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City of Peekskill Police Reform Task Force Presents Updates and Next Steps at Human Relations Commission Meeting

Peekskill, N.Y. – The Human Relations Commission held a meeting on Tuesday, July 13th in the City Hall Conference Room where updates were shared on the recommendations brought forth by the City of Peekskill Police Reform Task Force. The Peekskill Police Reform Task Force, which includes the City Manager, Peekskill Police Chief, and local community members, held public meetings from October 2020 through March 2021 where they put together a draft plan of over fifty recommendations for police reform for the City of Peekskill. The areas of recommendations that were drafted in the plan included education, training, equipment, recruitment, hiring, policies and procedures, transparency, and more. Within the presented plan of recommendations are some strategies that can be implemented locally right away, and others that require further advocacy and cooperation from Westchester County as well as New York State.

City of Peekskill Police Chief Don Halmy provided updates on the over fifty recommendations brought forth by the Peekskill Police Reform Task Force. Some of the updates that he discussed included a proposed increase in the budget for the training of officers, the creation of QR code cards for each officer to have in their possession, the installation of a language translation app in the lobby as well as on patrol car phones to have interactions translated into over 240 languages, updating the complaint and commendation forms on the police website, and the creation of a registry for persons at risk to help assist officers in the event that they have an interaction with a special needs family member when responding to a call.

“After almost 6 months of collaborative planning, the Peekskill Police Reform and Re-Imagination Plan was submitted to the State of New York at the end of March 2021,” said Don Halmy, City of Peekskill Police Chief. “While the planning phase continues, it was just as important to start implementing the proposals that so many had worked tirelessly on. There were many aspects of this plan that the Peekskill Police Department was able to start working on immediately such as increased training, officer information cards, joint community education opportunities, translation services, recruiting, and amendments to our operating procedures. Other proposals have a financial impact and we will be looking to include many of these into the upcoming 2022 budget discussions. Most of these proposals represent long term changes that I believe the community, as well as the Police Department, will recognize as positive additions and we look forward to working together, while continuing to represent this City at the highest level.”

One of the recommendations brought forth in the plan that is ongoing is the creation of a Community Complaint Review Board, which would consist of community members with independent oversight of police officers’ performance reviews and complaints of misconduct. The formation of a Community Complaint Review Board (CCRB) is in process with drafts to be presented by both the Peekskill NAACP and the Accountability and Transparency Committee. Once both drafts have been submitted, members of the Peekskill Police Reform Task Force will closely examine each report and bring forth their findings to the HRC and City Manager before presenting it to the Common Council. Before the CCRB is to be voted into local law, public hearings will be held and cooperation will be needed from the Peekskill PBA.

“I am pleased about the ongoing collaboration between the Peekskill Police Reform Task Force and the City of Peekskill Police Department,” said City of Peekskill Mayor Andre Rainey. “I would like to recognize the members of the Task Force for coming together and forming a set of recommendations that will only further enhance our police department to continue serving our community at the highest level. The Council members and I look forward to seeing the presentation of the CCRB as well as seeing the rest of the recommendations brought forth become implemented.”

The City of Peekskill Police Department is eager to work alongside members of the Peekskill Police Reform Task Force on the proposals and recommendations brought forth to further enhance the department and expand upon its relationship with the community. The department is currently comprised of fifty one officers and ten civilians, provides a safe community atmosphere for citizens and property, establishes communication lines fostering cooperation with all community agencies and groups, and forms partnerships

where the community works together to solve problems and improve the quality of life. In the past ten years, diversity has grown within the department with an increase of Spanish-speaking officers and staff, an increase in hiring people of color from 16% to 38%, and an increase in women being hired as well. Despite a limited budget and a decrease in staff, the calls for service have increased 73% over the past decade, which averages about 40,000 calls for service each year or 110 calls per day.

To view the latest updates on the police reform plan as well as watch the videos of the meetings that were held, please visit <https://www.cityofpeekskill.com/police/pages/peekskill-police-reform-taskforce>. For additional information on the Peekskill Police Reform Task Force and the next steps, please email policetaskforce10566@gmail.com or contact Susie Erdey, Chair of the Human Relations Commission, at peekskillhrc@gmail.com.

About the City of Peekskill: The City of Peekskill is a thriving, historic community located on the banks of the Hudson River. Just under one hour north of New York City, Peekskill is culturally and economically vibrant with abundant natural resources due to its location on the river and at the gateway to the Hudson Highlands. With over three miles of continuous parkland, the waterfront is a regional destination with a variety of active and passive recreation, as well as breathtaking views of the Hudson River. The downtown area features an array of dining establishments, a growing arts community, and is a hub for new generation technology and multimedia. For more information, please visit www.cityofpeekskill.com.

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