

# City of Mechanicville Police Reform and Reinvention Collaboration Plan

## Committee Members

Michelle Duell, Director Mechanicville District Public Library

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Chief William Rabbitt

City Attorney Lyn Murphy

District Attorney Karen Heggen

Public Defender Matt Maiello

Supervisor Tom Richardson

PBA Representative Jordan McBride

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## About Us

The City of Mechanicville is roughly one square mile. It is the smallest city by area in the state. As of the 2010 census, there were 5,107 people, 2,381 households, and 1,222 families residing in the city. The racial makeup of the city was 92.5% Caucasian, 2.8% African American, 0.6 Native American Indian, 1.3% Asian, and 2.8% from two or more races. There were 2,381 households, out of which 29.1% had children under the age of 18 living with them, 29.6% were married couples living together, 17.5% had a female householder with no husband present. The average household size was 2.14 and the average family size was 2.97. The owner occupied household is 36.1% while the rented household is 63.9%.

The Mechanicville Police Department responded to 4,664 calls for assistance in 2020. The average response time was 3 minutes or less for emergency calls and 5 minutes or less for non-emergency calls.

In alignment with Executive Order 203 the Police Reform Committee was made up of community members, stakeholders, nonprofits, elected officials, district attorney, public defender and the city attorney.

The Mechanicville Police Reform Committee created a Police Reform Page on the City of Mechanicville website where the public was able to keep informed about upcoming meetings, access the survey and results, as well as view recorded meetings. All meetings were scheduled at various times and days, open to the public via in person attendance or virtually. A social media page was also created in which all meeting information, survey and results were shared.

Throughout this process, we have sought to promote community engagement, foster and build trust, fairness and legitimacy and to address any bias and disproportionate policing in the City of Mechanicville.

## **City of Mechanicville Police Reform and Reinvention Collaboration**

We are submitting for approval the City of Mechanicville's response to Governor Andrew Cuomo's Executive Order 203 regarding police procedures.

We are extremely proud of the Mechanicville Police Department and their due diligence to review current police strategies, policies, procedures and practices. We are submitting this plan which will outline our initiatives to improve their operations.

We submit that the below information is a formalized collaborative plan that meets and/or exceeds all tenets contained in the Executive Order including suggestions, recommendations, modifications, modernizations and innovations that will be implemented and/or deployed within the City of Mechanicville Police Department.

We are providing this information to make it clear that the content of the police policy and procedures addressed in Executive Order 203 and demonstrate that the city is compliant with the order.

This collaborative plan will be submitted to the City of Mechanicville Council for ratification or adoption through local law or resolution prior to April 1, 2021.

## **Mission Statement**

We the Mechanicville Police Department members, are dedicated to protecting life and property and working with our citizens to reduce crime, disorder, and the fear of crime. Through community-oriented and problem-oriented policing, we will provide personalized police services with respect for human dignity according to the highest standards of professionalism, integrity, and accountability.

## **Vision**

We envision a future where law-abiding citizens feel safe and take pride and comfort in the quality of life in our community; a future where disorder and criminal activity continues to be vigorously and intelligently pursued. We envision our department as an excellent, service-oriented organization that incorporates innovative strategies, contemporary technologies, proven community policing philosophies, positive leadership, and efficient and effective use of resources in all organizational decisions.

## **Policy Manual**

The Mechanicville Police Department is currently updating their policy manual. All sections of the policy are written using Federal, State and Local best practices as guidance and in keeping with the standards of the NYS Police Training Council. The Mechanicville Police Department has contracted with Lexipol to ensure that their policies are updated properly as they work toward receiving NYS Accreditation.

## Training

Currently the Mechanicville Police Department has 3 trained in the Procedural Justice Training, the Chief William Rabbitt, Detective Sgt. Alex Dunn and Patrol Sgt. Matt Dunn. The Procedural Justice Training relies on the understanding that treating people with dignity and respect and giving citizens a voice during encounters promotes community trust.

The Mechanicville Police Department plans to advance, promote and offer annual updates/training in procedural justice. Currently the Mechanicville Police Department uses Police One Academy and Target Solutions for training of all officers. With the use of Police One Academy and Target Solutions they are capable to track when an officer has received training and when an officer is due for training.

The following is a list of current officers who are qualified as Trainers:

- Chief W. Rabbitt- General Topics and Firearms Instructor
- A Dunn- General Topics and Firearms Instructor
- M Dunn- General Topics and Taser Instructor
- J Pugliese- General Topics and Firearms Instructor
- M Abraham- General Topics and Domestic Violence Instructor
- W Roy- Master Instructor, Defensive Tactics, Reality Based Training, Suicide Prevention and Crisis Intervention, Firearms, Fundamental Crisis Intervention Skills for Law Enforcement, Aerosol Subject Restraint Instructor
- G Geoghegan- Master Instructor, DWI Detection and Standardized Field Sobriety Testing, Firearms, RADAR/LIDAR, Aerosol Subject Restraint Instructor.

## **Implicit Bias Training**

The Mechanicville Police Department receives Implicit Bias Training which addresses the automatic association people make between groups of people and stereotypes about these groups. Implicit Bias focuses on the thoughts or feelings about people that we are unaware of that can influence our own. Understanding how an Implicit Bias can affect our behavior and perception is the initial hurdle in reversing such bias.

It is the policy of our department to provide law enforcement services and to enforce the law equally, fairly, objectively and without discrimination toward any individual or group.

## **Use of Force: Policy 300**

The City of Mechanicville currently has a Use of Force Policy in place on the reasonableness of use, methods, techniques and circumstances and providing a definition of pertinent terms. In general, the MPD's policy is to use force only when necessary and only to the extent necessary with MPD officers trained in the latest methods and techniques to accomplish that task. The MPD most recent updates to the use-of-force policy reflect recent changes in State/Federal Law regarding carotid control hold. **Any officer who uses Use of Force will follow procedures for reporting in Policy 300.5**

## **Taser Use**

The MPD currently has all officers trained in taser use as well as Patrol Sgt Matt Dunn as a qualified trainer. The currently policy in place is to ensure that the appropriate use of said device should result in fewer injuries to officers and suspects.

## **De-escalation – Alternative Tactics**

The City of Mechanicville currently has a De-escalation Policy in place. It specifically states that “Only when circumstances reasonable permit, officers should use non-violent strategies and techniques to decrease the intensity of the situation, improve decision making, improve communication, reduce the need for force and increase voluntary compliance.” If during a situation the need arises that is outside of any MPD training or safety, the MPD has partnered with the Saratoga County Sheriff’s and the NYS Police to provide the needed assistance.

## **Body/Dash Cams Policy 504**

The Mechanicville Police Department in August of 2018 invested in body cams and has had in car dash cams for over 10 years. The current policy in place provides guidelines for the use of said portable devices.

## **Hot Spot Policing**

The MPD employs Hot-Spot Policing when they receive several complaints within a certain area of our community. These strategies focus on small geographic areas or places. Through Hot-Spot Policing strategies, the MPD can focus resources in these areas. If crime can be prevented at these hot spots, then citywide crime totals may be reduced. When appropriate, the department will endeavor to alert the community regarding crime patterns so as to engage community members to collaborate with the department in crime prevention and solving efforts.

## **Environmental Design Crime Prevention**

The City of Mechanicville and MPD will continue to advance and promote Crime Prevention through Environmental Design. This

approach will not just focus on beautification and code enforcement but a system wide approach to reducing crime, restoring safety, restoring the perception of safety in the collective community mindset and making an improvement to quality of life for the whole community.

### **Complaints/Compliments Policy 1010**

The MPD is currently working on the development of a new user friendly website. The website will include access to a complaint/compliments form that the public can use when they would like to file a complaint against an officer or share a time when one of the MPD officers has helped them.

Submitted forms are reviewed by the Chief of Police for action, then passed along to the Police Civilian Internal Affairs Review Commission.

### **Police Civilian Internal Affairs Review Commission**

According to the City of Mechanicville Charter Section 39.6 and 39.7 the Police Civilian Internal Affairs Review Commission was created in 1997. The Mayor oversees and assigns the members to the Commission. The Committee was active for a few years after its formation yet, upon information and belief, due to lack of complaints and referrals to the Committee, it is presently without voting membership.

### **The Purpose and scope.**

- A. In order to assure the public that police services are delivered in a lawful and nondiscriminatory manner, the public should be accorded participatory oversight of the police and their interaction with the citizenry. To this end, the Mayor and Council wish to structure citizen involvement as set forth in this article so that in the event that complaints are received regarding police



activities such complaints are reviewed and processed with the participation of citizen representatives. Citizen review, in conjunction with the police, of complaints against officers will assure that complaints are dealt with fairly and with due regard for officers and citizens equally.

- B. The Commission shall review all complaint investigations concerning members of the Police Department who are certified by the New York State Department of Municipal Police completed by the Internal Affairs Unit of the Police Department and subsequent investigations thereof related to alleged acts of excessive force, inappropriate use of firearms, discrimination, poor public relations and such other complaints as may be referred to it by the Mayor and/or the Chief of Police. The Commission shall also collect and review summary data on complaints received and report to the Mayor and Council any patterns which may merit further examination.

**§ 39-7. Membership; terms of office; meetings; officers.**

- A. There is hereby created a Police-Civilian Internal Affairs Review Commission consisting of seven (7) voting members to be appointed by the Mayor with consent of the Council. All members shall be residents of the City. Six (6) members shall be citizen members and one (1) shall be a member of the Mechanicville Police Benevolent Association (PBA) who shall be recommended by the PBA to the Mayor for appointment. Members shall, to the extent possible, be representative of the City's diversity of neighborhoods, races, and cultures, abilities, incomes and sexual orientations. No City Council members shall serve on the Commission.

- B. The original appointments to the Commission by the Mayor of the six (6) citizen members shall be for terms of one (1), two (2) and three (3) years, as designated by the Mayor. Thereafter, citizen members shall be appointed for a three (3)-year term.
  
- C. The original appointment to the Commission by the Mayor of the Mechanicville Police Benevolent Association representative shall be as recommended by a majority PBA vote, and he or she will serve one two-year term. No PBA member shall serve more than two (2) consecutive terms. No member of the PBA or his or her immediate family shall be eligible to serve as a citizen member.
  
- D. The Commission shall meet a minimum of quarterly and up to twice a month as determined by a majority of the Commission. The Commission shall elect a Chair and Vice Chair to preside over its proceedings and shall also elect a Secretary who will be responsible for the minutes of Commission meetings. The Commission Chair shall be elected from among the citizen members. Any costs associated with Commission minutes or paperwork involved will be borne by the Department of Public Safety.

### **Community Based Outreach**

The Mechanicville Police Department prides itself in Community-Based Outreach. Current collaborations include organizations that provide programs and activities within our community so that local participants may have access to services and information intended to create healthy community behaviors. Such collaborations and organizations include:

- The Mechanicville Area Community Services Center: Delivery of food to homeward bound Seniors, partner to provide Domestic

Violence Training and services for DV victims and Mental Health needs.

- The Mechanicville City School District: Participates in Active Shooting Scenarios, Youth Police Collaboration, Halloween Trunk/Treat, Provides support at sporting events.
- The Mechanicville District Public Library: Coffee with a Cop, Storytime participants, Halloween Safety instruction.
- Mechanicville Family Day Celebration provides a presence at the event, sets up a booth to distribute information.
- Mechanicville Stillwater Chamber of Commerce
- Mechanicville Stillwater Little League
- Mechanicville Stillwater Youth Soccer League
- Mechanicville Duck Day Event officers were participants in the Dunk a Cop booth.
- Mechanicville White Water Derby Event

## **Recommendations**

In conclusion of our findings the Mechanicville Police Reform and Reinvention Committee put forth the following recommendations for the Mechanicville Police Department.

- The Police Civilian Internal Affairs Review Commission will be restarted and the Mayor will exercise his authority and make appointments to be referred for approval by the City Council. The Committee, which was previously codified by the City, serves an important function which advances the purposes of Executive Order 203.
- The MPD Chief will provide semi-yearly updates to the community about the continued progress regarding police reforms and best practices.

- Encourage the Chief of the Mechanicville Police Department to continue to study and implement training and programs related to topics such as Diversity, Cultural Education and Bias.
- The Mechanicville Police Department will continue to work toward NYS Accreditation.
- The Mechanicville Police Department will maintain and update their own user friendly website.
- The Mechanicville Police Department will continue to promote community outreach.

We appreciate this opportunity to provide key details of what the City of Mechanicville Police Department is committed to serve the public in an equitable and just manner.

## **Attachments**

Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative Committee PowerPoint

Mechanicville Police Reform & Reinvention Collaboration Survey  
Results