

## Town of Carmel – Town of Carmel Police Department

### Police Reform Zoom Meeting – February 16, 2021

Available at: <https://youtu.be/KeT-axQ-6Sc>

This meeting was held on Tuesday, February 16, 2021 from 6:30PM to 8:30PM via Zoom. The meeting was moderated by Mr. John Iorio, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Greater Mahopac-Carmel Chamber of Commerce. The panel consisted of Town of Carmel Supervisor Kenneth Schmitt, Deputy Town of Carmel Supervisor Suzanne McDonough, Town of Carmel Police Chief Anthony Hoffmann, Town of Carmel Police Lieutenant John Dearman, and Town of Carmel Police Lieutenant Stephen Kunze.

Contributors were asked to pose questions in the chat area of the Zoom meeting. Mr. Iorio then opened the virtual floor to the contributor to allow them to address their question directly to the panel. Contributors were assigned a letter and number designation to preserve their anonymity.

A number of topics and questions were addressed between the contributors and the panel. Mr. Iorio stated that while the Zoom meeting had a capacity for 100 people, at its height this meeting had 19 participants.

This summary will be attached to the final Town of Carmel Police Reform report in the appendix.

### **Contributor Main Areas of Discussion and CPD Response**

#### **1. Police response to mental health aided calls**

- Contributors inquired as to the police department's stance on having mental health professionals either working with or for the department, and responding to mental health aided calls in place of police officers. Mention was made of the CAHOOTS program begun in Eugene, Oregon to reduce response to non-violent mental health calls.

*CPD Response/Actions: CPD already utilizes Hudson Valley United Way 211's Mental Health Crisis Hotline as a pre-programmed resource in all patrol mobile phones. The hotline is used by officers responding to calls of this nature to provide assistance in their response or to initiate telephone contact between the individual in crisis and a crisis counselor. The hotline is available to the public as a method to pre-empt a potential police response to mental health aided calls. Currently, along with this resource, CPD has begun to address additional training, specifically having all department members participate in additional de-escalation training, and having supervisors attain certification in Crisis Intervention Training. The goal of these training initiatives is to maintain the lowest level of intervention needed through improved de-escalation tactics on the part of the initial responding officers, and to have a Crisis Intervention Certified supervisor respond to coordinate the further response of EMS and mental health resources. While the department is interested in collaborating with mental health professionals in designing an improved response to mental health aided calls, such as the CAHOOTS model or a Mobile Crisis Team, this would probably be more appropriate and efficiently handled on a county-wide basis. Until greater*

*resources are available, CPD will seek to improve its response with the personnel and resources that it currently has available.*

*NOTE: It bears mention that during interviews conducted between the department and community leaders previously mentioned in CPD's reform report, CPD was commended for the approach already taken by officers on mental health aided calls.*

## **2. Police Licensing**

- Contributors inquired about licensing for police officers similar to that of doctors, nurses, and teachers in New York State. Suggestions were made that this would improve professional standards and accountability through a certification/decertification process. Another suggestion regarding licensing was that officers would be held accountable to a board of ethics similar to educators in cases of misconduct and it was asked if the police department currently has a method to address such issues.

*CPD Response/Actions: All Town of Carmel Police Officers are certified on the New York State Department of Criminal Justice Services Police Officer Registry (<https://www.criminaljustice.ny.gov/ops/registry/policerreg.htm>). This registry is detailed in New York State Executive Law Section 845. Professional standards for training for Police Officers are detailed in New York State General Municipal Law Section 209-q. As Town of Carmel employees, all CPD officers are governed by the Town of Carmel Ethics Code and the Town of Carmel Board of Ethics (<https://www.ci.carmel.ny.us/board-of-ethics>). Additionally, CPD officers are required to adhere to the Town of Carmel Employee Handbook and CPD Policy Manual and Rules and Regulations, and are subject to disciplinary actions relating to any misconduct therein. While this is not a licensing procedure under the New York State Department of State or Education, it does cover the aspects governing the other above named professions as well as allowing for local control.*

## **3. Accountability/Transparency**

- Contributors inquired as to police department transparency and accountability, current options in this area, and plans to improve in these areas going forward.

*CPD Response/Actions: The Putnam County Sheriff's Office is in the planning stages of establishing a "Sherriff's Advisory Board" that would assume the role of addressing accountability with the community and maintaining transparency of police operations. The Sheriff's Office has been in contact the CPD to explore the possibility of expanding this board on a county-wide basis involving all local police agencies in Putnam County.*

*CPD is also in the process of updating its' website at <https://www.ci.carmel.ny.us/police-department>. Additions to the site will include annual and quarterly reports on calls for service and police response, a Quality of Service form for members of the public to submit to department administration for feedback on compliments or complaints, and a planned annual survey of encounters between the department and members of the public. Additionally, department records are disclosable with certain limitations for confidential information and ongoing investigations through the FOIL process.*

#### **4. Monitoring for extremism among department personnel**

- Contributors inquired as to what mechanisms were in place to ensure that members of the department were not participating in extremist groups and if this were to be discovered what would take place in response.

*CPD Response/Actions: The department has a misconduct investigation and disciplinary process in place for allegations of officer misconduct. It is this mechanism that would be used in instances that it comes to the attention of the department that a department member is a participant in an extremist group with views contrary to the oath taken by the member or the rules and regulations of the department. Additionally, as Town of Carmel employees, CPD members are required to adhere to the department's internet and social media policy which in part regulates online conduct of employees.*

#### **5. Department diversity and recruitment efforts**

- A contributor inquired as to the demographic makeup of the department and how different racial and gender groups were represented in the department's ranks.

*CPD Response/Actions: The demographics of the Town of Carmel Police Department represent the communities it serves. The department is comprised of male and female officers, of Hispanic origin and other ethnic backgrounds. CPD is committed to continuing to seek the best candidates to fill its ranks, and will work collaboratively with the Putnam County Personnel Department and the New York State Department of Civil Service to recruit diverse candidates of the highest caliber. In addition, CPD will participate in recruiting activities through community involvement to ensure that those in the community who have an interest in becoming police officers have the insight and the knowledge to pursue a career in the field.*