

Caution: Spanish translation is by Google Translate please check for accuracy!

Cover Letter

Dear Peekskill Resident,

A complete draft of the Peekskill Police Reform Task Force's Draft Plan was approved by majority vote for each recommendation by the members of the Task Force on Thursday, February 25 for submission to the City Council for review. The [vote tally can be viewed](#) in the Appendix of this Plan. Another vote on March 4 added more recommendations to the Plan (see [vote tally](#)). The Plan has been posted to the [project webpage](#) and is available for public review and comment.

The Draft Plan has information on the police department, the Task Force membership and process, and over 30 draft Recommendation Summaries for community feedback. It includes an Appendix featuring background information and details on many recommendations, and well as other pertinent information.

Mayor Rainey, Co-Chair: "Thanks to the Governor for his timely initiative and to Task Force members for their hard work. This draft Plan is the beginning phase, and I look forward to more input from the community and ultimately discussion by the City Council to decide how to move the process forward in concrete ways to implement the Plan."

Antonio Knott, Co-Chair of Task Force: "It is an honor to be able to release the preliminary draft of the Peekskill Police Reform Plan. It goes without saying this could not have been completed without the input from the community and hardworking members of the taskforce. These members have spent countless hours researching, discussing and finalizing the various areas of reform that we release to the public for review and comment."

Chief Halmy, City of Peekskill, "Commencing with the signing of Gov. Cuomo's Executive Order 203, members of the Peekskill Police Department along with community stakeholders who represent the core of the city have worked very hard to compose this draft. While there is still much to do to make it a reality, I believe these proposals will only make an already excellent police department even better. The goal of this package is to enhance many of the programs we already have in place, while expanding our relationship with the community."

Important dates:

- February 11 - Last public meeting of Task Force to obtain community feedback in order to finalize the Plan for submission to the City Council for review
- February 18 - Last day for submission of public comments via email.
- February 25 - Vote in public meeting of the Task Force on draft Plan for submission to the City Council
- February 18 - March 1 - Plan revisions by Task Force based on public comment.
- March 1 - Public presentation of Plan to City Council
- March 15 - City Council discussion of the Plan
- March 22 - Expected City Council vote on the Plan
- April 1 - NYS deadline for City Council acceptance of Plan

Comments and suggestions are welcome and may be emailed to:

policetaskforce10566@gmail.com

Project webpage with this and other documents:

<https://www.cityofpeekskill.com/police/pages/peekskill-police-reform-taskforce>

NYS Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative

City of Peekskill, NY

DRAFT REPORT
By
Peekskill Police Reform Task Force
February, 2021
Revised March, 2021



Draft Peekskill Police Reform and Reimagination Plan in Compliance with E.O. 203.

E.O. 203 NEW YORK STATE POLICE REFORM AND REINVENTION COLLABORATIVE, June 2020

Each local government entity which has a police agency operating with police officers as defined under 1.20 of the criminal procedure law must perform a comprehensive review of current police force deployments, strategies, policies, procedures, and practices, and develop a plan to improve such deployments, strategies, policies, procedures, and practices, for the purposes 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.

[\(See full text of E.O.203\)](#)

Executive Summary

This is the City of Peekskill's response to Gov. Andrew Cuomo's Executive Order 203 regarding police procedures. The Plan below reflects a formal community collaborative process that meets or exceeds the tenets of the Executive Order. This Plan will be submitted to the Peekskill City Council for adoption via resolution prior to April 1, 2021.

The City of Peekskill welcomes the Governor's Executive Order 203 mandating Police Chiefs and City Managers to lead a thorough review of police operations and policies in consultation with the communities we serve. Tackling head-on the fact that systemic racism in United States history creates barriers to effective public safety work. This work depends critically on community partnership, perceptions of integrity, and trust. To achieve these goals, the Peekskill Police Reform Task Force's Plan (hereafter, the "Plan") aims to bolster the police department's ability to provide public safety and engender trust, specifically in minority communities (which now constitute the majority of Peekskill residents). Additionally, changes in policies, procedures, training, cultural education, community engagement, equipment, and personnel will increase public safety for all Peekskill residents.

This Plan is the result of a broad and deep community engagement process led by a diverse, talented, and dedicated group of community volunteers, police officers, and City staff. This Plan

is the culmination of several intense months of work, but it is only a strong beginning, and many challenges for implementation lie ahead.

All of these recommendations have the support, in principle, of the police chief and city manager.

Cost and feasibility assessment for each recommendation is to be determined upon further review by Common Council and city staff. City management has provided preliminary estimates only, as more accurate estimates will require further work. This will be a substantial undertaking.

The Plan presents several dozen recommendations of varying complexity. Some recommendations can be implemented locally and in short order. Others are complex, costly, require further exploration and, in some cases, require cooperation from other jurisdictions such as the county and state civil service agencies.

The Plan's detailed data and description of the Peekskill Police Department (hereafter, the "Police Department") itself constitutes an unprecedented step towards empowering the public to understand and engage police policy matters. These sections of the Plan show a police department with a history of investment in community policing programs and a commitment to steadily diversifying staff with more people of color and women. Various recommendations address the goals of further operational data development and transparency.

Even as calls for service increase, the department has a bare-bones budget and fewer staff today than a decade ago. The community's growth in population and increasing calls for service combined with calls for greater transparency and community engagement indicate a need for the many programmatic updates described in this Plan. The City Council and management face a difficult balancing act, funding public safety among other essential services while keeping the tax burden on local property owners as light as possible. This Plan helps illuminate the path forward for all concerned.

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Introduction

Peekskill is not a large city. While it has been blessed with an atmosphere of peaceful protest and sincere desire on all sides to address concerns as they emerge, this is no time to rest on our laurels and stick to “business as usual.” The efforts of the Peekskill Police Reform Task Force (hereafter, the “Task Force”) build on a history of sustained and successful investment in community policing, and with the full awareness that the work of overcoming systemic racism in the United States is far from complete and that police agencies and their community partners have a unique responsibility and opportunity to be leaders in this regard.

It is well-understood that our society’s social welfare programs have ample “cracks” and as a result police spend a great deal of time managing people who “fall through the cracks”: those who are struggling with alcohol and drug addiction, psychiatric disorders, domestic violence, and young people getting involved in gang-like activities. These interactions can evolve quickly into dangerous situations and police must routinely make split-second decisions with potentially grave consequences. The Police Department will use this Plan as a guide to bring about changes that can foster trust within our diverse community and can help prevent dangerous situations.

The City of Peekskill thus welcomed the Governor’s emergency order for all New York police departments to engage the communities they serve in a critical review of police practices in light of the disparate and unequal treatment of people of color in U.S. history. This report describes the Peekskill Police Reform Task Force: its origins, mission, activities, and results, including recommendations to guide the City Council, Police Chief, and City Manager in their leadership of local government. This Plan concludes the work of the Peekskill Police Reform Task Force, but it is neither the beginning nor the end of our collective efforts to plan and implement actions leading to greater public safety through an ever more solid and trusting partnership between the police and the community they serve. Community trust and understanding of police is essential to effective police work, as is police sensitivity to the current and historical reasons various groups, and especially people of color, distrust police.

Executive Order 203

[Executive Order 203](#) requires that the Police Chief and City Manager engage stakeholders in a public and open review of policing strategies and tools, including use of force, implicit bias, and de-escalation, aimed at addressing the damaging effects of systemic racism in the United States on police–community partnerships that are so critical to preserving and enhancing public safety in a diverse community. E.O. 203 requires the Police Chief and City Manager incorporate public input into a draft reform plan, present this plan to the public for comments, revise accordingly,

and then present the plan to the City Council for review and adoption prior to April 1, 2021.
Peekskill Police Department

This section of the Plan shows a Police Department with an extensive history of investment in community policing programs and a steadily diversifying staff, with more people of color and women coming up through the ranks. However, the department has a bare-bones budget and fewer staff today than a decade ago, even as calls for service increase year by year. The community's growth in population, poverty, and the ever increasing calls for service these trends produce, combined with justified calls for greater transparency and community engagement, indicate a need not only for the many programmatic recommendations described in this Plan, but quite simply, more staff and funding.

The development of raw data, from various sources, into a useful presentation to the public is a substantial undertaking and is one of the recommendations of this Plan. This section does not purport to meet this challenge. The information below is just a first step toward providing the kind of information that would be included in an annual police data report such as that proposed in one Task Force recommendation, addressing the challenge of transparency and accountability. Similar information should be accessible and updated via the Police website.

City Demographics

Overall, Peekskill's population of approximately 24,000 residents had the following racial demographics in 2019:

Demographic Category	Percentage of Total Population
White, not Hispanic or Latino	29%
Black or African American	23%
Hispanic or Latino	44%
Two or More Races, Asian, Other	4%

Data source: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/peekskillcitynewyork> Viewed on 1-11-21

In addition, about 28% of the population is foreign born, and about 12% of the population is in poverty.

Staff Demographics and Diversity

As seen in the table below, the Police Department has diversified over the last ten years, moving away from the traditional white male demographic. Including both sworn officers and civilians, the percentage

of non-Caucasians has increased from 16% to 38% of total staff since 2010. Also, women are a growing part of the team. The data below show staff positions that are filled. For reasons discussed elsewhere, there are vacancies that remain to be filled.

		2010		Total 2010	2020		Total 2020
		PO	Civilian		PO	Civilian	
Caucasian	Male	47	7	54	26	3	29
	Female	4	4	8	6	3	9
African American	Male	3	2	5	8	2	10
	Female	1	0	1	2	0	2
Hispanic	Male	3	1	4	7	2	9
	Female	1	0	1	1	0	1
Asian	Male	1	0	1	1	0	1
TOTAL		60	14	74	51	10	61
		2010	%	2020	%		
Males		64	86%	49	80%		
Females		10	14%	12	20%		
Non-Caucasians		12	16%	23	38%		

The leadership ranks are less diverse, but that is bound to change over time as a more diverse staff advances towards leadership positions. Despite the evident trend towards diversity in the department, including adding Spanish-speaking Officers/staff, this demographic change in personnel depends on a pipeline of candidates through the county civil service system. In the last three years as chief, Chief Halmy has hired 16 police officers, including eight non-Caucasians. There are currently six funded vacant police officer positions waiting to be filled. To be hired, a candidate must have scored in the top three on the civil service exam and pass background, psychological, and fitness tests. It is not unusual for promising candidates to fail to complete the process, or to decline employment. The demographics of the candidate pool lag behind those of the city population overall, which is currently nearly 44% Hispanic or Latino.

Activity Data

The Police Department maintains a range of tabulated data on its service activities. In some cases this data is easily available, such as the information presented below. In addition, records exist that, to be publicly accessible, tabulated or analyzed, requires a good deal of work culling through records, both paper and digital, and creating datasets and providing context. Since transparency is a basic principle of police reform, this Plan contains a range of recommendations towards this end. As a starting point, two kinds of data are summarized below:

- Arrest and Incident Data - any police activity that required documentation in a narrative report of some type.

- Calls for Service Data - the Department tracks approximately 100 different types of Calls for Service, many of which result in incident data

Each type of data is presented briefly below with some discussion notes. Caution is required in interpreting data. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic affected calls for service in 2020. In 2020, “special checks,” in which police check known areas of concern, were up considerably over years past, as were fireworks complaints, since the official fireworks were cancelled. On the other hand, “dark house” checks were reduced since many families cancelled trips and therefore did not request police security checks of their homes. The pandemic is just one example of a factor that may make data from any one category or year non-representative.

Arrest and Incident Data

This summary data reflects a small but busy police department with growing calls for service of various types. 2020 data in part reflects the pandemic, with fewer prisoner detention services and overall fewer arrests in total than in previous years.

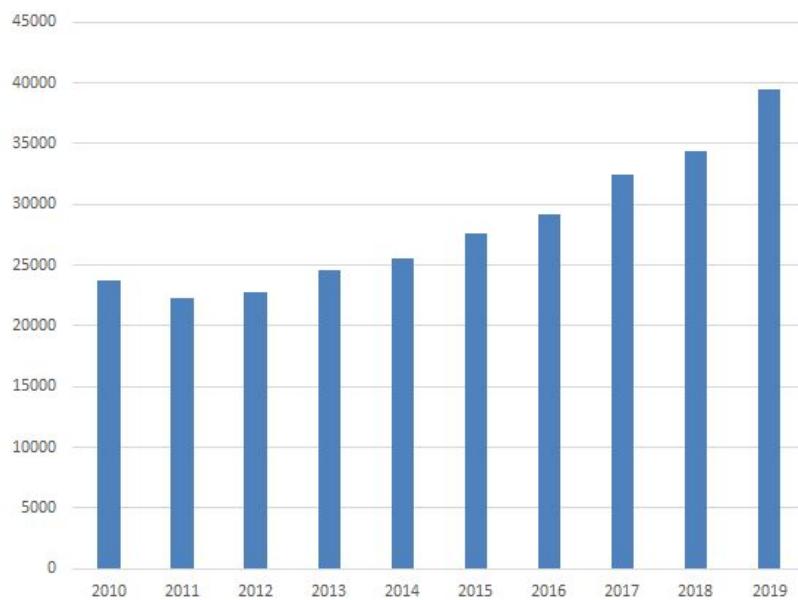
Arrest demographic data, correlating arrest incidents with subjects’ race and/or ethnicity are still under development and will be provided through the further development of police operational data for public discussion.

<u>City of Peekskill Police Dept 2010-2020 yearly Stats</u>												
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
CAD Calls/Event	23690	22284	22816	24549	25494	27650	29114	32416	34394	39523	40750	322680
Incidents/Case Reports	2193	1859	1995	1908	1882	1896	1829	6130	10344	10313	9376	49725
All Arrests Total	1836	1320	1570	1507	1499	1345	1505	1313	1257	1171	712	15035
Civl Code Arrests	443	214	230	131	84	59	52	115	141	109	85	1663
Vehicle/Traffic Stops	2975	2490	4068	4632	4018	4362	4556	4673	4243	4284	1606	41907
Accident Investigation	879	923	907	783	859	971	983	1040	958	941	813	10057
UTT's (Traffic Tickets)	2760	3017	3906	4779	4220	4542	4587	4666	4121	4479	2055	43132
DIR (Domestic Incidents)	441	546	571	516	609	626	530	532	389	482	448	5690
Parking	12162	9752	11027	8190	9210	10905	19369	15461	17348	17842	11787	143053
Prisoner Detention	1900	1391	1507	1354	1125	970	1099	780	749	896	478	12249
Males	1631	1245	1292	1157	976	834	952	677	644	759	409	10576
Females	269	146	215	197	149	136	147	103	105	137	69	1673

Calls for Service Data

In 2012 the department responded to 22,816 calls for service and the call volume has trended steadily upward over the last decade, reaching an average of about 39,000 calls per year in 2020, an increase of 73%. Over the same time period, as shown above, the staffing of the department has fallen from 74 in 2010 to 61 employees in 2020 (51 officers and 10 civilians), for a decrease in staffing of about 18%. The Police Department responds to roughly 40,000 calls for service per year, or 110 calls per day.

Police Calls for Service



Types of calls vary in frequency. The police carry out 10,000 to 20,000 “special checks” per year, meaning proactively patrolling specific sites where crime or safety issues are frequently noted. The next most frequent calls range from 500 to 2000 calls per year and are listed below:

<u>Nature of Call</u>	Total
Special Check	20,128
Operation Safeguard	1,895
V&T Detail	1,731
Traffic Stop	1,557
Medical Emergency	1,535
Park, Walk and Talk	1,101
Suspicious Per, Vehicle, Inci	879
Parking Complaint	774
Follow-up Investigation	710
Police Investigation	620
Noise Complaint	601
Civil, Land/Ten, Verbal Neighbo	598
MVA Property Damage	545
Commercial Burglary alarm	498

Some lower-frequency service activities are nonetheless very important to public safety, and can absorb a great deal of police time and resources. The activities shown below occur occasionally, and for which the police department maintains records:

Nature of Call	
Dark House Check	Larceny In Progress
K9 Activity	Overdose, Medical
Shots Fired	Abandoned Vehicle
Lockout	Burglary
Vehicle Booted	Criminal Mischief In Progress
Violation Order of Protection	Theft, vehicle
Assault	Man with Gun
Robbery	Sex Offense
Fire Alarm	Arson

Budget

The city budget is divided into funds and most city services, including policing, are covered in the General Fund. With an annual budget of about \$8.8 million, the Police Department absorbs about 21% of the General Fund. Surprisingly, the overall police budget has changed little over the last decade, mostly because the increasing cost of labor (salaries, retirement, health insurance, etc.) has been offset by a decreasing staffing level. As mentioned above, staffing has decreased by about 18% over the last decade.

There are currently six funded vacant positions in the Police Department. These funded positions are vacant for several reasons. Vacancies result from delays in hiring due to civil service processes, as well as the civil service requirement to preserve funded vacancies created by promotions to new positions that are probationary for up to a year, so that an employee can revert back to their former title if needed. Civil Service also freezes the police officer entrance exam list, making additional candidates unreachable for hire.

Personnel costs are about 75% of the cost of the Police Department budget, and the department is currently staffed at a minimum level needed to provide 24/7/365 patrol coverage of the city.

As a general rule, enhancement of services for increased community engagement, increased training of police officers, more police officer time spent on foot or on bicycles, all require increased personnel costs, either through the payment of overtime wages or hiring additional employees.

Current Procedural Justice Activities

To aid in discussion of issues pertaining to police management, it is useful to consider the present status of Peekskill police programs and activities relevant to police reform and accountability. The recommendations in this Plan address many of these topics further.

Accreditation: Periodic reaccreditation by NYS involves a thorough and painstaking review of police records, procedures, and results. The Police Department D was last reaccredited on September 9, 2019 (see Appendix).

Choke Holds: Choke holds and carotid holds are not permitted under Peekskill Police Department policy.

Duty to Intervene: Under current Police Department policy, officers have a duty to intervene when excessive force is being used and must report this to a supervisor.

Use of Force Documentation: All uses of force are documented, reviewed by Sergeant, Lieutenant, and Chief, and the NYS Department of Criminal Justice Services is notified.

Body Cameras: Body cams are utilized during encounters with the public. This includes audits to make sure there is compliance with camera use and police policy.

Mental Health/Crisis Intervention: Police are frequently called to manage people in mental distress, and partnerships with other agencies are key to success. The Police Department uses Phelps Hospital for obtaining mental health treatment for those in crisis. Mental health cards are distributed to those in need of additional mental health resources.

Complaints: Civilian complaint forms are available at Police HQ and on the City's website. If people are uncomfortable addressing their concerns within the complaint process, they are encouraged to bring their concern to another police agency for referral to the City, such as the NYS Police or the County District Attorney.

Trainings: Police officers receive a wide range of training, both in the classroom and on the job, to prepare them to serve the public effectively:

- Use-of-force training to limit use of force to only that which is necessary to protect the public and police officers in unsafe situations.

- De-escalation techniques to prevent the need for use of force
- Bias/Discrimination/Cultural Awareness and education to understand how implicit bias and micro-aggression occurs understanding how diverse groups communicate with and perceive law enforcement.
- Crisis intervention/mental health training to prepare to safely attend to the needs of people with psychiatric and emotional issues, or disabilities.

Current Community Engagement Activities

Efforts to improve trust and partnership between the Police Department and the Peekskill community build upon a history of community policing programs that have developed over time in the city. For the Police Department, participation in community events, organizations, and committees is essential for working proactively to address concerns. A few examples of this community engagement work include:

Coffee with a Cop: An event at a local business or popular location where the public can engage with Police Officers about any topics they wish or just meet and greet over a cup of coffee and snacks. Popular locations include the Peekskill Coffee House, Kurzhal's Coffee, Bohlman Towers, outdoors on Main Street, and the train station platform.

NAACP events: The Police Department has partnered with the NAACP on community events such as Bridging the Gap, kickball games, bowling, and student forums at Peekskill High School.

Youth Academy: A two-week summer camp, typically for middle school and high school students that is hosted by the Police Department. The academy is designed to give youth an idea of what policing is all about and what it takes to be a Police Officer.

Saturday Academy: A program hosted by the Peekskill City School District to bring families together on Saturday mornings. This program, which the Police Department participates in, allows residents to interact with a wide variety of community-based organizations in order to introduce them to many new activities they may not have known about and to just have a fun day.

Youth Bureau: Officer Jonathan Saintiche is a board member for the Peekskill Youth Bureau and serves as a liaison for the many activities going on with the children of Peekskill.

Operation Archangel: Officers trained in helping to manage security protocols in houses of worship meet with religious leaders to formulate safety plans and discuss relevant topics with the congregants.

High School Tailgate party: The Police Department works with the School district every year to host a tailgate party at the Peekskill High School where a BBQ luncheon is held for incoming students.

National Night Out: In conjunction with the Youth Bureau, a block party is held on North Division Street in which the Police Department provides a cook-out for residents while they meet and greet Officers.

Hispanic Community Forum: A community forum was hosted at the Church of the Assumption to discuss immigration concerns and any other topics guests wanted to talk about. Another meeting was being set up at the Tabernacle of Christ Church Hispanic congregation on Main Street but was put on hold with the pandemic.

Gun Buy Back program: The River Outpost hosted a fundraiser in order to raise money to buy back unwanted guns. The Police Department then held a gun buy-back event and removed almost 200 guns that may otherwise have ended up on the streets of Peekskill.

Domestic Violence: The Police Department recently had all Officers participate in a lethality assessment program that trains them to determine who may be at greater risk to become a victim of violence associated with domestic violence. This, in conjunction with follow up visits and strong referrals, will help to protect family members at risk.

Park, Walk, & Talk: On a daily basis, Officers interact with the public at different locations in the City. These typically include parks, the downtown area, Kiley Center, the Paramount Theater, Flea Market and Farmers Markets, scheduled sporting events, all city schools, etc.

Bicycle Patrol: During the summer we deploy Bicycle Patrols focused on the downtown area and the Riverfront Green/Riverwalk.

Bicycle Rodeo: Officers host a yearly bicycle safety course, usually in conjunction with the annual Peekskill Rotary Horse Show, in order to teach kids how to safely ride a bike. Usually also involves free give-aways like lights or helmets that were donated.

Child Safety Seat Installation: On a monthly basis, Officers conduct child car seat installations and have an inventory of free seats available to needy parents. This is also done by appointment.

School Resource Officers and DARE instructors: During the school year, these Officers are constantly interacting with the students of Peekskill and Cortlandt, hoping to build lasting relationships with these children.

K9 Program: Our K9s and their human partners are the most requested Officers to attend community functions, especially at schools. Charlie and Bones are our best ambassadors to the youth of Peekskill.

Peekskill Police Honor Guard: A unit that participates in City parades and memorial events.

Peekskill Police/Fire 5K: The Police Department and Fire Department hold an annual 5K race in the City of Peekskill with proceeds going to create scholarships for Peekskill High School seniors going into college.

Peekskill Housing Authority: The Chief of Police attends monthly Housing tenant meetings in order to be available to discuss any issues the residents may have on PHA property.

Social Media: The Peekskill Police social media pages do an excellent job of alerting the public to issues, events, and the different community engagement efforts the Police Department is involved in.

Trunk or Treat: Officers have participated in various Halloween activities throughout the community each year.

Salvation Army Tree Angel Program: Peekskill Officers participate to buy underprivileged children in the community the Christmas gifts they hoped for.

Planning and Public Participation Process

E.O.203 does not simply require all local police departments to make reform plans, but requires as much community involvement as possible in this planning process so that the diverse perspectives of community members are represented in the recommendations for change that will be submitted to the City's elected officials. Peekskill took the principle of community involvement very seriously, committing hundreds of hours of staff and volunteer time to this effort. The overall community engagement process involved:

- **Diverse Task Force:** The 23-member Task Force was chaired by African Americans and included a diverse collaboration among local people: people of color, youth, members of the LGBTQ community, religious leaders, active and retired police officers, formerly incarcerated persons, mental health professionals, and people involved in a wide array community groups and agencies.
- **Public Meetings and Votes of the Task Force:** Public meetings, broadcast on the City's Government Channel, with public comment via Zoom, were held on October 1, 2020; November 5, 2020; December 17, 2020; January 21, 2021; and February 11, 2021, and a public meeting with TV broadcast took place on February 25, 2021, for discussion and vote by the members of the

Task Force. Another publicly broadcast Task Force meeting took place on March 4, 2021 and a vote by which several more recommendations were added to the Plan. The City Council's meetings on this topic are always open to the public, and planned for March 1, 15 and 22, 2021. The Task Force meetings were promoted in [Spanish](#) and English, on social media, streamed live on the internet and on the Government Channel. Members of the public used the opportunity to make comments and ask questions.

- Project Webpage: The project webpage has been continuously updated with documents, press releases, and meeting videos and other resources enabling interested parties to quickly obtain relevant information.
- Project Email Address: Public communications were further facilitated by creating and monitoring a unique email address to receive comments, letters of interest, and other communications.
- Committee Membership and Activities: Committee chairs invited additional persons to participate in their committees, adding youth, policy experts, and other community members.
- “Listening Sessions”: The Community Engagement committee hosted seven community-based meetings attended by a total of 62 people, including Black and Hispanic youths.
- NAACP Monthly Meetings: Peekskill NAACP President Valerie Eaton, chair of the Training, Equipment and Education Committee, incorporated discussion of police reform issues into monthly NAACP meetings and special Criminal Justice meetings of the NAACP.
- Draft Report Subject to Public Comment: A draft of this report was published for public comment for a two-week period, and comments were received and incorporated as appropriate.
- A complete draft of the Peekskill Police Reform Task Force’s Draft Plan was approved by majority vote for each recommendation by the members of the Task Force on Thursday, February 25 for submission to the City Council for review. The [vote tally can be viewed](#) in the Appendix of this Plan. A second vote on March 4, 2021 added more recommendations to the Plan. The Plan has been posted to the [project webpage](#) and is available for public review and comment.
- Common Council Discussion: The Plan was presented to the Council on March 1 by a team of Task Force chair and committee chairs, and Council discussions are open to the public.

This public planning process unfolded over almost a year-long period:

Project Timeline

- Summer 2020 - Data gathering, assessment of current conditions, inventory of policy reform options
- Fall 2020 - Feasibility and cost analysis and prioritization of reform options
- Winter 2020 - Drafting of plan, public comment on plan, revisions
- Spring 2021 - Presentation of plan to Common Council, revision and adoption
- On-going - Implementation of plan, drafting of new policies and procedures, piloting of new programs or initiatives, measurement of outcomes.

Organizing Committee Formed

Shortly following E.O. 203 the City formed an Organizing Committee aimed at recruiting diverse persons to form a Peekskill Police Reform Task Force. Organizing Committee members were:

- Valerie Eaton - President, NAACP-Peekskill Chapter
- Susan Erdey - Chair, Human Relations Commission
- Mayor André Rainey
- Peekskill Police Chief Don Halmy
- Andrew Stewart, Peekskill City Manager
- Mayo Bartlett, Westchester County Police Task Force
- Ramón Fernandez, City Council liaison to the Police Department

The committee met weekly beginning in July to review E.O. 203 and define the scope of the project, especially as it pertained to ways of generating community participation and engagement. On August 17, 2020, the committee [issued a public call for candidates](#) to serve on a large and diverse community task force, and used its social networks to recruit interested individuals from a broad range of social sectors. These included: African Americans, Hispanics, Whites, youth, LGBTQ, straight, male, female, faith-based, those with experience in police profession or policy matters, people who have been incarcerated, and community activists and advocates. City residency was considered important, but some exceptions were made for policy experts with local involvement, if not residency per se, and with the understanding that subcommittees would be free to invite additional people to participate in committee meetings and work.

Task Force and Committees Formed

The Task Force had its first meeting on October 1, 2020, and met weekly thereafter for a total of approximately 20 meetings prior to submission of a Plan to the Common Council. The Task Force elected two co-chairs, Antonio Knott and Mayor Rainey, created five committees, and appointed committee chairs and members. Each committee developed its own schedule of additional regular meetings, and in some cases, opportunities for further public involvement. The table below lists the Task Force members, their affiliations, their committee membership, and in some cases indicates individuals included on committees, but not appointed as Task Force members.

The Police Department assigned one police officer to each committee, including the police chief, a school resource officer, the president of the PBA, and a female police officer.

First Name	Last Name	Committee	Affiliation
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Marcus	Andre	Transparency/Accountability	Peekskill Youth NAACP
Christopher	Calabrese	Policies and Procedures	Chief Inspector, West. County Police; Local Business Owner
Jennifer	Carpenter	Community Engagement (Chair)	Ret. Police Sergeant and Consultant.
Sgt	Carter	Community Engagement	Police Sergeant, Peekskill
Jeff	Deskovic	Policies and Procedures	Community Advocate, Attorney
Valerie	Eaton	Education, Training and Equipment (Chair)	Peekskill NAACP - President
Susan	Erdey	Community Engagement	Chair, Human Relations Commission, City of Peekskill
Ramon	Fernandez	Recruitment/Hiring	Councilman, Peekskill
Jay	Forbes	Transparency/Accountability	Community Educator and Organizer
Chief	Halmy	Policies and Procedures	Police Chief, City of Peekskill
Antonio	Knott (Co-Chair)	Transparency/Accountability	Accounting Professional; Board Treasurer Peekskill Pride
Sgt	Kruithof	Transparency/Accountability	Police Sgt; PBA President
PO	Lalindez	Recruitment/Hiring	Police Officer, School Resource Officer, Bicycle PO
Martin	McDonald	Recruitment/Hiring	Westchester County Police Reform Taskforce
Wilfredo	Morel	Community Engagement	Community Health and Arts Advocate, Peekskill
Ariana	Okoth	Education, Training and Equipment	Peekskill Youth NAACP
Elizabeth	Oliveto	Education, Training and Equipment	Social Services Professional
Tricia	Pickering	Recruitment/Hiring (Chair)	Faith community; Civic leader
Katherine	Quezada	Community Engagement	Student leader Peekskill High School
Andre	Rainey (Co-Chair)	Education, Training and Equipment	Mayor, Peekskill
Steve	Ronco		District Attorney Office Representative
PO	Sgroi	Education, Training and Equipment	Police Officer, Peekskill
Brandon	Smith	Education, Training and Equipment	Use of Force Policy Expert
Andy	Stewart	Transparency/Accountability	City Manager, Peekskill
Eileen	Sullivan	Transparency/Accountability	Mental Health Advocate
Joseph	Teel	Transparency/Accountability (Chair)	Finance and Accounting Professional
Derek	Wright	Policies and Procedures (Chair)	Ret. NYPD Detective; Local Business Owner; NAACP Member

In creating committees, the Task Force used for guidance the NYS [publication](#) *New York State Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative: Resources and Guide for Public Officials and Citizens*, August 2020. In addition it was noted that the Final Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing was, at best, a barebones start and foundation to future initiatives.

Transparency and Accountability Committee

Chaired by Joseph Teel, an African American city resident with a background in finance and civic activism, this committee's work focused on researching models for community review boards as well as creating public electronic access to police records, especially the Police Manual and data on arrests, calls for service, and other police activities. The group interviewed experts in these fields and shared models and policy information.

Community Engagement Committee

Chaired by Jennifer Carpenter, a retired police officer who consults on police training and community issues, this committee focused on methods to increase community awareness and understanding of police operations, and methods to increase police awareness and understanding of community concerns. The group hosted "listening sessions" with local youth and others, and developed recommendations related to police training and ongoing community forums. Here is a partial list of community meetings held:

DATE	LOCATION	# OF ATTENDEES	Demographics
11/11/2020	Kiley Center	2	Black males
11/17/2020	Kiley Center	12	H&B males
12/01/2020	ZOOM	1	Hisp f/m
12/07/2020	ZOOM	7	B&H m/f, LGBTQ
12/08/2020	ZOOM	8	B&H m/f, LGBTQ
12/14/2020	ZOOM	9	B&H m/f, LGBTQ
01/11/2021	ZOOM	27	B, W&H m/f, LGBTQ

Education, Training and Equipment Committee

Chaired by Valerie Eaton, president of the NAACP-Peekskill, this committee developed recommendations related to police officer anti-racism/implicit bias education, duty to intervene

training, in-service training, and crisis intervention training. The committee discussed partnerships possible with county agencies, especially related to mental health crisis response. The committee reviewed equipment concerns, such as dash cams, approachable vehicles, less-than-lethal weapons, data access, and muster room video presentation technology. Chair Eaton also incorporated police reform topics into regular meetings of the NAACP.

Policies and Procedures Committee

Chaired by retired NYPD officer Derek Wright, this committee involved police professionals in the page-by-page review of the Peekskill police department's [Policy Manual](#), the document that describes exactly how police officers are to do their jobs. Topics included use of force, duty to intervene, juvenile interviews, and managing non-binary gendered persons during arrests and encounters, among others. According to City of Peekskill local law Chapter A602-1,

"The Chief of Police shall be empowered to amend the Department rules, regulations and procedures as deemed necessary by submitting the same to the City Manager in his capacity as Commissioner of Public Safety pursuant to the City Charter. The City Manager is hereby authorized to adopt and promulgate all such amended rules and regulations upon the consent of the Common Council."

Recruitment and Hiring Committee

Chaired by Tricia Pickering, a local and national media professional, this committee developed recommendations centered on the furthering of youth interest in police careers, specifically proposing Explorers, Cadet, and professional training programs aimed at youth. The committee also reviewed the School Resource Officer program. Several recommendations emerged that would involve changes to the county and state civil service system for testing and hiring police officers, which are described below. The committee also discussed the idea of civilian participation in PO candidate interviews, but no consensus yet exists for this concept.

Impact of Public Comment

The Task Force has used the various methods described above to obtain diverse public comments, ranging from verbal comments at public meetings, to emails to the Task Force, to conversations between Task Force members and other persons in both formal and informal settings. Task Force members brought this knowledge of community interest into their committees, the committees reviewed all relevant materials, and the committees produced draft recommendations. The draft recommendations were reviewed by the full Task Force, revised accordingly and are presented in this Plan. The Plan was submitted for public comment, and further revisions were made by the Task Force.

List of Recommendation Summaries

Each of these recommendations is summarized below.

Recommendations for Education, Training and Equipment

1. Negotiate Change in Collective Bargaining Agreement with the Police Benevolent Association (PBA) to Provide for Increased Training with Cost Mitigation
2. Increase 2022 Police Overtime Budget by \$40,000 to Pay for Increased Training Hours
3. Join the ABLE (Active Bystander Law Enforcement) Training Program through Georgetown University
4. Increase Training and Education in Human Behavior and Social Interaction Management
5. Approachable Vehicles: Maximize usage of bicycles, ATVs and other innovative vehicles in addition to standard automobile-based policing
6. Dash Cams - Replace and Expand Cameras on Car Dashboards
7. Less than Lethal Weapons - Tasers
8. Install a Peekskill Police Department Intranet and Access Tools
9. Create Roll-Call Presentations Calendar for Local Organizations:
10. Safety Pouch for Vehicle Document Access During Traffic Stops
11. Use Bar Codes or QR Codes to Facilitate Information Access
12. Create Educational Panels
13. Data Collection to Measure Program Effectiveness

Recommendations for Community Engagement

14. Plan Monthly On Going Public Forums for Community Engagement
15. Develop a Community Survey on Public Safety Issues and Concerns
16. Update Community Feedback/Complaint Form on Police Website
17. Redesign Police Website
18. Update Police Mission Statement
19. Revise Police Personnel Evaluation Form to Include Community Engagement Abilities of Police Officers
20. Meet and Greet Daily Report by Police Officers
21. City Council Appoint a Liaison to the Police Department
22. Make Spanish Language Translation Available at Police Department Lobby on All Shifts
23. Police Management Should Conduct a Periodic Internal Survey of Police Officers to Identify Ways to Optimize Community Engagement Programming
24. Create and Implement a Communications Plan Showing Community Policing Activities

25. Increase Police Department Community Engagement Activities in Public Housing
26. Develop a LEAD Program in Partnership with County and Local Agencies

Recommendations for Policies and Procedures

27. Revise the Police Department Manual as Continuing Project of Existing Committee

Recommendations for Transparency and Accountability

28. Recommend the Creation of a Community Complaint Review Board
29. Develop a New Webpage Dedicated to the Peekskill Police Department with Police Activity Data
30. Publish Police Department Manual Online
31. Consider Accreditation by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA)
32. Police Provide ID Cards at Incidents
33. State and County Agencies Should Address Certain Policy Issues

Recommendations for Recruitment and Hiring

34. State Civil Service Law Should Reform the “1 in 3” Rule
35. State Civil Service Law Should Reduce Delays in Testing Process
36. State Civil Service Law Should Offer Police Exam Every Two Years
37. State Civil Service Law Should Reform the Psychiatric Evaluation Rules
38. Add a Dedicated Community Relations Police Officer to Staff
39. Create an “Explorers” Program for Youth Ages 14-21
40. Create a “Public Safety Academy/Classes” at the High School Level
41. Improve the SRO (School Resource Officer) Program
42. NYS Create a Police Officer Recruitment Agency
43. Peekskill PD Should Make Better Use of Social Media Tools

Recommendations Related to Behavioral Health

44. Registry for Persons At-Risk
45. Crisis Intervention Training
46. Crisis Intervention Coordination with Experts in Local, Faith, County and Medical Agencies

Recommendations Added on March 4, 2021

47. Hire a Full Time Social Worker in the Police Department
48. Appoint a Community Representative to Participate in Police Chief Hiring Process
49. Hire a Full Time Civilian Assistant to the Police Chief
50. Write a Community Policing Strategic Plan and Update the Plan Annually
51. Prioritize Police Personnel Safety and Wellness:

Recommendation Summaries

The summary recommendations below are derived from, and in addition to, the recommendation memo authored by the various committees and assembled in full in the Appendix. Links to relevant memos, or “green sheets” are provided as appropriate following each summary below (“R1”). The recommendations are organized by committee, and they vary greatly in complexity, from a simple change to a policy, to the development of a complex project that requires organizational change, significant cost, and/or partnership or cooperation from other parties.

Preliminary feasibility and cost estimates are provided using a simple rating system:

- Feasibility rating: 1 = simple; 2 = somewhat involved; 3 = complex/difficult
- Cost rating: \$ = less than \$10,000; \$\$ = less than \$20,000; etc.
- Priority rating: This rating is incomplete, subject to feasibility, cost and further discussion.

Recommendations for Education, Training and Equipment

Police officers currently receive a portfolio of ongoing in-service training in a wide range of topics, from de-escalation to firearms safety. Since an hour of in-service training for one officer is an hour of patrol work that must be filled by another, increasing in-service training requires increased funding for staffing and overtime.

1. Negotiate Change in Collective Bargaining Agreement with the Police Benevolent Association (PBA) to Provide for Increased Training with Cost Mitigation: The current union agreement enables management to assign officers to receive up to 24 hours of training at the cost of “comp time” instead of overtime (time and a half) pay, with a cap on comp time of 56 hours per year. Trainings that occur and require additional time beyond 24 hours are paid at overtime rates. Therefore, the City will seek to negotiate with the PBA to enable the City to pay officers for 40 hours of training using comp time, not overtime, making the increased training envisioned in this Plan more affordable.

Feasibility = 2 Cost estimate = \$\$\$\$\$ Priority = TBD/High

2. Increase 2022 Police Overtime Budget by \$40,000 to Pay for Increased Training Hours: In general, an additional 8 hours of training for all PO per year would cost an approximate \$40,000. This budget increase would enable the PD to provide greater diversity of trainings. Current budget for trainings (registration, travel, lodging) is \$12,000.

Feasibility = 1 Cost estimate = \$\$\$\$ Priority = High

3. Join the ABLE ([Active Bystander Law Enforcement](#)) Training Program through Georgetown University: Organize a presentation by these policy and training experts and if appropriate, approve an agreement and plan to participate in this outstanding training program designed to help officers take action to intervene to prevent a colleague or supervisor from taking inappropriate or harmful action. [R1](#).

Feasibility = 2 Cost estimate = \$\$ Priority = High

4. Increase Training and Education in Human Behavior and Social Interaction Management: De-escalations, anti-racism, racial and implicit bias, mental health crisis intervention, trauma, stress management and wellness training for all POs, tactical perception and procedural justice principles. All officers should be trained on recognizing mental illness and substance abuse. Trainings offered through County Dept of Health and NYS DCJS, and others. Ensure local experts and organizations are included in training /education contract procurement process. Also possible to allocate more of existing training budget to de-escalation and related topics. It is incumbent upon the Police Chief and Supervisory Officers to recognize the wellness scale of Police Officers. The wellness and safety of officers is predicated on recognizing signs of burnout and other attributes that may impede their judgement. [R1](#); [R2](#); [R3](#); [R4](#); [R5](#);

Feasibility = 1 Cost estimate = \$\$\$ Priority = High

5. Approachable Vehicles: Maximize usage of bicycles, ATVs and other innovative vehicles in addition to standard automobile-based policing. Current bicycle program is contingent on minimum staffing a minimum of 4-5 cars for rapid response to radio calls and patrol with sufficient safety equipment. Use of additional vehicles routinely requires additional staffing. Cost is both equipment and staffing. [R1](#)

Feasibility = 1 Cost estimate = \$\$ Priority = TBD

6. Dash Cams - Replace and Expand Cameras on Car Dashboards: Currently PD has a few cars with Dash Cams, but the systems are not operating adequately for a simple expansion to more vehicles and integration with body cameras and other digital devices. Estimated cost of \$30,000 in 2022 budget. [R1](#)

Feasibility = 1 Cost estimate = \$\$\$ Priority = TBD

7. Less than Lethal Weapons - Tasers: PD will increase its supply of Tasers to insure Tasers are always available to and used patrol officers; PD will require all officers to carry Tasers in addition to pistols and pepper spray. Training on de-escalation will equip

Officers with the skills to choose the appropriate weapon to meet the circumstances. PD will continue to explore less than lethal weapons as new technologies develop. [R1](#)

Feasibility = 1 Cost estimate = \$ Priority = TBD

8. Install a Peekskill Police Department Intranet and Access Tools: Include Peekskill-specific information trends and daily updates from intranet on Muster Room improved screen. Muster room current technology for projection is outdated. Update this technology for the display of intranet pages available internally to PPD staff and officers. Explore further development of digital document sharing and collaboration tools, such as an intranet. [R1](#)

Feasibility = 1 Cost estimate = \$ Priority = TBD

9. Create Roll-Call Presentations Calendar for Local Organizations: The PD currently does 5-10 minute mini-trainings and presentations at roll call, and will create a calendar of such opportunities and review presentation topics and credentials from interested community groups and representatives. Due to shift schedule, four meetings are needed to address all police officers.

Feasibility = 1 Cost estimate = \$ Priority = TBD

10. Safety Pouch for Vehicle Document Access During Traffic Stops: The safety pouch is a community-wide initiative. It enables drivers to purchase (or be provided) a “safety pouch” for storing vehicle documents, accompanied by a window sticker. During a traffic stop, these devices clearly indicate driver cooperation and make documents more easily accessible. [R1](#)

Feasibility = 2 Cost estimate = \$ Priority = TBD

11. Use Bar Codes or QR Codes to Facilitate Information Access: Consider addition of a bar code or QR code to accident Reports. Scanning code will take the user to information about the accident and the Officer who responded. Addition of a bar code or QR code to Drivers License/ID Card. Scanning code will take the user to information about the individual identified in the ID. Voluntary information could be added to this data including mental health, autism, medical information (e.g., allergies, conditions such as seizure disorder, etc.). Addition of a bar code or QR code to Officers badge or business card. Scanning code will give the user information about that Officer: Name, badge number, etc. Scanning can be used for an individual to identify that an officer is in fact an officer. [R1](#)

Feasibility = 2 Cost estimate = \$ Priority = TBD

12. Create Educational Panels: Regularly scheduled educational panels where officers and the community can come together to discuss predetermined topics as related to police-community relations. These panels would be a collaboration between the proposed Community Services Officer and interested community members. [R1](#)

Feasibility = 2 Cost estimate = \$ Priority = TBD

13. Data Collection to Measure Program Effectiveness: Police department will incorporate program evaluation tools into major community engagement activities to track and measure outcomes and benefits to participants. In addition, the Peekskill Police would

benefit from having an electronic database which contains a variety of data points pertaining to Police stops, outcomes and individual demographics. This information can be collected, extracted, and reviewed by the Police Department for a variety of reasons: training, focusing priority, funding, and indicating where reform is needed. This information can point out to the Police and the community where possible biases are, leading to targeted training and reform. [R1](#); [R2](#)

Feasibility = 2 Cost estimate = \$ Priority = TBD

Recommendations for Community Engagement

The police department has a current portfolio of community engagement programs described above. These recommendations focus on enhancing this portfolio with better tools for capturing community interests, needs and perceptions.

14. Plan Monthly On Going Public Forums for Community Engagement: Continue and institutionalize the public forums created by the Task Force (Committees on Community Engagement and Education) through the appointment by the Common Council of a new committee dedicated to this purpose, drawing from the Task Force members and including the police department. Meeting agendas to focus on: community concerns and questions, policing programs and priorities, presentations by experts in various areas of police community engagement work, monitoring of progress on implementation of this Plan. [R1](#); [R2](#)

Feasibility = 2 Cost estimate = \$ Priority = High

15. Develop a Community Survey on Public Safety Issues and Concerns: Design and administer a survey to measure public satisfaction with police services and perceptions of diverse public safety concerns throughout the city's neighborhoods to help prioritize policing and public safety activities. [R1](#)

Feasibility = 2 Cost estimate = \$ Priority = High

16. Update Community Feedback/Complaint Form on Police Website: Update existing complaint form on the website to make it more visible. The "complaint and commendation" tool on the police website makes it easier for city residents to let police know their concerns, observations and ensure that the comments received are assigned and reviewed by police officers. Assign a Lieutenant to review, refer and respond to complaints and commendations and provide a monthly report to the Chief. [R1](#)

Feasibility = 1 Cost estimate = \$ Priority = High

17. Redesign Police Website: Create a more attractive and user friendly website, based on the design discussed in the committee, including new content related to policing data, such as calls for service, number of arrests of various types, and community engagement activity reports. Note that police activity data development and transparency is addressed separately in the Accountability and Transparency section. [R1](#)

Feasibility = 2 Cost estimate = \$\$ Priority = TBD

18. Update Police Mission Statement: A mission statement reminds staff and community of the basic values of the department, and will be more prominently incorporated into the

police website, the police Department Manual and police training. Focus on values statement related to procedural justice, racial equity and public safety [R1](#)

Feasibility = 1 Cost estimate = 0 Priority = TBD

19. Revise Police Personnel Evaluation Form to Include Community Engagement Abilities of POs: While these abilities are currently considered, the evaluation could more thoroughly include these abilities. [R1](#)

Feasibility = 1 Cost estimate = 0 Priority = TBD

20. Meet and Greet Daily Report by POs: Each police officer will report one meet and greet conversation with a city resident to listen to community perspective and build relationships. [R1](#)

Feasibility = 1 Cost estimate = \$ Priority = TBD

21. City Council Appoint a Liaison to the Police Department: Council to provide a list of duties for this role. [R1](#)

Feasibility = 1 Cost estimate = 0 Priority = TBD

22. Make Spanish Language Translation Available at Police Department Lobby on All Shifts: The Department currently has several bilingual POs, but they are not always available for walk-in service. As long as all dispatchers are not English-Spanish bilingual, develop a plan to provide this service. Currently, PD uses 911 translation service in emergencies. Ensure that non-English speakers have access to interpretation and translation services as needed via staffing and/or contract services. Possibly a dedicated phone in lobby with appropriate signs in various languages.

Feasibility = 1 Cost estimate = \$ Priority = TBD

23. Police Management Should Conduct a Periodic Internal Survey of Police Officers to Identify Ways to Optimize Community Engagement Programming: A key tenet of procedural justice is the cultivation of PO feedback and input into policing priorities. The addition of a periodic survey will help management to ensure POs know their ideas are taken seriously. Refer to Association of Chiefs of Police for policy guidance. [R1](#)

Feasibility = 1 Cost estimate = \$ Priority = TBD

24. Create and Implement a Communications Plan Showing Community Policing Activities: Use diverse media to increase the frequency of positive messages regarding community engagement activities, events, personnel and partnerships. Incorporate these goals into the City's annual contract for communications services and into the work of the dedicated Community Relations Officer (see Recruitment and Hiring). [R1](#)

Feasibility = 2 Cost estimate = \$ Priority = TBD

25. Increase Police Department Community Engagement Activities in Public Housing: Examples could include infant CPR training, coffee with cop, back to school events, BBQs, and Halloween events. Assign PO to participate in event planning by other agencies within the public housing settings. These non-enforcement activities are the building blocks of trust.

Feasibility = 1 Cost estimate = \$ Priority = TBD

26. Develop a LEAD Program in Partnership with County and Local Agencies: Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion ([LEAD](#)) is a community-based diversion approach with the goals of improving public safety and public order, and reducing unnecessary justice

system involvement of people who participate in the program. Involves an MOU among social services agencies to “de-center” POs responding to incidents where referrals are needed.

Feasibility = 3 Cost estimate = \$\$

Priority = TBD

Recommendations for Policies and Procedures

Police policies and procedures are codified in the [Police Department Manual](#). The Police Department Manual is hundreds of pages long and provides police officers with instructions for all significant tasks in their jobs. It must be updated regularly with changing laws, technologies, and discoveries. It is not unusual for cities to contract for third-party services to continuously review and update their police manuals and provide associated training resources. All contracts require approval by the Common Council. The Police Department does not currently have such a service agreement and is not proposing one at this time.

27. Revise the Police Department Manual as Continuing Project of Existing Committee:

Police Chief will continue to work with members of this committee on an ad hoc basis to review and update police Department Manual in light of best practices. The Chief will research and write policy changes, updates, removals, etc., in accordance with professional standards, new laws, new technology and other developments. (See Transparency and Accountability section for related recommendation to publish the Department Manual online. See Appendix for Police Department Manual Table of Contents). Updates are currently in progress on policies for (selected): [R1](#)

- Interview and Interrogation - Mandatory electronic recording of ALL juvenile prisoners in custody.
- Use of Force - Emphasized focus on de-escalation.
- Duty to Intervene -Mandate officers report other officers they witness using abusive language and/or excessive physical force
- Use of Deadly Physical Force - Updated directives for use of deadly physical force with firearms at or from a moving vehicle
- Mandate Times of Search Warrant Executions - Restrict time of search warrant executions exclusively from 6 AM - 9 PM, except with permission from a judge.
- Add to department manual the procedures to form a specialized response team of officers specifically proficient in [Crisis Intervention Training](#) (CIT), including mental health awareness and de-escalation and/or non-violent tactics to respond to mental health calls within Peekskill.
- Prisoners – Clarify the current department manual in the best practices for the Strip Search and lodging of non-binary persons inside the Peekskill Police station house.
- Notifications to I.C.E (Immigration and Customs Enforcement)
DELETED the entire section from the department manual.

Feasibility = 2

Cost estimate = 0

Priority = High

Recommendations for Transparency and Accountability

The committee explored various approaches to the creation of a type of Community Complaint Review Board (CCRB), as well as ways of making data on police activities more easily available and useful for public discussion. CCRBs are a complex policy and legal challenge. There are models and resources to draw upon for guidance. Westchester County is planning to create a type of CCRB as a shared service for local police agencies. Even if the County creates a County Review Board the City of Peekskill may still benefit from having its own CCRB. Other actions to increase transparency are aimed at gathering and presenting information and data to help the public better access and understand police services, and participate in policy discussions about them.

28. Recommend the Creation of a Community Complaint Review Board: Create a committee involving by current members of the Accountability and Transparency committee to continue the work already researched for the City of Peekskill by this committee in applying models for providing citizens with independent oversight of police officers' performance reviews. Committee should include a selection of subject matter experts. Many such models exist, balancing the internal performance review process with independent investigation powers. Consider hiring NACOLE (National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement) for consulting services to help the city identify the best policy options and tools. Recommend a shared services model with the County, as the County Police Task Force is working on such a proposal, details of which are currently not available. [R1](#); [R2](#)

Feasibility = 3

Cost estimate = TBD

Priority = High

29. Develop a New Webpage Dedicated to the Peekskill Police Department with Police Activity Data: The development of data from raw records into information and insights helpful for public discussion is a labor-intensive process. Presentation and discussion of this data is a project unto itself. The City should design an annual report on the Police Department that includes appropriate data on calls for service, local crime, demographics of arrests, police community engagement program activities and policy updates. The report should be presented annually to the city council and public for review. The report would be accessible online and provide analysis of data trends and program development, not just statistics with no context. The Peekskill Police Department already maintains and provides a wide range of data on its activities, but the data is not organized for public access or understanding. [R1](#); [R2](#); [R3](#)

Feasibility = 3

Cost estimate = \$\$

Priority = High

30. Publish Police Department Manual Online: As the Police Department's guiding document, the Manual, properly redacted, can be made available for public access so those interested in a detailed understanding of police procedures can become better informed and participate in advising the police department on policy changes going forward. This requires completion of on-going revision process, review for public distribution, digitizing, indexing, and other preparation according to best practices for public access to police policy and procedure information. [R1](#)

Feasibility = 2 Cost estimate = \$ Priority = High

31. Recommend Accreditation by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA): The department currently is among many police departments accredited through a rigorous periodic review by the NYS Law Enforcement Accreditation Council (see Appendix), and was last assessed in 2019. CALEA offers an enhanced accreditation process as well as related services to support and track in-service training programs and keep the Department Manual updated according to new laws and best practices in the police profession. In addition, accreditation from CALEA is a nationally recognized accreditation and would allow the City of Peekskill to be one of only two cities in Westchester County that is nationally accredited. National accreditation gives benefits to the City and the members of the Police force. [R1](#)

Feasibility = 3 Cost estimate = \$\$\$ Priority = TBD

32. Police Provide ID Cards at Incidents: The Police Department will review and redesign the contact cards and information and referrals sheet they provide to people involved in various types of incidents. Contact cards with basic incident and police officer information (shield #) make it easy for subjects to follow up with the police department regarding any aspect of an incident, whether to make a complaint, offer helpful information, or obtain a report. Information sheets enable crime victims, family members, and others to find help from a wide range of agencies specializing in mental health, drug addiction, domestic violence and other topics. [R1](#)

Feasibility = 1 Cost estimate = \$ Priority = High

33. State and County Agencies Should Address Certain Policy Issues: Police reform policy debates often identify issues that ought to be addressed at the county, state or national scales. These include: proposals to change “qualified immunity” to better balance the goals of accountability and public safety; proposals impacting union contracts as they pertain to disciplinary action; and proposals for increased public access to police disciplinary records via online databases. [R1](#); [R2](#); [R3](#):

Feasibility = 3 Cost estimate = TBD Priority = High

Recommendations for Recruitment and Hiring

These recommendations address both the workforce development “pipeline” and the policy environment in which hiring takes place, and include several recommendations to the county civil service agency that would help local police hire qualified candidates.

34. State Civil Service Law Should Reform the “1 in 3” Rule: County should change the “1 in 3” rule to a “1 in 10” rule for the appointment of new police officers off the County eligible list, and change the “1 in 3” rule to a “1 in 5” rule for the promotion of existing police officers to positions of greater authority, or other reasonable change, whereby local police departments would have a bigger pool of qualified candidates and more ability to hire both more qualified and more diverse personnel. [R1](#); [R2](#)

Feasibility = 3 Cost estimate = \$ Priority = TBD

35. State Civil Service Law Should Reduce Delays in Testing Process: The agency should decrease the lag time between when tests occur and when candidate test results become available in order to speed up the hiring process. Currently wait time can be 5-8 months. Consider making the exam computerized, if this speeds the process. Delays cause qualified candidates to lose interest and pursue other careers. [R1](#)

a. Feasibility = 3 Cost estimate = \$ Priority = TBD

36. State Civil Service Law Should Offer Police Exam Every Two Years: The agency currently provides the exam only every 4 years. This results in a list of eligible candidates that becomes burdened with candidates no police department wants to hire, preventing qualified and desirable candidates from entering the candidate pool. [R1](#)

Feasibility = 3 Cost estimate = \$ Priority = TBD

37. State Civil Service Law Should Reform the Psychological Evaluation Rules: The agency should modify the requirement for psychological evaluation. As the regulation currently exists, the candidates for police officer from other police departments who are transfer-eligible but did not have a prior psychological evaluation as part of their first full time law enforcement job cannot be considered for hiring by another department. This eliminates qualified candidates from pursuing transfer opportunities. The candidates should be able to get a psych evaluation and be considered for employment. [R1](#)

Feasibility = 3 Cost estimate = \$ Priority = TBD

38. Add a Dedicated Community Relations Police Officer to Staff: There needs to be constant contact and positive police community interaction throughout the city schools, youth groups, recreation activities, seniors, religious groups, and businesses within Peekskill. Adding a dedicated full-time position is the best way to ensure that all police officers maintain a focus on community engagement wherever possible. Consider adding a sergeant position with oversight of community relations work by all officers in the department. The Department currently has an unfilled downtown foot patrol title that could be upgraded to a Community Relations Officer for this purpose. [R1](#)

Feasibility = 2 Cost estimate = \$\$ Priority = TBD

39. Create an “Explorers” Program for Youth Ages 14-21: For youth ages 14-21, in collaboration with schools and youth agencies, the Explorers program aims to foster youth character and career development. Explorers learn the value of education,

discipline, diversity and the Peekskill community, and gain an introduction into law enforcement careers. Police will have the opportunity to grow in sensitivity to youth concerns and ways of communicating. Program is already planned. [R1](#)

Feasibility = 1 Cost estimate = \$ Priority = TBD

40. Create a “Public Safety Academy/Classes” at the High School Level: This program would run in conjunction with the Police Cadet program. It would offer a specialized preparation program where students could earn College credits from a local College/University while taking Criminal Justice classes and internships. Similar programs throughout the Country offer High School students to graduate in five years with a HS diploma and an Associate’s Degree. This gives them an added boost and pads their resume when interviewing for Peekskill PD because they now possess an Associate’s Degree. [R1](#)

Feasibility = 3 Cost estimate = \$\$\$ Priority = TBD

41. Improve the SRO (School Resource Officer) Program: SROs are widely appreciated. School District and Police Department should work together to optimize this program so that more students understand and benefit from it, including review of DCJS program and training guidelines and current status of the program. Find ways of enhancing student access to police officers and student understanding of the SRO program and police services. Consider increasing the frequency of SRO classroom visits versus other ways SROs spend time in schools. City currently has two SROs involved in the Middle School and High School. [R1](#)

Feasibility = 2 Cost estimate = \$ Priority = TBD

42. NYS Create a Police Officer Recruitment Agency: Similar to military service, invest in recruiting young people into public service as POs. Focus on minority and female candidates. Use updated marketing methods including range of social media tools.

Feasibility: 3 Cost: TBD Priority: TBD

43. Peekskill PD Should Make Better Use of Social Media Tools: Department currently uses Facebook and Instagram, but could add Twitter and more advanced audience targeting methods such as “geofencing” given that young people tend to rely on mobile devices for all information, including employment searches.

Feasibility: 3 Cost: TBD Priority: TBD

Recommendations Related to Behavioral Health

The Police Department receives mental health-related calls for service during one out of five tours or shifts, or approximately once every couple of days. Police, ambulance, and paramedic personnel frequently manage incidents and provide services to people experiencing psychiatric crises and to their families. The Police Department also provides support to County Child Protective Services staff when they visit Peekskill homes. Given how common these calls are, and the necessity of collaborating with other agencies to serve them, this Plan includes the following recommendations that emerged from various committees:

44. Registry for Persons At-Risk: The Police Department will use its Records Management System (RMS) and website to create a tool whereby families can voluntarily register

individuals with behavioral challenges so police responding to the address will be more aware of special needs, whether psychiatric, medical, physical or developmental disability, or other needs.

Feasibility = 2 Cost estimate = 0 Priority = TBD

45. Crisis Intervention Training: Police Department in-service training will include additional hours of training in mental health incident and behavior management, in collaboration with Westchester County Mental Health Department. This includes attention to the mental health of POs to ensure PO safety. Training is already available for officers through DCJS. All officers should be trained on recognizing mental illness and substance abuse. Crisis Intervention Training, including De-Escalation Training, should be included in the mandated list of In-Service Trainings as listed in the policies and procedures and attended annually. Some officers should be more extensively trained in specialized crisis intervention training such that each tour would have a specialist in this area. Specially trained Officers in addition to community behavioral specialist create a Crisis Intervention team. [R1](#); [R2](#);

Feasibility = 2 Cost estimate = \$\$ Priority = TBD

46. Crisis Intervention Coordination with Experts in Local, Faith, County and Medical Agencies: Schedule POs with CIT across all shifts or tours. Pursue teamwork with County agencies and staff for coordinated response to mental health crisis related emergency responses, including possible “ride along” program. Explore options for more coordination with EMS agencies. [R1](#); [R2](#); [R3](#)

Feasibility = 3 Cost estimate = \$\$ Priority = TBD

Recommendations Added on March 4, 2021

Vote tally from 3-4-21 Task Force meeting

47. Hire a Full Time Social Worker in the Police Department: Add a civilian social worker to police staff to help respond to calls for service as appropriate, and to follow up on calls for service, especially as they may pertain to domestic disputes, mental and medical health issues, homelessness and related issues. Also, advocate to county and state agencies for the assignment of social workers to work in collaboration with the Police Department, school district, courts, ambulance, paramedics and other agencies. [R1](#)

Feasibility = 2 Cost estimate =\$\$\$\$\$\$ Priority = TBD

48. Appoint a Community Representative to Participate in Police Chief Hiring Process: The appointment of a police chief by the city manager is subject to civil service regulations and the approval of the City Council. The proposal is to add a representative of the community to participate in the interview process, possibly a city council member, or somebody else appointed by the city council. [R1](#)

Feasibility = 1 Cost estimate = Priority = TBD

49. Hire a Full Time Civilian Assistant to the Police Chief: This new position, subject to civil service and union negotiation, would have duties that include assisting the Chief in the development, administration, coordination, and implementation of departmental policies, procedures, and activities. The variety of duties would include data development and analysis pertaining to public safety concerns, perceptions and community engagement efforts, and the organizing, planning, and coordinating of various programs and operations in collaboration with community police officer and in support of community policing efforts. [R1](#)

Feasibility = 2 Cost estimate = \$\$\$\$\$\$ Priority = TBD

50. Write a Community Policing Strategic Plan and Update the Plan Annually: This written Plan would describe the department's core values, goals and objectives, the actions by which it plans to accomplish them, and the process by which the Plan is written and progress on its goals is monitored. The strategic Plan would describe existing programs and their impacts, proposed new activities, who is responsible, and the means by which success will be measured. The Plan would address community concerns based on survey data, and provide statistics on crime and police activities. It should outline a broader mission of identifying and addressing the underlying issues, the Community's concerns, drivers of crime and disorder, and the Community's perception of them. [R1](#); [R2](#)

Feasibility = 2 Cost estimate = \$ Priority = TBD

51. Prioritize Police Personnel Safety and Wellness: Members of the Peekskill Police Department along with Law enforcement personnel around the country are under enormous stress in the performance of their everyday duties—a stress compounded by constant public scrutiny. Effective community policing requires law enforcement personnel to have greater capacities for empathy, compassion, and tolerance than traditional policing. In order to demonstrate this emotional versatility, Peekskill Police will need ways to break the defense or coping mechanisms they can develop after repeated exposure to trauma and other stressful events. The City of Peekskill should mitigate the impacts of these events, in systematic ways, in order to ensure personnel, have the capacity to fully engage and establish meaningful relationships with members of the Peekskill community and the general public. The officers who protect us must also be protected against the hazards of their job. [R1](#)

Feasibility = 2 Cost estimate = \$\$\$\$ Priority = TBD

Further Discussion Topics and Community Concerns

Many topics and themes have been addressed in a preliminary fashion during Task Force meetings and committee meetings that do not appear as Recommendation Summaries above. The Task Force heard and considered many ideas through public verbal comment at meetings, public

comment via emails to the Task Force, and through conversations in the community and within the Task Force itself. See the Appendix for a list of these topics in the section titled [“Further Discussion Topics and Community Concerns.”](#)

Acknowledgements

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- Mike Miner, City Videographer
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- Kelly Lee, Co-Communications
- People who made public comments
- Judge Reginald Johnson
- Mayo Bartlett

Appendix Table of Contents

Note: Each section heading below is linked to an online folder containing the items listed within the section heading.

MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

1. Vote Tally from 2/25/21 Task Force public meeting to review and approve recommendations to include in the Plan.
2. [Vote tally](#) from 3/4/21 Task Force meeting adding certain recommendations to the Plan
3. Letter From Governor Cuomo To Mayors
4. Executive Order No. 203
5. Police Department Manual Table Of Contents
6. Police Department Assessment Report 2019
7. Police Department Calls For Service Date 2020
8. Racial Justice And George Floyd By Chief Halmy
9. Racial Justice Statement By City Manager
10. Task Force Member Recruitment Announcement

11. Task Force Formed And Chairs Appointed
12. October 1st – First Public Meeting
13. November 5th Public Meeting
14. December 17th Public Meeting – (Flyer In Spanish)
15. December 17th Public Meeting – (Flyer In English)
16. January 21st Public Meeting – (Flyer In Spanish)
17. January 21st Public Meeting – (Flyer In English)
18. Task Force River Journal November 2020
19. Community Survey Sample

RECOMMENDATIONS

ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

1. Legislative Action - Indemnification
2. Legislative Action - Certification
3. Develop an Annual Police Dept Data and Program Report
4. National Accreditation by the commission on accreditation for law enforcement agencies (CALEA)
5. Demographics of persons receiving police services and analysis thereof
6. Make police policy manual online
7. Police form mental health partnership with relevant agencies
8. Contact cards-Police provide ID cards at incidents
9. Police review board models and concepts
10. Review of Existing Legislation by the State and County
11. Design a new website for the police department

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

1. Administer a department – wide and community –wide survey to get the officers and community perspectives
2. Mission statement revision in policy manual
3. Procedural justice
4. Trauma related training
5. Assistant to the Police Chief
6. Community Policing Strategic Plan

7. Community Policing
8. Peekskill Personnel Safety and Wellness Recommendations

EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EQUIPMENT

1. Data Collection
2. Active Bystandership – “ABLE” Training
3. Required Anti-Racism Education
4. Equipment-Approachable transportation
5. Bar Code and QR Code Use
6. DashCams/BodyCams
7. De-Escalation
8. Expert Level Training Requirements
9. Peekskill PD Intranet
10. Less Than Lethal Options
11. Public Forums
12. Safety Pouches for Drivers

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

1. Add a Dedicated Community Relations Police Officer to Staff
2. Increase Police Diversity by modifying NYS Civil Service Restrictive Hiring and Promotion Rules - the “3 in 1 rule”
3. Peekskill Police Manual Updates
4. PPD Crisis Response and Training

RECRUITMENT AND HIRING

1. Liaison from City council
2. Civil Service make Police Exams more frequent and review 3 in 1 rule
3. Civil service should consider Computerized Police Exam
4. Modify Civil Service requirement for psychiatric evaluations
5. Explorers Program-Ages 14-21
6. Adding a non-police professional to the interview process for new hires or promotions
7. Public Safety Academy/Classes
8. 3 in 1 rule
9. Expansion of SRO program to include Elementary Schools and Middle School in addition to High School