

VILLAGE OF BRONXVILLE
POLICE COMMUNITY RELATIONS COMMITTEE
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE BRONXVILLE POLICE DEPARTMENT
DEVELOPED PURSUANT TO EXECUTIVE ORDER 203
DRAFT February 5, 2021

Background and Process

In response to the Governor’s Executive Order 203, the Mayor of Bronxville, in coordination with other members of the Village Board, formed the Police Community Relations Committee (“PCRC”). The members of the PCRC were chosen to represent a wide array of constituents across the Village, ranging from clergy, merchants, residents, students, police officers, and members of the judiciary. For a list of the members and their affiliations, see Appendix A.

The initial meeting of the PCRC was held at the Village Library on October 19, 2020; this was not open to the public. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce the Bronxville Police Department (“BPD”) to the PCRC. At this meeting the committee chair, Deputy Mayor Robert Underhill, established the purpose and objectives of the committee and introduced senior members of the BPD who gave in-depth presentations on various elements of the BPD. This review of the BPD included size, staffing, demographic information on the BPD, training protocols, use of force statistics, governance, and more. The meeting was recorded in its entirety and was made available to the public via the Village’s website.

The second meeting of the PCRC was held on November 10, 2020, and was the first of two public sessions to receive community input. Due to the risks presented by COVID-19, the meeting was held virtually. The second open meeting of the PCRC was held virtually on November 17, 2020. Both of these open meetings were widely publicized through the local press, email alerts and other means, and were recorded in their entirety and made available on the Village’s website.

Having completed the “public input” sessions, the PCRC next met on December 1, 2020. The PCRC met virtually without the public being invited; however, the meeting was recorded and made available on the Village’s website. Chief Satriale was invited to the meeting by the committee chair to address certain issues raised in the prior meeting; he left the meeting early in order to allow open and honest discussions without a BPD presence. The next meeting of the PCRC was held virtually on January 6, 2021. To encourage open exchange of opinions, this meeting was not recorded. The committee chair invited Chief Satriale to join at the outset to provide clarification on certain topics and concerns raised in the previous meeting. After about 15-20 minutes of discussion, the committee chair excused Chief Satriale. The remainder of the meeting was conducted without the BPD members of the committee present; the purpose of this (as in the previous meeting) was to ensure that committee members could be free to make any comment or express any concern without a BPD presence.

On January 21, 2021, a meeting of the PCRC was held virtually. All members of the committee were invited to attend this meeting to review a set of draft recommendations (it was entitled January 20, 2021 DRAFT). Some comments were received from PCRC members via email prior to the meeting and a

series of fulsome conversations ensued. The committee generally expressed support for the findings and the recommendations. Several members voiced their appreciation for this process and expressed a high level of satisfaction with the BPD. There was support for the formation of a smaller, PCRC-like committee to be formed by the Village to continue to serve as a review and advisory body to the Village Board on BPD matters. This meeting was recorded and made available on the Village's website.

THIS SUMMARY WILL BE CONTINUED AS THE PCRC COMPLETES ITS PROCESS THROUGH THE PRESENTATION TO THE VILLAGE BOARD ON MARCH 8.

Summary of Findings

The PCRC is grateful for the engaged participation and transparency of the BPD. The PCRC found that the process of reviewing the BPD was, in and of itself, a very valuable and enlightening exercise. Some key findings are presented below:

- The BPD has benefits and drawbacks from being a relatively small village force. The benefits include enhanced governance as the chief and other members of the force know each other well – this helps to minimize the potential for improper behavior going unnoticed. Drawbacks include limited resources for specialties such as mental health.
- In the last decade or more, the BPD has experienced very little turn-over of personnel. This has resulted in a force that is stable from a head count perspective, is very familiar with the community (and the community with individual officers), and helps reinforce the familiarity of BPD leadership with the officer corps.
- The BPD has a demographic profile that is more diverse with respect to race and gender than many comparable forces.
- There are certain resources that the BPD could benefit from that probably need to be provided by the County or through some shared services arrangement - mental health expertise is at the forefront of such need.
- Based on data that was available and reviewed, there was no evidence found of systemic racial bias in the BPD's application and enforcement of the law.
- Both historically and recently, there is no evidence of excessive "Use of Force" by the BPD.
- The BPD is generally valued and viewed by the community as an effective force that plays many varied roles in our community including responding to health emergencies, mental health emergencies, traffic control, acting as crossing guards in addition to deterring criminal behavior and solving crimes. There are some divergent views among the younger age population – this needs to be addressed by the Village, the BPD and the Bronxville School.
- It became clear that the BPD and Village government can do a better job informing the community about the roles our police play, police training, policies and activity. More effective communication and transparency can only help strengthen the bonds between the BPD and the community.

In general, the committee found the BPD to be well respected and engaged with the community, well managed, well trained and well governed. The PCRC also concluded that like any well run organization, the BPD must continually self-examine and seek avenues for improvement. The committee also found

much value in the process and encourages the Village Trustees to ensure that this process of review and disclosure becomes a pattern of behavior and not simply a task to satisfy the Governor's mandate.

Outlined below are the recommendations of the PCRC:

Recommendations

Enhance Community's Understanding and Awareness of the Activities and Policies of the BPD:

- Make monthly statistics available on the Village's website
- Post 10-year history of statistics on the Village's website
- Update civilian complaint form (following a review of complaint procedures/policy) and make it readily accessible
- Complete an Annual Report of the BPD and develop a presentation which will highlight:
 - Significant activities and events
 - Use of Force statistics
 - Summary of civilian complaints and their outcomes
 - Summary of training activity including de-escalation training
 - Staffing changes
 - Policies
 - Accomplishments
- Reinstitute Village Government, BPD and Student Government Committee (with parental representation) to help develop and strengthen the bonds between our younger residents and the BPD. This may help address (among other things) issues of underage drinking and substance abuse
- Given the recently announced acquisition of Concordia College by Iona College, it is imperative that the Village Board and the BPD establish a relationship with the incoming administration to engage in discussions regarding security and safety (in addition to other matters not related to the BPD). This effort should include establishing a liaison with the Concordia College/Iona student body and BPD
- Develop and implement (via an independent third party) a survey on policing in the Village to gauge:
 - Understanding of police services
 - Police-community interactions
 - Perceptions of safety
 - Trust in the BPD
 - Officer performance

Community safety priorities

This should also include area for comment on other areas of Village government such as the DPW and the Village Trustees. The Village Board should determine the most effective mechanism for seeking community input on areas of government apart from the BPD

Enhance Officer Training:

- Implement Lexipol Policy Management and training programs to ensure that all members of the BPD are current on all changes in law and practices, and ensure proper oversight and enforcement of training
- Require all officers to complete Implicit Bias training
- Develop onsite/offsite training facilities
- Expand training programs:

OC/Pepper Spray and other less lethal training to all members of the BPD

Expand de-escalation training to all members of the BPD

Expand training to include the Village of Tuckahoe and Town of Eastchester Police Departments

- Leverage resources with neighboring communities and outside agencies for mental health needs, domestic violence and substance abuse (including underage substance abuse)

Other Recommendations:

- Update BPD policy to state that the Board of Trustees, acting in their role as Board of Police Commissioners, shall be notified of all Use of Force incidents and further require that all incidents be reviewed by the Village Administrator and Labor Counsel
- Provide training for Village Trustees on their role as Board of Police Commissioners
- The Mayor and Village Trustees must communicate with Westchester County and the State to emphasize the importance of providing more mental health resources to smaller communities – this is an issue that is growing in need
- Evaluate benefits/costs of annual accreditation
- Consider sub-group of PCRC as an ongoing advisory resource for the Village Trustees and their governance of the BPD and other municipal departments
- Consider utilizing new police hires for downtown and/or school walking posts (to be re-evaluated in conjunction with survey findings)

Closing Comments

The committee chair expresses his sincere appreciation to all of the members of PCRC and to the BPD for their time and hard work. Our meetings were long, most were done virtually making it challenging at times, covered a lot of material and dealt with some very difficult and uncomfortable topics. Our committee, by design, represented people of many different walks of life and with different perspectives, life experiences and opinions, but binding us together was the desire to do the very best for the Village of Bronxville. Our conversations were honest, respectful, orderly and always in good faith. Thank you.

APPENDIX A

The PCRC consists of the following members:

Mary Marvin – Mayor
Robert Underhill - Deputy Mayor/PCRC Chair
James Palmer – Village Administrator
Christopher Satriale – Chief of Police
Richard Bunyan – Police Lieutenant
Nicholas DeYoung – Police Sergeant/Training Supervisor
Steven Palm – Resident/Merchant
Anar Patel – Resident
Matthew Murphy – Resident
Miki Kapoor – Resident
Peter Thorp – Resident/Senior Citizen/Rotary Club/Gramatan Village
Dr. John Nunes – Concordia College President/Resident
Reverend Michael Bird – Christ Church/Resident
Bishop Derek Owens – Goldensword International Fellowship Church/Bronxville Police Chaplain
Reverend Matthew Waterstone – Reformed Church /Resident
Father Peter McGeory – Saint Joseph’s Church
Reverend Robert Hartwell – Village Lutheran Church/Resident
Rabbi Sruli Deitsch – Chabad Jewish Center Bronxville
Roy Montesano – Bronxville Public School Superintendent
Kelly Weild – Bronxville High School Student
Thomas Heraty – Bronxville High School Student
Shannon Gangemi – Bronxville Chamber of Commerce Executive Director/Resident
John Thomas – Westchester County Assistant District Attorney/Deputy Bureau Chief Mt. Vernon Branch
Dr. Amit Shembekar – NYP Lawrence Hospital Associate Medical Director
Tamika Coverdale – Esquire/Legal Aid Society Region Chief
George McKinnis – Retired Bronxville Justice/Founder- Restorative Justice Program