

Town of Olive

Olive Community Policing Task Force

Plan of Action

March 4, 2021

Plan of Action Findings

Overview

The Town of Olive Community Policing Task Force (OCPTF) was convened in August, 2020 by Supervisor Jim Sofranko to perform a comprehensive review of the Town of Olive Police Department. This review, mandated by NYS Executive Order #203, required all local governments with a police department to develop and enact a policing reform plan. The reform plan is to include any modifications and innovations to current police deployment policies and procedures based on the specific public safety needs of the community. The Executive Order calls for the plan to also include policies and procedures that promote trust, fairness, accountability, and transparency, and which seek to reduce any racial disparities in policing.

Members of the Olive Community Policing Task Force

Resident Dafne DeJesus	Resident Keith McGlynn
Town Board Member Victoria Read	Olive Police Chief Sean Ryan
Resident Ana Silva	Olive Supervisor Jim Sofranko
Pastor Karen Squires	Resident Byron Utley
Additional Contributors:	
Onteora School Resource Officer, Tom Sharon	
Olive Police Commissioner, Robert Krause	

Olive Community Policing Task Force Meetings

The OCPTF followed the guidelines of the NYS Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative issued by Governor Cuomo in August, 2020. Seven meetings of the task force were held from August 2020 through January 2021. During the initial meetings, the Policies and Procedures of the Town of Olive Police Department was shared with the task force to foster a better understanding how the department currently operates. Subsequent meetings opened up an ongoing dialogue examining the existing police policies, community policing, responses to mental health and substance abuse calls, police training, public engagement, the school resource officer, and community outreach which led to a better understanding of the daily challenges experienced by the police department.

In later meetings, the dialogue continued with discussion on public perceptions and misconceptions of policing in the town. Areas of potential bias, race-based fears, or simple misunderstandings, all of which could potentially escalate situations with more serious consequences, were examined and discussed. These dialogues, although difficult at times, most often resulted in a helpful understanding of our individual perceptions and those of others.

The ongoing work of the chief, the department, and police commission was recognized by the task force as highly professional and demanding. It should be noted that during the course of this process the OCPTF came to recognize the existing Policies and Procedures of the Town of Olive Police Department were current, admirable in their depth, and legally protective for all parties. The task force was satisfied with how the policies and procedures were implemented by the Police Chief, Police Commission and police department.

The ongoing dialogue also gave the residents on the task force an opportunity to voice their experiences, concerns, and perceptions to the police representatives. The discussion included examining the value in having a local police department who know their community and respond accordingly. Also discussed were police one-on-one engagements with the public, the fears and anxiety that may occur during those brief initial moments of engagement, and how to de-escalate those fears. The task force had conversations about issues of racial, gender, disability, cultural, and economic bias and the training needed to overcome bias. Another concern was the lack of diversity on the police force and the difficulties a small part-time police force has in attracting a diverse workforce. It was suggested the Policies and Procedures Mission Statement be edited to include additional inclusive language. The use of force, body cameras, availability to submit a complaint, mental health response, substance abuse response were also discussed throughout process. The residents expressed a desire for better public information, transparency, and outreach with the public to better communicate the role of the Olive Police Department.

Public Meetings

The public was invited to an online meeting on December 30, 2020 to share their views and comments. The meeting announcement was published in the local newspaper, the Olive Police Facebook page, and the Town of Olive website. A few additional online resources shared information about the public meeting. The Olive Community Policing Task Force listened to residents' concerns during the meeting about policing in the town. Much of the meeting was informative, and as questions arose, the task force shared their knowledge of the Policies and Procedures with the public and expressed the Town Board's commitment to Community Policing. The role of surrounding police jurisdictions was discussed as some residents inquired as to the need for a local police department. Increased public outreach and better public communication became an essential part of the Plan of Action as a result of this meeting.

A draft Plan of Action was presented and discussed by the OCPTF at its January 25, 2021 meeting. An updated draft Plan of Action was developed from discussions, meeting notes, and public input. It was posted on the town website for public review on February 15, 2021. An online public meeting was held on March 3, 2021 to hear input from the public on the draft Plan of Action.

The final OCPTF Plan of Action was created from notes, observations, input from the Olive Police Commission and public during the meetings of the Olive Community Policing Task Force since August 2020. The NYS Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative mandates the Town Board approve the plan and submit it to New York State by April 1, 2021.

The final OCPTF Plan of Action will be formally presented to the Olive Town Board at its March 9, 2021 meeting in order to meet the state deadline.

Plan of Action

March 4, 2021

- 1) Establish better communication with the public as to the role of the Olive Police Commission. Be clear to convey that the Police Commission is comprised of town residents whose duties include accepting and accounting for any complaints received in regards to the Town of Olive Police Department. The contact information of the Police Commissioners and Town Supervisor should be made easily available to the public. The public should be assured all complaints are confidential and will be acted upon.

- 2) Direct the Police Chief to establish a method of utilizing body camera footage for ongoing random review and training. All police officers are to be frequently reminded that existing policy requires cameras be turned on during all interactions with the public. The initial seconds of any police interaction with the public will likely determine the tone and outcome of that interaction. Review of and constructive criticism of the footage will hopefully create a better understanding of the perceptions created during these interactions in order to help alleviate or de-escalate any initial fears or tensions in future public engagements.

- 3) Direct the Police Chief to encourage more robust interactions with the community to strengthen community policing. Routinely have officers visit businesses, talk to residents and engage with visitors. Require police personnel to attend public events such as Olive Day, sporting events, scouting events, business events, school events, and library events. Establish a periodic Coffee-With-A-Cop at local cafes, a mystery reader in schools or library, and an Olive Recreation event to engage with our children.

- 4) Direct the Police Chief to assign an officer as Social Media Coordinator for the Olive Police Facebook page. Suggest a modest stipend for the continuous work of updating the page. Include public information such as weather events, road closings, emergency contact information, and sharing public information from DEP, DEC, NOAA, Ulster County, NYS, etc. Also promote community events the Olive Police will be attending and include the report of the calls responded to each month.

- 5) Direct the Police Chief or Commission to have business cards designed for the Olive Police Department with officer's name, Police Commission contact information, town website info, non-emergency dispatch phone number and emergency 911 phone number. It is to be encouraged that the cards be distributed by officers during public engagements.

- 6) Direct the Police Commission to adopt the Mission Statement of the Policy and Procedures of the Olive Police Department as rewritten by the Community Policing Task Force to be more racially sensitive and inclusive. (see attached)

- 7) Direct the Police Chief to increase inherent bias and racial sensitivity training. Find additional resources for such training and continue to work with Ulster County Sheriff Department for ongoing training. Continue to seek diversity in hiring.

8) Create an annual Town Hall meeting with the Olive Police, Police Commission, Town Board and community to share ideas, review the Plan of Action, and to increase community involvement and public education.

9) Advocate to Ulster County for more trained mental health responders to assist the Town of Olive Police during calls for mental health, substance abuse, domestic disputes, homelessness, and acts of violence.

Town of Olive Police Department

Policy Manual

TOWN OF OLIVE POLICE MISSION STATEMENT

The Town of Olive Police Department's Mission is to protect and serve the public. In carrying out this mission, we should cooperate as a team to make certain that the citizens of Olive are afforded the best protection and service we can give them and to provide safety and improved quality of life in our community through excellence in policing.

In furtherance of our mission, it will be the responsibility of all members and employees to perform their duties in a manner which will ensure that the following goals and values of the administration of this department are achieved.

1. To care about the people and the community we serve. We are proud of the Department and the services we provide. We recognize the importance of all Department members and treat each other with fairness, loyalty, and respect.

2. To obey the law and respect the *human dignity* of all people. We are committed to honesty and ethical behavior in all our actions. We accept individual responsibility and accountability for our actions and decisions. It is well recognized that all people to varying degrees are implicitly biased. We are committed to continuing to examine our implicit biases in our effort to treat all persons equally.

3. To strive for excellence in the service we provide. We are committed to excellence in our personal performance and professionalism. We are committed to the community we serve.

4 To maintain and enhance the confidence and trust of the people we serve, continually strengthening and expanding the partnerships between law enforcement and the community, more fully involving the community in identifying problems, developing solutions, and establishing relevant Department priorities and policies in an collaborative effort; effectively resolving the problems of the community we serve while protecting life and property. We are committed to enhancing our ability to understand, communicate with and effectively interact with persons of all cultures, races, and backgrounds.

5. To provide a genuine atmosphere of security for people in the community of all races, ethnicities, national origins, genders, sexual orientations, religions, income, ages and abilities