

Mayor's Column
November 2, 2020

At the direction of Governor Cuomo, the Village is in the process of performing “a comprehensive review of current police force deployment, strategies, policies, procedures and practices with a goal of developing a plan to improve where necessary for the purposes of addressing the particular needs of the community served by such police agency and promote community engagement to foster trust, fairness and legitimacy and to address any racial bias and disproportionate policing of communities of color.”

The next phase of the Villages plan is to solicit community opinion. To accomplish this, we have planned two community meetings scheduled for November 10 and November 17. Plans as to time and transmission are in formation, as due to COVID, they will not be in person meetings.

The Police Community Relations Committee (PCRC) has been charged with specific responsibilities which are listed on the Village website under the PCRC tab. We welcome input related to these specific tasks at BronxvillePCRC@vobny.com. The email address will be active through November and we will collect the input and discuss it as a committee in December as we develop the Village's plan.

General questions about the police department or Village issues should be directed to Sgt14@vobpd.com or mayor@vobny.com.

As background, the following is a thumb nail sketch of our department to use as a point of reference for community discussion.

Department Overview

Our police force, from an historic high of 28 officers, now has 21 in total. On each one of the three daily shifts, we have two police cars with one officer each patrolling the village as well as an officer manning the central phone system. When funds are available, we add foot and bicycle patrols and traffic enforcement. Of the 21 officers, two are female, two are of Hispanic lineage and speak fluent Spanish, one is of Jamaican descent and one is African-American. All six of these officers have been hired during the tenure of Chief Satriale and our senior trustees, resulting in one of the most diverse police departments in the county. On average, we have approximately 3300 calls to the police department yearly. Approximately 90% of all arrests result from calls asking for assistance, be it

shoplifting, burglary etc. As example, a staffer from one of our businesses may call and ask us to apprehend a shoplifter in their store. In the past 13+ years, with an average of 3300 calls, we have had zero false arrest claims.

Cameras

The village truly led the way in having a unified system of cameras dispersed throughout the Village for well over five years now. Our officers are great proponents of the camera system as they not only help the village and neighboring communities but also serve to document the actions of our police officers as well. Early on, our officers actively requested to wear body cameras. They asked for no contract concessions or any special arrangements and have been wearing them for seven months now.

Training

Of our 21 officers, 12 have been certified as Youth Officers and two additional officers are certified as School Resource Officers, requiring an even higher level of training. As a result, we have a valued presence at the Bronxville Public School. Sergeant Nicholas De Young is also on the school district-wide Safety Committee which meets monthly. We have also added what we call park and walks, particularly around the business district and our public schools, with the goal to enhance the connection and strengthen the relationship with our businesses and particularly with our schools and their students.

Our officers have also completed elder abuse training and all participate in countywide in-service training at the County Police Academy including de-escalation training. Some of our ranking officers have also been a part of an FBI program at Princeton University which teaches leadership and proper supervision of fellow officers. Additionally, our second in command of the department is an attorney. Eleven of our officers are New York State Certified Instructors and conduct our own in-service training programs. One of our officers came to us as a certified EMT and she has trained all her fellow officers in first aid, CPR and use of defibrillators. In January of this year, our officers saved the life of a gentleman in cardiac arrest as a result of their exceptional training and equipment. In addition, all officers have received specialized training in the use of Narcan as they carry it on every tour and have had to utilize it on several occasions.

Our department also joined a program started by a New Rochelle police detective who has an autistic son called Christopher's Voice to understand the reactions of

persons in distress who may need a specialized response. As a result of participating in this program, our officers are now equipped with backpacks which have items within that serve to soothe and calm autistic children when interacting with police. In a local department initiative, we have created what we call a special-needs file to address the local needs of our children and adults who are challenged in any way. Parents and family members have given us pictures, medical needs and personality tendencies of Village residents who may become lost, disoriented or just in distress and need a very different and specialized response.

In addition, as a result of the great cooperation and mutual respect we have as a government and a police force, in the most recent contract negotiations, our officers voluntarily offered the village a second full unpaid workday to take further training with no request for a quid pro quo give back.

Weapons Training

Weapons and Taser training is required of all of our officers once each year in accordance with New York State Law. Per our village department regulations, our officers train two to three times yearly, which is well above standards. Our police force has also purchased many tools that progressive police departments have in order to avoid using deadly physical force including many less than lethal options. These include pepper spray, a pepper ball gun, Tasers and beanbag rounds. We consider purchasing any items developed that aid in avoiding deadly physical force and de-escalating an encounter.

According to our Department's policy, use of force encompasses even the removal of a gun or Taser from its holster. Every officer must report their actions and an internal investigation is conducted by the officer's supervisor for final review by a Lieutenant and ultimately the Chief of Police. This includes review of body and street cameras.

In Chief Satriale's tenure, there have been zero of use of excessive force complaints, no racial discrimination assertions and no lawsuits claiming false arrest.

As Trustees of the Village, along with our three colleagues, we are also designated as Police Commissioners and are privy to much confidential information. In this role, we oversee and approve department policies and manuals. Our Village policies go far beyond what is required by state and national standards.

We are now preparing to implement Governor Cuomo's new Executive Order forming a community panel of all Village stakeholders that would promote the protection of civil rights for all.

We invite any interested resident to reach out for additional information. Based on the above training, leadership and outcomes, we have never seen a unit perform their jobs with more adherence to protocol and the high standards required. We stand in awe of their dedication and service and write this with well earned respect and gratitude.

Mayor Mary Marvin

Deputy Mayor Robert Underhill