



VILLAGE OF HASTINGS-ON-HUDSON

Municipal Building

7 Maple Avenue

Hastings-on-Hudson, New York 10706

Police Reform and Reinvention Task Force

Process Public Comments

The following comments were received during the Task Force's process of gathering, analyzing, and compiling information contained in the Draft Reform Plan that was presented on February 16, 2021 to the Board of Trustees.

These comments were submitted via the web form on the Police Reform and Reinvention Task Force webpage, by email to policereform@hastingsgov.org, through regular mail, or through use of the drop boxes outside Village Hall, the Library, or the James Harmon Community Center.

The comments are arranged in no particular order in this document.

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Response to question3...I'm so worried about teenage boys, in their developmental stage they may struggle with wanting to be in control of their lives, and side effect can be disrespecting authority figures and can lead to "arrests" which affect the rest of their life. How to focus/train officers on de-escalating situations with teens and being very aware of the risk of creating a record to the rest of an adolescents' life, focus on finding alternatives to that to protect our vulnerable teenage boys.

Question2:Basketball courts@ reynolds.Great way to get to know the kids and facilitate the interaction with kids coming from other areas,maybe be involved to organize a league.Several boys have gotten their cellphones stolen there over the yrs.police presence could help keep everyone honest.

Politicians that dreamed up this nonsense need reform - NOT the Hastings PD.....Be very good to your local police- they are the only thing standing between you and anarchy.....

You have solicited public comments on the draft report on police reform, but nowhere can I find the draft report to comment upon. I therefore conclude that YOU DON'T REALLY WANT COMMENTS.

I find this deplorable.

Hello,

Thank you for taking the time to consider police reform.

I am sorry that I have not been involved more directly, but would like to enter this email as a public comment.

I believe there is so much to consider when we think of the safety and security of our community and our police officers are very important in this.

I'd love to suggest that we think of safety and security more broadly, with police playing a role in a larger support network. There's an excellent article in The Atlantic that talks about "unbundling" the police...not, defund (what department has ever wanted that?!? :)but to parse out the roles appropriately and fund accordingly.

Link of web based tool on page 8 is not working- "page no longer exists"

The opening of the introduction leads one to believe that the death of George Floyd was not a direct result of police action: "Pursuant to Governor Cuomo's Executive Order No. 203 following the police-involved death of George Floyd,..." The sentence should read "Pursuant to Governor Cuomo's Executive Order No. 203 following the murder of George Floyd, by police. Language matters. Police officer Chauvin killed George Floyd while his 'brother' officers enabled the murder. If we are not willing to speak in truthful terms there is little hope and more "George Floyds" will be killed by the police.

Hello-

I am a former HHS student and wanted to add a few things that I think were really crucial in community relations between the Police and local teenagers. Something I always found to be really essential was Chief Bloomer's attitude with us. He made an incredibly strong effort to build relationships with us in a way that I have not experienced since. His efforts always seemed to be centered around keeping kids out of trouble, talking things through, and figuring things out with kids prone to bad behavior, kids at risk of more serious issues, and kids having conflicts with each other. He avoided involving parents or other authorities, and he was someone we trusted- an authority figure that wasn't fixated on getting us in trouble and punishing us for mistakes. It was all centered around friendly meetings, conversations, and a very caring and kind attitude I have never experienced with the police. Other officers, like officer Gagliardi, seemed to genuinely understand and respect us as teenagers- it never felt like they were out to get us, and always were reasonable. I noticed there was a pretty massive shift with that after Chief Bloomer retired and a new chief took over. The efforts of outreach seemed to massively shrink, the police began to crack down more (in arrests, chasing kids through the woods, etc) and it built an animosity between the students and the officers. I noticed kids actively acting out, committing more vandalism, smashing bottles, being super rowdy and

Adeel Mirza is an Assistant District Attorney.
This should be changed on the list.

To: Police Reform & Reinvention Task Force Public Forum, 11/5/20

From: Jennifer Miller

In light of rising crime rates in the NY Metropolitan area plus the national movement to blame every problem on police officers, I would think that our local police and police families need more support than ever. What does this community need to know about the emotional trauma experienced by all first responders? How can we raise public awareness about this? What resources do we need to provide to police and police families in these difficult times?

Questions for the November 5 Police Reform & Reinvention Task Force Public Forum

1. What can Hastings residents do to show support and appreciation for the law enforcement officers in this community?
2. What should Hastings residents do if we find that our schools are perpetuating false, anti-police messages to our children? Should this be reported to village officials or to law enforcement?
3. Given the heightened threat to the health and safety of American law enforcement officers in 2020 (e.g. Over 43 police officers have been murdered this year), do our local police require additional legal protections, equipment, tools, communication technology, or safety training?
4. Will anti-cop hate speech or false accusations be permitted in this community?
5. To what extent has the Village of Hastings-on-Hudson researched the issue of policing and police brutality so that actions and policies are based on sound research rather than mass hysteria?

I wish to submit these questions anonymously to avoid having my family targeted by local anti-police activists

The police needs to be trained in mental health issues and how to deal with them.

Police officers are not militant officials. They are civil servants like those of the fire departments and teachers. They are not above the law.

Small villages like Hastings should not militarize its police force.

Black Lives Matter is not the same as Blue Lives Matter because the police are not a race of people.

Police officers should be neutral in the manner in which they express their political allegiance.

Police officers should spend more time in training.

Nov 16, 2020

Dear Police Appreciation Committee,

I once called 911 because I heard a pop in a light fixture, smelled something burning, and thought that there might be an electrical fire in the walls of my old house. A police officer was in my house in what seemed like 60 seconds. He then coordinated the efforts of nearly 15 more first responders who appeared within minutes. It was a moving and powerful experience to watch people I had never met dash to rescue my house and my family in the middle of the night. They were like superheroes to me. And I know that they would do the same thing if the situation were more dire.

I believe that we should protect and care for our first responders to the same extent that they protect and care for us. Thank you to all village leaders and to the members of this committee for standing by the Hastings Police Department in these difficult times.

Regards,

Kristen Webb

Date: 11/27/2020

To: Committee to reform and reimagine law enforcement

From: Jenna Steinberg

Re: public comments

To whom it may concern,

Now that we have given the public an opportunity to comment freely on their perceptions of Hastings Police Department, it seems appropriate, fair, and logical to allow the police department to comment on their perceptions of the public.

For example, are Hastings residents reasonable in their expectations of what the police can and should do? Is the public informed about policing to the degree necessary to make useful comments about police policy? Has the public been socialized to follow our laws and to respect the difficult job law enforcement officers? Does the public show appreciation and respect for first responders who often put their own health and safety at risk for us? Are there areas where Hastings residents can improve as citizens of this village?

I feel that these are pressing questions that should be addressed.

Sincerely,

Jenna Steinberg

Dear Police Reform Committee,

The vast majority of comments made in the first public forum seem to imply that, overall, there is great public support for a job well done. I heard no evidence of wrongdoing or a lack of professionalism. In the absence of evidence that there is a problem with our police department, why would the public reimagine it? Perhaps the committee should acknowledge that we are lucky to have good leadership and professionalism in policing.

I would also ask that the committee strongly consider this question as you move forward with your work: How do we protect our local police from false accusations or other abuses by the public? I have been very saddened to watch young Americans use targeted harassment and violence towards innocent police officers, all over the country, for the past 5 months. Shame on us for allowing this to go on and on.

Yours Truly,

Bill McArthur

December 2020

To the Members of the Police Reform and Reinvention Task Force:

Thank you for soliciting comments from the community regarding the important work of your task force. I appreciate this chance to share my thoughts and your willingness to take them into consideration.

My comments fall into several categories:

1. Hiring trained, skilled alternate (non-armed) responders:

Across the nation, we have seen that police are too often called upon to deal with situations for which they do not have specific and thorough training. All too often, these situations have turned violent and even lethal. I believe we should hire people trained in the mental health fields to deal with people having mental health crises, drug-induced behaviors, or homeless people in need of help. Trained, unarmed responders can be very effective in these situations and take the burden off police departments. It is crucial that these sorts of professionals are hired by our police department or by the county, if that is more feasible. A team of skilled professionals specifically set up to deal with such crises is what we need.

2. Potential militarization of local police forces:

Again, observing what has happened around the country, I am concerned by various efforts to militarize police forces. I have seen traces of this tendency here in Hastings. These happened in the past and are perhaps no longer be relevant, but I mention them here to demonstrate ways that this issue can touch our small village.

- During a Village Board of Trustees meeting, the former police chief advocated for buying vehicles large enough to hold riot gear. This seemed to me an unnecessary and frightening request.
- Like other residents, I was alarmed by the past decision to station sharpshooters on the roofs of village buildings during the Memorial Day parade, and my family avoided the event because of this.
- I urge you to resist any efforts to militarize our local force through weaponry, vehicles, equipment, etc.

3. Collection of information/surveillance:

I was disturbed when the HOH PD sent out an email this year asking folks with home surveillance systems like the Amazon RING if they would be willing to share footage with the department upon request. It was stated that the police were hoping to create a database of these cameras. I am opposed to this or other forms of surveillance of Hastings residents.

4. Some suggestions as to how our police department could feel more friendly/approachable to the community (community policing):

- Police officers in bulletproof vests are intimidating.
- Police officers in cars with tinted windows are intimidating.
- The HOH PD headquarters in the municipal building is not welcoming. The office and officers are completely sealed off from the public as though we are somehow threatening or at least a nuisance, and the lack of a friendly greeting makes simply going to renew a parking permit feel like a daunting task.

5. Police Reform and Reinvention procedure:

I commend your efforts to reach as broad a segment of our population as possible. As you've noted in meetings, not everyone feels comfortable making comments and suggestions on a public Zoom call or even in an email. Ombudsmen for different groups (youth, immigrants, minority residents, the less wealthy among us) could be very useful in helping people talk frankly, knowing that their opinions and experiences will be represented to the task force for consideration without attribution.

I'd further like to suggest that non-police members of the committee arrange meetings to facilitate honest and open communication. Even though community-police relations are generally good in Hastings, having an officer in the conversation dampens people's comfort at speaking freely. There should be room in this reform and reimagination process for meetings with and without police presence in order to make your task force's work as fruitful as possible for all.

Once again, thank you all for your hard work on this important effort, and for taking the time to consider my thoughts on the matter.

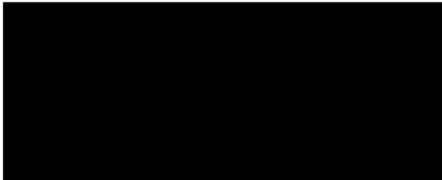
December 10, 2020

Dear Police Reform Committee members:

I would like to request that the following be included in your final report.

Thank you very much for considering this.

Nick Mottern



1. EQUIPMENT/TECHNOLOGY/ARMAMENT

- a. Please report on whether police are equipped with tasers, body cameras, drones pepper spray or other chemical restraints, and the number, make, model of the various items; please make public the policies that are in place for the use of these items. Please report if the police are considering or planning to obtain any of these items, and if so, publicize the specific policies that will govern their use. Please also report on the specific makes and types of weapons possessed by the police, and provide specific policies governing the circumstances under which each weapon may be employed.
- b. Please make a recommendation on whether, and to what degree, the police should use mass data platforms, such as Evidence.com for the collection, sorting and retrieval of police information and what information should be made available to police through computer links in police cruisers. Please make a recommendation on what, if any, services police should purchase on a monthly basis from mass data platforms and whether police should purchase services from firms using facial recognition technology.
- c. Please provide current and potential cost information on the various pieces of equipment and services mentioned above.
- d. Please recommend whether the Board of Trustees should vote to approve the purchase of specific equipment and services listed above as well as policies for their use.

2. USE OF PHYSICAL FORCE

Please publish the specific policies followed by police in the use of physical force, for instance with respect to use of choke holds and other life-threatening forms of restraint. Please make recommendations on how these policies might be changed or improved, if

you feel it is necessary. Please report the training that police receive on the use of physical force and additional training that may be needed in order to safeguard the public and police.

3. RACIAL CONCERNS

- a. Please include in your report a list of trainings used by police to ensure that the civil and human rights of people of color are fully respected, and please provide computer links so that the public may view these trainings.
- b. Please make recommendations of how the public can comment, publicly or in confidence, on these trainings and, periodically, on any new trainings that are used going forward beyond the final report of the committee.

4. SURVEILLANCE

- a. Please report on whether the police have been, or are, involved in any political surveillance, either independently or in cooperation within any county, state or federal agency. Please make recommendations with respect to prohibition of such surveillance, including aerial surveillance.

In relation to political activity, please make recommendations on steps that can be taken by the Board of Trustees and police to ensure that residents will not be subject to intimidation, interrogation, detention or assault by local police and any outside agency in connection with their political activities, including exercising their First Amendment rights.

- b. Please report on the police plan that existed, or may exist, to engage residents with Ring or other home surveillance devices in providing video information to police. Please make recommendations with respect to this type of surveillance as well as installation of police video cameras, traffic light cameras and the use of Sting Ray or other types of electronic surveillance equipment.

5. EMOTIONAL AND PHYSICAL STRESS

Please report on, and make recommendations with respect to, services that are readily available to police, if any, to assist them, and their families, with emotional and physical stress related to their work and how the cost of these services are covered. And, are police encouraged to make use of these services?

6. CITIZEN COMPLAINTS

Please report on what is the point of contact in village government for complaints about police conduct and which officials make decisions on what corrective action is taken as a result of complaints. Please make recommendations if you feel this is necessary.

Anthony Costantini

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, November 05, 2020 4:49 PM
To: policereform
Subject: short letter for tonight
Attachments: police reform.docx

I am attaching a letter for tonight's meeting. I seem to have lost the email with the zoom link. If I can't get on could you read the attached?

Thanks in advance,
Priscilla Prutzman

--
Priscilla Prutzman

[REDACTED]

- Paramilitary equipment (e.g., surplus military gear). (There are SWAT teams outside the village that can be called on if necessary.)
- Excessive surveillance technology (think China, where everybody is tracked and evaluated continuously).

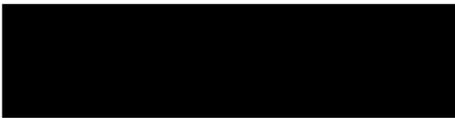
I realize that the state of New York demanded every community with a police department to investigate police reform, so Hastings must do so.

But It would not bother me in the least if the conclusion of the Hastings police-reform initiative were that Hastings is blessed with an excellent police force and that no "reform" or "reinvention" is required.

Police share something with airline pilots: most days are routine, but every once in a while a harrowing situation develops that requires life-or-death decisions. How would you like to be a police person's spouse or kids, wondering every day whether Daddy/Mommy is OK? Constantly seeing police berated on TV? It's no wonder that police are taking early retirement across the country.

How about expressing some gratitude for the essential role the police play in our village and how well they do it, year in and year out?

Robert K. Elliott



Anthony Costantini

From: Clifford Steiner [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, November 02, 2020 8:07 AM
To: policereform
Subject: Police reform

Good morning,

My name is Clifford Steiner. I grew up in Hastings and moved back 10-years ago to care for my aging Mother. Over the years the Hastings police have assisted me several times when my Mother fell and I could not pick her up by myself. I love the Hastings Police Department and I'm not interested in de-funding the department. However, there are several changes I would like to make. Less time by the police indoors at the station and more time paroling the roads. There's a high instance daily of reckless driving and speeding that goes unchecked. Also, I would like to see the police on foot in the village. I'm not a fan of spending taxpayer dollars on police Motorcycles, bikes, or other unnecessary equipment.

Thank you for your time.

Regards,

Cliff

Anthony Costantini

From: Liam Cawley [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, January 05, 2021 11:24 AM
To: policereform

Hastings PD does a great job and I am very happy to have them in my community. They don't need to be "reformed."
They are underpaid and under appreciated.

-Liam Cawley

Sent from my iPhone

Anthony Costantini

From: Lorin Finkelstein [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, December 21, 2020 4:18 PM
To: policereform
Subject: Police Task Force

1. What training would you like to see our police officers take?

First off I want to say I love our police and the chief. We live in a great community and for the most part feel pretty safe. We have lived in the town for almost 20 years and thankfully have never heard about or seen anything like we are seeing in other parts of the country.

I am not an expert in these areas and it is really unfair to make recommendations. I do not know what the current Police training entails. Therefore I would ask, is there any current training or current requirements in de-escalation, reading a scene, and/or non-lethal forms of apprehending suspects. I realize these are 3 separate areas that most likely require separate training and expertise, but seems like these could be looked at for law enforcement as a whole.

I realize an officer's life is also in potential danger at ANY MOMENT and that split second decisions need to be made, but too often the scene seems to go from 0 to 100 so quickly that it's no wonder both officers and citizens are being hurt. There are hundreds of examples.

These types of incidents, for the most part, don't take place in our sleepy little town. But if they did and it was your kid having an "episode" in the Food Town Parking lot or your father selling loose cigarettes in front of the Stationary Store, I would hope our responding officers would have the training and equipment to enforce the law and make EVERYONE safe.

We don't need to defund the police, we need to spend more money. More money or training, outreach to the community and effective, non-lethal strategies when engaging citizens for non-violent crimes.

2. Where would a police presence be helpful in the community?

Keeping the streets safe. The drivers in this town and others that use our tight little streets to navigate around whatever traffic they are fighting need to be taken to task. Someone is going to get killed walking there dog or riding their bike. Want to make a difference? Spend a month giving tickets for the stop sign on Kent and Ravensdale or a speed trap on Farragut Parkway by Amjos. Its like an F1 race when the cars come off Farragut and onto The Fenway. The radar signs do nothing. tickets and points on a license, that's another story.

How about ticketing the people in Hillside Woods that have their dogs off leash? I heard a dog chased and drowned a deer in Sugar Pond. Seriously? Someone's child is going to get hurt.

Sure community outreach and coffee with a cop is important, but so is action when it comes to the safety of the residents. This is what small town police departments are supposed to do. Our town needs a reputation that if you drive fast on our streets or have your dog off the leash you are going to get a ticket!!

3. How can youth and police officers interact positively?

Have there been incidents where the youth of HOH and the police have had negative interactions? Again, unless I'm missing something the biggest issue with the kids is driving too fast and partying in the woods. There is no gang activity, large scale drug dealing, situations where the police are encountering the kids of HOH in a situation that would require anything like we are seeing on TV.

Coffee with a cop is great for the adults in the community. I like that. Think it good for the adults, but you are not going to relate to the kids that way. Maybe the younger police officers have a better chance at breaking through, but again what's the issue??!

4. What equipment and technology would best serve our community? Drones. I personally don't see enough patrolling of the neighborhood we live in. There are reports every week of break in and vandalism etc.. We have a ring camera that alerts every time a car drives by. We really don't see the police cars often enough. I guess it's hard and not fun to drive around all day patrolling the town. So why not get a few drones. It would make patrolling easier, probably more cost effective and who doesn't want to fly a drone!!

--

Lorin Finkelstein

Anthony Costantini

From: Jeremy Galland [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, November 06, 2020 7:21 AM
To: policereform
Subject: Police reform

I believe that police, firefighters and teachers all have contracts that specify a full work week of less than 40 hours.

Since your committee is only focused on policing, (and Hastings firefighters and Ambulance Corp are a unpaid volunteer amazing group) this email is solely about the Hastings police contract.

Do our police earn their annual salaries based on a 32 hour work week? Or is it a 35 or 36 hour work week?

Significant savings and reallocation might be possible if a more standard 40 hour work week was required. Could we eliminate through attrition 3-5 police positions? Village tax revenue could then be redirected or reduced.

If this committee is replying to emails, I would appreciate knowing if what I wrote was materially inaccurate.

Thank you

Jeremy Galland

Anthony Costantini

From: Lisa Eggert Litvin [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, November 05, 2020 11:22 AM
To: policereform
Cc: Joel
Subject: Comment for Nov. 5 forum on Policing in HOH (we are unable to attend)

Dear Task Force,

We write in response to your recent email, asking us to share our thoughts about policing in Hastings.

We have lived here for 16 years, and throughout this time, our Police have been here to advise us, help us out, and protect us. They gave us suggestions on how to improve the safety of our house; they helped us navigate all the road work in front of our house as we couldn't move around so well because of a recent back surgery; when we were out of town, they made sure our house remained safe after a tree fell on our ConEd meter and started a small fire while no one was home. And so much more.

In sum, we are grateful and supportive of the selfless and dedicated work our Police Force provides for our Village.

Sincerely,
Lisa and Joel Litvin
[REDACTED]

Sent from my iPad

Anthony Costantini

From: Susan Cooper [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, November 05, 2020 12:13 PM
To: policereform
Subject: comment on police reform

Hello,

It is time to begin the process of consolidating the various police departments within the town of Greenburgh. The cost savings could be utilized in ways to better benefit the communities and due to the high numbers of police in these areas, consolidation would not mean a lower level of safety. I have seen several police officers at various times in bullet proof vests monitoring outdoor dining and Friday night live events. This is one example amongst others that seems so excessive in terms of cost and necessity. We remain in a pandemic with many out of work and the burden of the high cost of living in Westchester County. While other departments (and schools as well) could also look at consolidating, beginning with police consolidation would be timely and past due.

Thank You,

Susan Cooper
[REDACTED]

Anthony Costantini

From: Patricia Rodriguez [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, November 05, 2020 5:22 PM
To: policereform
Subject: hastings pd

I have been living in Hastings since 1973, and in all this time I have experienced only the finest, professional and caring interactions with the Hastings police officers. I want the Reform and Reinvention Committee to know that, while it is always beneficial to explore ways to improve, our police department is one of the reasons I have felt safe and happy here for over 40 years. Sincerely, Pat Rodriguez. 381 Farragut Ave.

Anthony Costantini

From: Gerald B. Dixon [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, November 04, 2020 11:00 AM
To: policereform
Subject: Hastings Police

I'm surprised that there is an implication that our Hastings Police need reform.

My own experience (we've lived here 57 years) with our police has been positive. Every member of the police has been courteous, helpful, in fact kind.

Is this issue one of a "broad brush" treatment, given the current national picture or have other villagers reported negative experiences?

I hope that encouragement, praise, and appreciation get emphasized.

Gerald Dixon

Anthony Costantini

From: Nancy Maleska [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, November 05, 2020 5:27 PM
To: policereform
Subject: HOH Police Dept.

Just wanted to put in my two cents regarding our Police Department. On a whole, they have always been professional and helpful whenever I encountered anyone on the force. Of course I have had my favorites over the many years that I lived here in HOH, and I can't say a bad thing about them. I love the fact that we have had at least one woman on the force in years past and now so many more. I think it is wonderful that we have a diverse police force as well. The reaching out that the Dept. does in hosting the coffee with a cop is important too. A uniform may be intimidating at first but once you get to talk to them you realize that they are just good people here to help you & your community.

Keep up the good work.

Sincerely,
Nancy Maleska
[REDACTED]