on community outreach events such as: Health and Safety outreach at the Stillwater Community Center, Stillwater Central School District, Mechanicville-Stillwater Elks Lodge and outreach to various youth clubs such as the Boy Scout and the Girl Scouts.



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The Stillwater Police Department continues to partner with the various drug, alcohol, and domestic violence outreaches and services available in Saratoga County as part of a more comprehensive approach to community policing.

Based on community input and a community survey conducted in response to EO#203, the community has identified the following as the areas they are most concerned with:

- 1. Traffic Related Issues-** The Town of Stillwater Police Department addresses traffic related issues by conducting routine traffic enforcement, targeted traffic enforcement based on community input, and conducting Safe Driver Training in our local High School.
- 2. Drug Abuse-** The Stillwater Police Department addresses drug abuse through community outreach, targeted patrols, and self-initiated interventions. All officers have been issued Narcan and have been trained in its proper use when an opiate overdose is suspected. We also work with our law enforcement partners at the Saratoga County Sheriff's Office (SCSO) to reach out to those who have suffered an overdose and offer them resources to combat their addiction.
As part of our public safety options, SPD promotes and encourages using established outreach programs to facilitate substance abuse and mental health counseling to assist those with ~~in~~ drug abuse and alcohol related issues.
- 3. DWI Related Offenses-** The Stillwater Police Department address DWI related offenses through traffic enforcement, target DWI patrols and with community outreach through a "Consequences of Impaired Driving" program conducted with high school students at the Stillwater High School. We also work closely with the Saratoga County Stop DWI Program.



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- 4. Domestic Violence-** The Stillwater Police Department has a detailed domestic violence policy to guide officers when responding to calls of domestic violence. Domestic Violence Advocacy Programs are an essential part of our policy.
- In addition to standard scene safety protocols and rules of arrest, the policy also directs officers to provide the following assistance to victims of domestic violence:
- a. Advise all involved parties of the serious nature of domestic violence, its potential for escalation, and of legal and social assistance available.
 - b. Assess the immediate safety and welfare of involved children.
 - c. Remain on scene until satisfied that the immediate threat of violence has passed and that all appropriate options to protect and assist the victim have been exhausted.
 - d. Provide the victim with referral information regarding domestic violence shelters and domestic violence advocacy programs.
 - e. Assist in arranging for transportation or transport the victim and family or household members to a place of safety.
- 5. School Safety –** The Stillwater Police Department works closely with the Saratoga County Sheriff's Office School Resource Officer (SRO) assigned to the Stillwater Central School District. This fosters positive interactions with students, faculty and staff and builds strong relationships that overflow into the community.
- a. Participation in school safety drills and training conducted by the Saratoga County Sheriff's Office.
 - b. SPD conducts additional outreach and training with the students in the Stillwater School District.
 - c. Routine safety walk-throughs at the school.



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Staffing, Budgeting and Equipping the Stillwater Police Department.

Based on community input garnered during this process, SPD has identified an opportunity to better serve the community by adjusting patrol shifts to provide increased coverage during times of higher call volume.

The annual budget of the SPD reviewed by the Stillwater Police Commission and approved by the Stillwater Town Board. SPD also receives funding through the Saratoga County Stop DWI program and state and federal grants when available/applicable.

The Stillwater Police Department (SPD) is led by 1 part-time 1st Sergeant (OIC) who oversees 2 part-time patrol sergeants, 10 part-time officers, and 1 part-time civilian employee who provides IT and technical support. SPD staffs 2 shifts daily, 1-day patrol officer and 2-evening patrol officers with patrol supervision covering both shifts.

Employing Smart and Effective Policing Standards and Strategies

Procedural Justice and Community Policing

- SPD currently participates in community outreach, community education programs, and positive non-law enforcement contacts with residents as part of our procedural justice and community policing strategy.
- SPD Leadership requires officers to complete a thorough investigation and encourages officers to use their discretion if alternatives to criminal arrest are more beneficial.
- Officers participate in community policing by attending special events, visiting Stillwater Schools, visiting the Community Center, engaging with local pre-schools, and engaging with residents in the community and other locations/events as requested.



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- SPD works closely with local Domestic Violence Advocacy Programs (DVAP) and victim advocate groups to assist victims of domestic abuse and crime victims.
- SPD works closely with County and State partners to provide patient outreach to those struggling with addiction.

Law Enforcement Strategies to Reduce Racial Disparities and Build Trust

SPD has identified the opportunity to update/add policy and training in the areas of biased-based policing, hate crime investigation, and diversity awareness.

SPD will address these opportunities by creating and enacting the following policies: Hate Crime Investigation Policy, Biased Based Policing Policy and a Diversity Awareness Policy. Departmental training will commence once the policies are reviewed and approved by the Stillwater Police Commission.

Community Engagement

SPD currently engages with the community through social media, press releases and patrol operations. SPD has identified an opportunity to expand community engagement through the addition of a SPD web portal on the Town of Stillwater website and through additional community surveys.



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Fostering Community-oriented leadership, culture and accountability

Leadership and Culture

SPD Leadership positions are appointed by the Stillwater Town Board at the recommendation of the Stillwater Police Commission. SPD Leadership holds officers to the highest standards of accountability and professionalism.

Tracking and Reviewing Use of Force and Identifying Misconduct

All use of force incidents are documented and forwarded to NYS DCJS as required. Use of force incidents are investigated by SPD leadership and referred to the Police Commission for review, as necessary.

Internal Accountability and Misconduct

Any complaints of misconduct are reviewed/investigated by SPD Leadership and handled through retraining, counseling or discipline as outlined in the departments standard operating procedures and operations manual and referred to the Stillwater Police Commission.

SPD, in conjunction with the Police Commission, will continue reviewing and updating Department Policies, Rules and Regulations.

Citizen Oversight and Other External Accountability

The Stillwater Police Commission has statutory oversight of the Stillwater Police Department. The Town of Stillwater Police Commission is comprised of civilian members, elected officials and the SPD OIC.

Data, technology and transparency

SPD currently utilizes patrol car dash cameras and body cameras to capture patrol operations. Video of patrol operations that result in an arrest are forwarded to the Saratoga County DA's Office as required. Incidents of significance are reviewed by the Stillwater Police Commission.



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Recruiting and Supporting Outstanding Personnel

Recruiting a Diverse Workforce

When filling a vacancy, qualified applicants are interviewed and evaluated by SPD Leadership and referred to the Stillwater Police Commission for further interviews and evaluation. They are subsequently referred to the Town Board for final consideration and the appointment decision. The Stillwater Police Department fully supports diversity in employment but has been limited in candidate applications received to date.

Training and Continuing Education

SPD is a DCJS certified law enforcement agency and currently meets or exceeds all statutory training requirements.

SPD has identified the opportunity to explore a continuing education program via in person and online law enforcement training.

Support Officer Wellness and Well-Being

SPD has identified a need to provided more comprehensive support of officer wellness and well-being programs. Options are currently being reviewed. The most beneficial to our officers will be implemented.



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Conclusion

Through the Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative Process, the Town of Stillwater has validated that the policies and operational procedures of the Stillwater Police Department generally meet or exceed the community's expectations as well as the statutory requirements set forth by law.

However, through this process, we have identified the following areas of opportunity for the Stillwater Police Department to more effectively meet the needs of the community:

- Adjust patrol schedules to better meet the needs of the community.
- The need to institute the following policies with associated training:
 - Biased-Based Policing Policy
 - Hate Crime Investigation Policy
 - Diversity Awareness Policy
- Expand community engagement through the addition of a web portal on the Town of Stillwater website and include community surveys. This portal will allow the public to share comments, concerns, ask questions and/or to give positive feedback. This will provide for a response from the Police OIC, the Police Commission, the Town Supervisor or a combination thereof in order to effectively address any concern raised.
- Increase training through a continuing education program.
- Provide more comprehensive support of officer wellness and well-being programs.

The Stillwater Police Department and the Stillwater Police Commission will continue to work together to address the opportunities outlined above and any additional opportunities identified.



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This plan was reviewed by the Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative Group on Monday March 1, 2021. The meeting was broadcast on zoom to allow for any group members unable to physically attend and to allow for public input.

This plan is approved, as written, to be posted to various websites to include Town of Stillwater website and Facebook page, the Stillwater Area Community Center site, the Stillwater Library and the Mechanicville Express and others for public comment.

This will then be sent to the Town of Stillwater Supervisor and to the Town Board for adoption and approval and attestation by the Supervisor.

Upon approval, this will be submitted to NYS as prescribed.

Sergeant Paul Pecor
Co-Chair Collaborative Group

John Nett, Commissioner
Co-Chair Collaborative Group