

## **EO 203 – Police Reform & Reinvention Collaborative Plan**

### **Introduction:**

On June 12, 2020 Governor Cuomo issued EO 203 (see appendix) as a direct result of the murder of George Floyd by a police officer in Minnesota. EO 203 mandated that “ Each local government entity which has a police agency operating with police officers under 1.20 of the criminal procedure law must perform a comprehensive review of the current police force deployments, strategies, policies, procedures and practices, and develop a plan to improve such deployments, strategies, policies procedures and practices, for the purpose of addressing the particular needs of the communities 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”.

EO 203 goes on to state that “Each chief Executive of such government shall convene the head of the local police agency, and stakeholders in the community to develop a plan. In the Town of Warwick that chief executive is the supervisor. In October ten citizens from our community were invited to serve on a panel to review the WPD’s policies and to discuss the issues raised in the EO as they pertain to the Warwick police department. These citizens represented a wide range of stakeholders from our community and they were joined by the supervisor, mayor, chief of police, Village trustee liaison to the WPD and a representative from the DA’s office as required by EO 203. (see appendix). An organizational meeting was held on October 15<sup>th</sup> where panel members were asked what particularly they wanted to be sure were discussed in the upcoming panel public meetings. (see appendix for list of topics from that meeting).

The panel recognizes and acknowledges that Black Lives Matter. With a history of incidents that resulted in the death of unarmed civilians, including in NYS, it clearly is imperative to ensure our community that the men and women of the Warwick Police Department are well trained and perform their duties in a manner that treats everyone fairly, with respect as human beings. It is with this spirit that panel sessions were held.

### **Panel Sessions:**

The first panel public meeting was held on October 26<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm in the WVCSD board room. This meeting was dedicated to a presentation by the WPD on its composition, funding, staffing, training, hiring practices and operational plans as recommended on page 11 of the guidance document issued by NYS entitled “NYS Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative”. Unfortunately, technical issues on the live stream caused frustration for viewers so a subsequent YouTube video covering these topics was re-recorded. (view on Town of Warwick YouTube channel). The information provided in that panel session and subsequent video is available for review in the attached Appendix.

The second panel meeting was convened on November 16<sup>th</sup> and this was a substantive discussion of what changes have been already implemented to comply with EO 203. Also discussed were Bias in policing, the use of force policy, de-escalation & conflict resolution training, mental health support, accreditation by NYS for the WPD, community engagement as well as any topic raised by a panel member. (view on the Town of Warwick YouTube channel). A spirited discussion of these issues ensued among panel members. There was general agreement that while we are not a large urban department many of the underlying issues and concerns of the past year require us to reflect on how we police in our community. This is imperative to alleviate any fear of police by POC and to assure all our residents that our police will treat everyone fairly and with the proper respect as human beings. It was said by a panel member that while many have no problem approaching the WPD more recent arrivals to our town who have felt marginalized in their former communities may be reluctant to approach our police department. Outreach efforts and easy access to WPD polices and procedures should be prioritized to eliminate this fear.

The Town Board and the WPD solicited additional public comments at a virtual meeting on March 9<sup>th</sup> at 7 pm. This comment session had 55 participants and can be viewed on the Town's YouTube channel. There were many good suggestions and thoughts for how we can foster trust, fairness and legitimacy in how we police our community. All of the comments were considered and many have been incorporated in the plan.

In addition to these two panel sessions and public comment session the Town received numerous emails (all are attached in the Appendix) regarding EO 203 and has considered all of them in the Reform & Reinvention Collaborative Plan that is presented here.

For the record a search of the Town archives revealed that in the past five (5) years there have been no reports or complaints of racial bias or excessive use of force against the Warwick Police Department. Our plan is designed to make sure that record continues and that we maintain ongoing training of the men and women of the department to keep our residents safe while building mutual trust and respect with our residents.

## **Town of Warwick Police Reform & Reinvention Collaborative Plan:**

Pursuant to the forgoing process the Town of Warwick, in compliance with NYS EO 203, has proposed the following plan of action. The implementation of the plan has already begun and will be fully implemented in 2021.

1. Increase training for each police officer and dispatcher. This should be yearly and the panel recommends this be engaging with real life examples from community members as part of the curriculum. We will ensure this training is interactive and ongoing to maximize its effectiveness:
  - Implicit Bias – 4 hours minimum
  - De-escalation- 4 hours minimum
  - Procedural Justice- 4 hours minimum
  - Community Relations- 4 hours minimum
  - Crisis Intervention – 4 hours minimum
2. Prior to EO 203 the WPD had begun a review and update of its policy & procedures. The WPD will complete implementation of NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) approved policies and procedures, to be in compliance with all State laws & regulations. Adoption by the Town Board by July 1, 2021 (some are mandatory subjects of negotiation with the police union). Based on input from one of our panel members changes have been made to the original draft policies.
3. Update the Town website WPD page for greater transparency to include:
  - a) All required policies: all are posted there as drafts but are currently in use pending adoption by the Town Board
  - b) On line complaint form- In both English and Spanish (in the forms section of the WPD page on the [www.townofwarwick.org](http://www.townofwarwick.org)). The elected Town Board member designated to liaison to the police department will receive all complaints filed by our residents and will report to the board on the outcomes of those complaints.
  - c) A summary report of police activities to include calls for service, complaints and their findings, compliance with 50a requirements will be published annually.
4. Several Spanish Language interpreters, to help our Spanish speaking residents more easily interact with the WPD, have volunteered their time and have been engaged. A Dispatcher, fluent in Spanish has also been hired.
5. There was a mixed feeling on obtaining NYS Accreditation for the department concerning primarily cost however since the WPD meets most of the requirements we will pursue and obtain Accreditation from NYS DCJS.
6. Following the NYC “Right to Know” law we will provide each PO with a business card containing name, contact information and shield number to give to any person interacting with a police officer
7. Increase community outreach beyond our current efforts (see appendix) to include:
  - Our Spanish speaking community
  - New residents
  - Workshops on police/civilian interactions

8. Continue to strengthen our connection to young people through our School Resource Officers, career days and after school activities. Police officers are in all of our school district schools at the invitation of the School Districts to enhance safety and are part of the school's strategies to prevent incidents like those that occurred in places like Parkland, Fl. By contract our officers do not participate in any school disciplinary actions, this is the purview of the school administration.
9. Continue to encourage People of Color (POC) to pursue careers in law enforcement. The NYS Civil Service process, is by design, a slow process that is contributing to the lack of POC candidates. This process needs reform and we are committed to work with citizens to lobby NYS for those changes. In addition, the Town will form a citizen volunteer committee to research and propose to the Town Board ways to improve the recruitment of POC for careers with the WPD.
10. Advocate for more resources for the Orange County Mental Health Department so it can provide more assistance and training for local police departments. This was a recurring comment and the Town will also ask for citizen volunteers who will help us obtain more resources and improve protocols from Orange County Mental Health to aid our officers.
11. While Body Cameras were never brought up by the panel several public comments asked for the men and women of the Warwick Police Department would welcome body cameras as funds are available to provide them without unduly burdening the taxpayer. Estimates received for these cameras and the subsequent required preservation of the data is estimated to cost approximately \$65,000 to \$80,000/year, each year, for the next ten (10) years. This represents a three-quarters (3/4%) to one percent (1%) increase in the town tax rate. The Town will seek grants and/or other funding for the purchase of body cameras to minimize the burden on taxpayers.
12. Conduct an annual community survey to determine the effectiveness of these reforms and how the community perceives policing in our community. We will work with our local institutions of higher learning, like SUNY Orange, Marist college and/or Mt. St. Mary's, to develop the survey and will ensure it is distributed to a wide cross section of our community. Results will be published on the town's website.
13. Hate has no place in the Town of Warwick. The Town will designate the Detective Squad as the direct contact for reporting any incident of a hate crime for priority investigation. These investigations have been and will continue to be conducted jointly with the NY State Police and the Orange County District Attorney's office to send a strong message hate will not be tolerated.
14. Reconstitute the Town's Quality Communities Committee that will meet quarterly to discuss the many wide-ranging issues facing our Town. The committee will include at least one representative of the WPD.

