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**VILLAGE OF SIDNEY POLICE REFORM AND REINVENTION COLLABORATIVE**

**Presented for Public Comment**

**February 24th, 2021**

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1. **Village of Sidney**

The Village of Sidney is a picturesque village in Delaware County NY that is bordered by the Susquehanna River and nestled in the foothills of the Catskill Mountains. As of the 2010 census there were 3,900 residents with a median age of 41.5 years. Racially, the majority of residents identify as white (96.1%). Some of the larger employers in the Sidney area are ACCO Brands, Amphenol, Sidney Central School, Tri-Town Regional Hospital and Unalam.

1. **Village of Sidney Police Department**
	1. **Role**

The Village of Sidney Police Department currently has nine employees consisting of eight sworn full time officers and one part time police clerk. The eight sworn officers include the Chief, two sergeants (one of whom is a detective), and five patrol officers. The Sidney Police Department provides 24 hours a day, 7 days a week police coverage in the Village of Sidney. The Sidney Police Department is dispatched through the Delaware County 911 system, as well as the New York State Police Troop C headquarters dispatch center. The primary purpose of the Village of Sidney Police Department is the protection of life and property in the Village of Sidney; enforcing NYS State Law, NYS Vehicle and Traffic Law as well as local village ordinances; the investigation of crimes and arresting offenders. Officers handle incidents from parking tickets to domestic violence, drug complaints, burglary and larceny complaints. The department also responds to non-criminal calls for service such as EMS calls, landlord/tenant issues and animal complaints as well as others. The Sidney Police Department is a full-service agency that prides itself on being professional and treating everyone respect.

* 1. **Mission Statement**

***To preserve the rights of our citizens, to reduce criminal activity and the fear of crime through proactive enforcement, protecting both people and property.***

**Our mission is accomplished by:**

Diligently maintaining public order and promptly responding to events that threaten life and property.

**Our core values are:**

**Pride**- To take pride in our community, the department, and the quality of work that we do

**Respect**- To show respect for all people regardless of race, creed, or beliefs.

**Integrity**- To treat all matters before us with confidentiality and place the ideal of honesty before all other considerations.

**Diligence**- To aggressively pursue the investigation of crime and bring criminals to justice.

* + 1. **Policy Changes for 2020**

In an effort for the Sidney Police Department to be as transparent as possible the Village of Sidney recently approved and has purchased body worn cameras for the police department. These cameras are an invaluable tool in regard to the protection of the public and officer's, as well as the Village of Sidney. The cameras were officially put into daily use in December of 2020. A policy regarding their use was added to the department’s policy book.

In compliance with a bill signed by the governor on June 12, 2020, the use of force policy was amended to reflect that choke holds are prohibited.

1. **Police Reform & Reinvention Collaborative Committee**
	1. **The Committee**

The Village of Sidney Mayor, Andrew Matviak, asked his Village Board of Trustees, the Police Chief and other community members for suggestions for members of a soon-to-be formed Police Reform & Reinvention Collaborative Committee or “the committee”. He was requested suggestions that aligned with the requirements and recommendations in the Resources & Guide for Public Officials and Citizens published by the Governor’s office.

The Committee is required to include:

* Membership and leadership of the local police force
* Members of the community, with emphasis on areas with high numbers of police and community interactions
* Interested non-profit and faith-based community groups
* The local office of the district attorney
* The local public defender and
* Local elected officials

The Committee was suggested to include:

* Residents who have had interactions with the police
* Residents who have been incarcerated
* Any local police unions
* Local education officials and educators
* Local neighborhood, homeless and housing advocates
* LGBTQIA+ leaders and advocates
* The Local Health Department and healthcare leaders and advocates
* Mental health professionals
* Business leaders
* Transportation and transit officials and
* Legal and academic experts

The Committee included:

* Fr. Bernard Ampong, Sacred Heath Parish
* Jeff Bagley, Business Owner and Community Member
* Christopher Dionne, Detective Sergeant of the Village of Sidney Police Department and Police Benevolent Association President
* Alaina Drayton, Community Member
* Joe Ermeti, Delaware County Public Defender
* Michelle George, Deputy Clerk of the Village of Sidney
* Larry Halbert, Rotary Club, American Legion and Sidney Alumni Association Member
* Michelle Hasselbarth, Teacher at Sidney School and Community Member
* John Hubbard, Delaware County District Attorney
* Andrew Matviak, Mayor of the Village of Sidney
* Casey-Lynne Mazzarella, College Student and LGBTQ+ Community
* Eric Oliver, Chief of the Village of Sidney Police Department
* Marissa Orezzoli, Business Owner and Community Member
* David Reynolds, Sidney Emergency Squad
* Adam Sellen, Circle Drive Alliance
* Vic Tartaglia, Deputy Mayor of the Village of Sidney
* Sheri Youngs, Community Member
	1. **Committee Activities**

The Committee met virtually, due to the pandemic, on a weekly basis beginning on November 11, 2020. The meetings were opened to the public beginning on January 13, 2021.

First meetings reviewed the goal and timeline set by the Governor’s Office as well as current Sidney Police Department policies related to policing and use of force. Later meetings discussed the survey that would later be mailed to Village taxpayers and also posted online as well as the results of that survey.

1. **Committee Recommendations**
	1. **Police Officer Training**
		1. **Mental Health Training**

The mental health crisis was chosen as one of the top three greatest issues by respondents to our survey and training on mental health conditions and symptoms was the second most selected type of training survey respondents thought were important for our police officers to have.

To improve in that area, it is recommended and encouraged to establish the following training goals:

* Have all officers receive any and all types of mental health training available to them. It is recommended that we partner when possible with Chenango County Mental Health Department to coordinate services and training. The focus of this would be that, through crisis intervention training, officers would develop the ability to recognize a mental health disorder as a first responder.
* We believe that the availability of a mental health satellite office at the civic center in Sidney, even on a part time basis, would be helpful to the police and the community as a whole and it is therefore recommended that we petition Delaware County to expand the scope and personnel of that office to include assistance to Sidney PD in training and/or being available in a crisis situation.
* Receiving updates on a regular basis from the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

* + 1. **De-Escalation and Conflict Management Training**

70% of all respondents who answered the question regarding training on our survey chose De-Escalation and Conflict Management Training as important training for our Police Department. It was the most often picked of all the options. This type of training teaches officers to slow down, create space, and use communication techniques to defuse potentially dangerous situations. It gives officers strategies to more calmly deal with people who are experiencing mental and emotional crises.

* + 1. **Other Training Recommendations**

* + - 1. Procedural Justice to continue to educate the police on how to interact with the public and how that interaction shapes the public’s views of the Police Department.
			2. Implicit Bias training would provide tools to adjust automatic patterns of thinking and eliminate discriminatory behaviors. Under certain conditions, those automatic patterns can influence behavior—making people respond in biased ways even when they are not explicitly prejudiced.
			3. Use of apps and other resources available to help police overcome language barrier when interacting with people who do not speak the same language or languages as the officer.

There is a lot of training available through sources such as New York Municipal Insurance Reciprocal (NYMIR) on an individual basis or group training in person or online.

* 1. **Community Outreach**

The top three suggestions, based on our public survey, for new ways the Sidney PD can interact with the community centered on these topics: being more visible to the public, increased interaction with youth and participation in community events.

**Recommendations based on these responses:**

* More visibility: Increased foot patrols, safety surveys with business owners and residents, more one-on-one casual interactions with citizens.
* Increased interactions with youth: Larger presence at Sidney School, perhaps including involvement with SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions), Teen Institute and the Interact Club as well as finding ways to interact with at-risk youth.
* Participation and involvement at other community events: Using the Fingerprint/ID Software Device at the annual Rotary Pancake breakfast, participating with COSAP (Coalition for Substance Abuse & Prevention) and finding ways to partner with active community organizations like United Way, Chamber of Commerce and the Rotary Club of Sidney.
* We need to build relationships through community involvement that would include working with the public by proactively participating in events and programs at the school and with the various service minded organizations here in Sidney. Please keep in mind that the current Sidney PD has limited resources concerning man hours available.

Additionally, this committee feels that a plan to introduce police officers to the public would be beneficial. Posting biographies and photos of officers at the Sidney Village Police Department Office and on their Facebook page would be a way to accomplish this. We could also feature a police officer in the local publication Small Town Connects or on WCDO, our local radio station, and/or the Village website. Also WCDO would be a great way to announce any changes or pertinent information that the public should know.

* 1. **Establish a Complaint Procedure for the Public**

The Village of Sidney Police Department has traditionally not had many personnel complaints lodged against its officers. Of those very few have been serious complaints. However, given events outside of Sidney, it is more important than ever that when complaints are received that they are documented, investigated and followed through to disposition. Complaints should be tracked and reported on to the Village Board. Having some transparency to this process better protects the Police Department from criticism and ensures the public that anyone lodging a complaint will be heard.

The Process

1. Complaints can be submitted through the Village of Sidney website ([www.villageofsidney.org](http://www.villageofsidney.org)) or by calling the Village Clerk at the Village office (607-561-2339). Complaints that are called into the Police Department should be directed to one of the channels above. Anyone not wishing to avail him or herself of one of these options can make their complaint directly to the Chief of Police.
2. The Village Clerk/Treasurer Office’s will document the complaint on the complaint form and submit it to the Chief of Police and the Safety Committee.
3. Chief of Police investigates complaint or directs a sergeant to complete an investigation of the complaint.
4. Findings of the complaint are documented by the member conducting the investigation. The Chief of Police must review and sign off on the determination and resolution of the complaint.
5. The form is then forwarded to the Safety Committee for additional review. If they also approve of the actions recommended and/or already taken, they will then also sign off on the complaint form. If they do not agree, form will be forwarded to the Mayor for review.
6. Findings are relayed, if appropriate, to the complainant by either the Village Clerk or the Chief of Police.
7. If an officer is found to have violated department policy or to be in the wrong in some way SPD will refer to department policy for discipline, if necessary.
8. If an officer’s actions are found to be in gross misconduct the Chief of Police will notify Public Safety Committee members and Village Board.
9. Appropriate action and/or discipline will be discussed by Chief of Police and Village Board.
	1. **Policy Review**

The committee recommends that the Village of Sidney Police Department’s policies be reviewed by the Police Chief once every two years. Updates and revisions can be made between reviews as needed. It is encouraged that the Chief benchmark and compare policies against other local police departments and any other available resources.

* 1. **Hiring of Police Officers**

Respondents to the survey indicated that they would like the following things to be taken into account when the department hires new officers: previous complaints made against the officer, previous law enforcement experience and increasing the number of minority officers (increased diversity in gender, race, ethnicity, religion).

The committee recommends that the Chief take these considerations into effect when possible in the hiring process. It is important to note that the Chief’s ability to take these things into consideration is constrained by civil service rules in effect. For this reason the committee recommends that the Mayor and Village Board work with legislators to ease the rules so that departments can take these things into consideration when hiring qualified officers.

1. **Public Survey Results**

When asked to identify what issues were felt to be the greatest problems within the Sidney community, the three issues that were most chosen were:

* Illegal drug possession/use 82.6% of respondents chose this issue as one of top three
* Burglary/theft 40.6% of respondents chose this issue as one of top three
* Mental Health Crisis 31.6% of respondents chose this issue as one of top three

When asked how often respondents feel safe in our community when outside alone during the day, respondents answered:

* Never 1.8%
* Occasionally 7.1%
* Sometimes 13.6%
* Always 77.5%

When asked how often respondents feel safe in our community when outside alone at night, respondents answered:

* Never 10.8%
* Occasionally 10.8%
* Sometimes 35.9%
* Always 42.5%

When given the opportunity to share additional ways for the police to interact with the community, many responses centered on these topics:

* The police being seen more often on foot instead of in cars, talking with people and visible
* Being involved with youth and the school
* Communicating more with the community using technology (social networking, Zoom and the Village of Sidney website were all mentioned)
* Being visible at community events or hosting events themselves (Meet and Greet, Town Hall-type event, going door-to-door)

How often do you trust the Village of Sidney PD?

* Never 2.5%
* Occasionally 8.1%
* Sometimes 20%
* Always 69.4%

How respectful do you feel officers within the Village of Sidney PD are while ON DUTY?

* Never 2.6%
* Occasionally 3.9%
* Sometimes 17%
* Always 76.5%

How respectful do you feel officers within the Village of Sidney PD are while OFF DUTY?

* Never 1.6%
* Occasionally 6.3%
* Sometimes 21.9%
* Always 70.3%

If you have a child(ren) that attends Sidney Central School, do you agree that a uniformed officer be present?

* No child attending 48.6%
* No strong opinion 9%
* Strongly disagree 5.6%
* Strongly agree 36.8%

We asked the public about the type of contact they had had with the Sidney PD in the last 12 months and gave 14 different options to choose from as well as a write in option.  The most popular responses are shown below.

* No contact 37%
* Casual interaction with on-duty officer 26.9%
* Called the station for non-emergency call or complaint 22.4%

For those who had had interactions, we asked respondents how effective the officer at addressing the situation and/or their needs.  Responses were:

* Not effective 11.6%
* Somewhat effective 14.7%
* Very effective 73.7%

We asked the public to choose three types of courses/training they felt were important for Sidney PD officers to take.  Of the selections give, the top three chosen were:

* De-escalation & conflict management 70% respondents chose this as 1 of top 3
* Mental Health conditions and symptoms 61.3% respondents chose this as 1 of top 3
* Self-defense tactics 35% respondents chose this as 1 of top 3

We asked respondents to choose what things were most important for the Sidney PD to consider when hiring, the three top things chosen were:

* Reviewing officer background for past complaints 77.6%
* Prior law enforcement experience 48.5%
* Increasing the number of minority officers (increased diversity in gender, race, ethnicity, religion)    33.9%

96.5% of the respondents identified as either a resident, business owner or tax payer of the Village of Sidney.

Age of respondents was:

* Under 18 0%
* 19-30 7.7%
* 31-50 32.5%
* 51-65 24.3%
* Over 65 35.5%

59.3% of respondents identified as female.  40.7% of respondents identified as male.

4.9% of respondents identified as a member of the LGBTQ+ community.

Respondents identified as the following race/ethnicity:

* American Indian/Alaska Native 1.8%
* Asian .6%
* Black or African-American 1.2%
* Hispanic or Latino 1.2%
* Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander 0%
* White 96.4%

Respondents indicated that they had the following household incomes:

* Less than $20,000 6.9%
* $20,000 - $44,999 27.5%
* $45,000 - $139,999 56%
* $140,000 or more 7.5%.
1. **Mayor’s Conclusion Statement**

The committee met from November through the end of March to develop our plan. We sent surveys, developed by our committee, to our residents and posted the surveys on line as well as opening our zoom meetings to the public from January to March for public comments. The responses from the community indicated that our community was very supportive of the work of our Village police department. This plan would not be possible without input  from our residents and the hard work of all our committee members especially Michelle Hasselbarth for her work on the online survey and to Sheri Youngs, Larry Halbert, and Vic Tartaglia for their work in drafting the plan.  The committee thanks our police officers for all the work they do to protect our community.