

AD Hoc Advisory Committee on Community Policing

To: MAYOR KATHLEEN FOLEY,
VILLAGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

From: AD HOC ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY POLICING

Date: June 8, 2022

Re: REVIEW OF VILLAGE OF COLD SPRING SURVEY RESULTS

BACKGROUND

The Ad Hoc Advisory Committee on Community Policing (the “Committee”) responsibilities stem from NYS Executive Order #203¹ and as part of the Plan mandated and adopted by the Village of Cold Spring’s (Village) Board of Trustees (VBOT) on March 23, 2021, the Village will convene a Community Stakeholders Group to review documents and make recommendations to the Mayor and VBOT.

The plan specifically states that the Committee is formed to:

(1) provide comment and feedback on the ongoing review of police policies; (2) assess areas of concern identified in the surveys; (3) address the key questions in the executive order; and (4) make periodic reports to the Village Board and the public.

This memorandum serves to report the ADHAC’s review (“the review”) of the Village’s Community Survey, which was created on March 4, 2021, and completed on May 15, 2021².

The Review

The ADHAC focused the review on two principal areas, **Community participation** and **Community comments/concerns**; no methodology beyond these areas was employed.

Additionally, Committee member Gretchen Dykstra met with Office in Charge Larry Burke (the OIC) on April 17, 2022, to discuss actions he may have taken in response to the Survey results.

¹ https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/default/files/atoms/files/EO_203.pdf

² https://www.coldspringny.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlf416/f/uploads/vcs_police_reform_survey_presentation_052521.pdf

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Community participation

The survey produced a total of 382 responses, 367 submitted by email and 15 submitted via paper.

Considering the population of the Village of Cold Spring, as based on 2010 and 2020 US Census reports, approximately 19% of residents participated.

No corresponding community demographics were solicited, as consequence, none are reported.

Villagers had to request a survey, so results can be interpreted as not representative of all, just survey respondents.

Committee recommendations:

Future surveys should **always** include analysis, correlating responses with demographic information. For example, soliciting participation from teenage community members could reveal their thoughts on matters of great concern to them, such as public safety and drug use in the Village.

Community comments/concerns

Current survey demonstrates a need for ongoing communication from the Mayor to the public, as it relates to the role of the Cold Spring Police Department (CSPD). When and what roles other Law Enforcement Agencies play in Village Public safety. For example: a confusion about role/jurisdiction of CSPD and Putnam County Sheriff's office seems to be a common comment.

Committee recommendations:

Transparency is good, but elected officials must educate and inform the public on an ongoing basis about how the Village works...inform with facts before expecting informed opinions. It is the Committee's view that the onus for openness and robust communications rests with the elected officials. They need to go to the audience, not the reverse. Perhaps a paid monthly column in the Highland Current or the Putnam County News and Recorder; not unlike head of teachers' union in NYT, and/or and Ask the Mayor column on a regular basis.

And/or hold in-person/zoom meetings to facilitate attendance. Email notices could go out reminding people of VBOT meetings with proper link.

Community comments/concerns

Mental health incidents were not listed as a major public safety concern, but respondents put it first for training of officers.

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Committee recommendations:

Future surveys should enhance and gauge public awareness of current issues and, as much as possible, be based on experience, not “feelings.” However, the Committee recognizes that survey participants will likely share personal experiences/interactions with VCPD that contain emotional relevance. In the current survey, respondents seem to conflate issues that garner national attention with CSPD, rather than reporting their direct experiences with officers in the Village.

OIC’s role and response to the Survey:

Without daily rollcall of officers and, indeed, rarely, if ever, a department wide meeting, how does OIC communicate on an ongoing basis with officers on the values and goals of the CSPD? Is there a standard procedure for internal communications? What is it?

The Committee asks if the OIC could be asked to submit a regular, perhaps a quarterly written report to VBOT and posted on website that would compile key statistics with comparables from months or years before.

Committee recommendation:

The OIC should be provided resources to develop a simple, easy-to-use program where each officer would input daily activities and such data would be compiled automatically.

Advisory Committee compliments OIC for expecting officers to walk, weather permitting, at least once a shift.

Perhaps, a version of Park, Walk and Talk could be beneficial e.g., park car at one end of a street and walk up one side and down the other, talking to people as you go.

Community comments/concerns

Public needs to understand hiring challenges: Part/time with no benefits so turn over with young, women or people of color officers is high and difficult to address.

Therefore, if CSPD is going to consist primarily of retired NYPD what is the ongoing process for inculcating a diverse set of goals.

Committee recommendation:

Greater communications between OIC, Mayor, VBOT and the community on these challenges and steps being taken to address could be helpful.

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Data: Although the survey did not ask specific questions about how the CSPD reports on a regular basis, the Committee feels strongly that a new concise and computerized system for data collection be developed.

For example, current system for non-traffic incidents is a long, non-alphabetized list, useful for large jurisdictions. OIC knows it well, but it is proven unwieldy and time consuming.

Committee recommendation:

Is it possible to develop a simple, easy-to-use program where each officer would input daily activities and such data would be compiled automatically? Perhaps, a VBOT could be recruited to help OIC develop such a program compatible with computer already in police cars.

The Committee thanks the current administration for asking us to provide this assessment and advice, and the OIC for his willingness to provide all relevant information openly and comprehensively.

Respectfully,

ADHAC
Victor Burgos
Gretchen Dykstra
Sean Conway
Lithgow Osbourne
Doron Weber
Karen Jackson