



Tuckahoe Commission on Police Reform

Village of Tuckahoe, Westchester County, New York

Background:

Governor Andrew Cuomo's issued Executive Order 203 (EO) on June 12th, 2020. This Executive Order requires every municipality to review and develop a policing reform plan by April 1st, 2021. Pursuant to the Governor's order, The Tuckahoe Commission on Police Reform was created whose mission statement was "To make our Tuckahoe Police Department a model police agency in New York State and Westchester County, New York." As per the EO the Chief Executive of the Village, Mayor Greg Luisi formed the commission which included the following core members:

1. Mayor Greg Luisi
2. Trustee Omayra Andino
3. Steve Celestino - Chair
4. Reverend Michael Gerald
5. Donna Brown
6. Robert Horne – Legal Aid
7. ToniAnn Gagliardi – District Attorney's Office
8. Chief of Police John Costanzo
9. Detective Steve Leone
10. Village Administrator David Burke

Commission Meetings:

The Tuckahoe Commission on Police Reform met first as a group (via Zoom) on October 15th, 2020. Participants discussed logistical questions regarding the commission, such as public meetings, how best to elicit public input, etc. as well as internal goals of the commission as we move forward.

The Commission met again on October 22nd, 2020 to continue the discussion and further refine scheduling.

Prior to the first public meeting, community input and participation in the Commission was advocated via the Village's social media pages, via email and at Village Board meetings.

Public Meetings

The first public meeting was held on November 12th and was also recorded for re-broadcast on the local cable channel. The meeting was held at Village Hall, however participation was also available via Zoom. The various commission members spoke about the goals of the commission and everyone working together to promote confidence in the Tuckahoe Police Department. The majority of public comments were positive, highlighting the appreciation of community outreach programs as well as and good communication with residents via the Swift 911 app and Facebook. Chief Costanzo, as well as representatives of the department provided an in-depth and comprehensive overview of the police department and fielded audience questions. The overview consisted of:

- TPD staffing/demographics including special units
- Departmental policies, procedures and practices
- Community Outreach
- TPD Adopted Budget FY 2020-2021
- Training/Certifications
- *Accreditation status

*Accredited with the New York State Department of Criminal Justice Services since 2003. The accreditation program is a progressive way to aid the department in evaluating and improving its overall performance. It provides a formal recognition that a department meets or exceeds general expectations of quality service. The program is comprised of 110 standards and is divided into three categories as follows:

1. Administrative standards have provisions for such topics as agency organization, fiscal management, personnel practices and records.
2. Training standards encompass basic and in-service instruction, as well as training for supervisors and specialized or technical assignments.
3. Operations standards deal with critical and litigious topics such as high-speed pursuits, roadblocks, patrol and unusual occurrences.

The program is voluntary and only about 20 percent of police agencies are accredited statewide.

Data

In addition to an overview, a PowerPoint was included in the presentation which included pertinent data (2016 – 2020) in the following areas:

- Use of Force (2016-2020), including:
 - total police contacts
 - use of force incidents
 - use of force complaints
- Arrest Demographics (2017-2020), by:
 - Gender
 - Race

The second public meeting was held on December 3rd. Key community organizations and school officials were specifically invited to attend this meeting. Members of the local VFW, Tuckahoe Schools, ECAP, Eastchester/Tuckahoe Chamber of Commerce and Immaculate Conception Church were in attendance.

Stakeholder Survey

As part of the information gathering and ensure as much community input as possible, The Commission developed a police survey soliciting information from the public. The survey included topics related to police interactions with the community, communication as well as outreach. On December 22nd a survey was made available to stakeholders via email “blast,” as well as the Village and Police Department websites, Facebook and other outlets. 178 responses were received that were mostly favorable to the police department with some comments for suggested improvements.

On December 30th 2020, Chief Costanzo submitted a report to the commission answering key questions from the Governor’s guideline as outlined in Executive Order 203. The twelve-page report indicates the Tuckahoe Police Department is in compliance, if not exceeding, the requirements of many state guidelines.

Various local municipal police reform plan drafts were reviewed by the commission to gain further insights into potential areas that might impact our local police department. A local resident who is a NYS licensed social worker, submitted a Power Point presentation to the commission entitled, “Black Male Grief Reaction” to provide insight on how black males cope with traumatic loss.

On January 14th and January 28th, 2021 the commission held internal meetings to review all public input and discussions to date.

Based on community feedback from meetings, emails and survey results, The Commission has identified **four main areas for improvement** to the department.

- A. Strive for increased communication within the Village
 - a. Improve Village website with updated information and the inclusion of policies, procedures, complaint forms or other pertinent information
 - b. Increase use of social media platforms to provide up to date quality information to the public, be it an emergency situation or public relations opportunity (e.g., cone with a cop)
- B. Increase community participation with various stakeholder groups
 - a. Attend monthly or quarterly meetings with members of the Chamber of Commerce, Lions Club, local School Organizations, non-profits and other like organizations to gain feedback directly from the community and hear concerns
- C. Evaluate the use of symbols in the department and how they are interpreted and modified over time:
 - a. Certain cultural symbols, regardless of historical intent or meaning, may be adopted by certain groups or organizations. The Department should be cognizant of such symbols and try to remain as impartial about these as possible.
 - b. Adopt policies that address use of symbols and department's expectations on use of approved attire while on duty
- D. Increase annual training requirements in the areas of mental health and cultural diversity

The Village of Tuckahoe Commission on Police Reform thank the Village of Tuckahoe Board of Trustees, Police Department Staff and all village residents for providing the opportunity to provide constructive recommendations for the improvement of the Tuckahoe Police Department and; therefore, the community as a whole. The Commission, upon consensus of its members hereby releases this report effective February 8th 2021 and seeks public comment on the report via email to TuckahoePRRC@tuckahoe-ny.com or public meeting scheduled for Monday, February 22nd at 7pm via Zoom.

After public input is considered, and revisions made, this report will be passed on to the Tuckahoe Village Board of Trustees with a recommendation to fully accept and ratify the report as per Executive Order 203.