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I. Executive Summary

Supervisor Yasmine A. Syed

On June 12, 2020, Governor Andrew Cuomo issued Executive Order No. 203 “to eliminate racial inequities in policing, to modify and modernize policing strategies, policies, procedures, and practices, and to develop practices to better address the particular needs of communities of color to promote public safety, improve community engagement, and foster trust.” Executive Order No. 203 was issued as a result of both the recent history of police-involved deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and numerous other Black Americans, but also the longer history of racially-biased law enforcement that contributed to the erosion of trust between Black Americans and law enforcement. That trust erosion culminated in nationwide protests throughout the summer of 2020, including a peaceful protest right here in Niskayuna on June 7, 2020, aimed at calling to attention the need for police reform and demanding action toward that end.

In response to the Governor’s Executive Order, and in response to our community demanding action, the town established the Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative (the Collaborative) in November 2020 comprised of community activists, elected officials, faith leaders, concerned citizens, law enforcement personnel and town administrative personnel. The Collaborative membership was divided into four (4) sub-workgroups each encompassing one the four (4) pillars outlined in Governor Cuomo’s *New York State Police Reform and Reinvention*
Collaborative: Resources & Guide for Public Officials and Citizens.\(^2\) The sub-workgroups were as follows:

1. Determining the Functions that Police Perform
2. Employing Smart and Effective Policing Standards and Strategies
3. Fostering Community-Oriented Leadership, Culture and Accountability
4. Recruiting and Supporting Excellent Personnel

Over the span of November 2020 through February 2021, the sub-workgroups endeavored to gather data, conduct research, engage in analysis and promulgate meaningful discussions centered on addressing their allotted pillars and fortifying the police-community relationship. Concurrently, and equally important, the Town Board engaged the services of CNA (Center for Naval Analyses) of Arlington, VA, to conduct a racial equity audit of the town’s police department. (see Appendix E for the audit report and recommendations). The CNA report was finalized in February 2021, the recommendations of which were considered by the Collaborative. The Collaborative delivered its draft report with recommendations for public comment on March 2, 2021 and subsequently a public hearing was held on March 9, 2021. The salient points of the recommendations contained in this report are as follows:

- Increase transparency, accountability and community policing efforts
- Promote the involvement of Niskayuna residents in the processes of the police department (i.e. recruiting, hiring, internal policy development)
- Foster trust and a better relationship with Black and Brown community members
- Recognize implicit and explicit biases and implement training to address those biases

- Consistently review the operations and personnel of the police department with a focus on building trust with minorities
- Place a greater focus on officer well-being

This document concludes with an implementation plan to ensure that the town complies with the standards set forth in this report, that meaningful reform is enacted and that collaboration continues in recognition of the fact that though the summative work is complete, the formative work now begins. The opportunity to make real and lasting change in our community is crucial and I have every confidence that we will.
Committee Members:
Supervisor Yasmine Syed
Councilman Bill McPartlon
Comptroller Ismat Alam
Confidential Secretary to the Supervisor, Brian Backus
Police Chief, Frances E. Wall
Deputy Police Chief, Michael Stevens
Acting Deputy Town Attorney, Alaina Finan
Deputy Town Attorney, Alexis Kim
Assistant District Attorney, Chandler Frontero
Public Defender, Stephen Signore
School Superintendent, Cosimo Tangorra, Jr.
Members of the Niskayuna Police Department


Acknowledgements:

I would like to acknowledge the Collaborative members for their dedication and steadfast commitment to producing the reports and recommendations contained in this work. Each and every one of the members dedicated hours of their time to attend meetings, sacrificing many evening hours and, for some, weekends. They listened to one another with open ears and minds and were respectful of one another’s views and experiences. Thank you to Confidential Secretary, Brian Backus, for serving as the Town and Community Stakeholder liaison. Your tireless efforts to schedule all of the meetings, compile all of the documents and seek out all of the needed information for the Collaborative ensured the ability to stay on task and on time.

Thank you to Councilwoman McGraw for spearheading the initiative to conduct a Racial Equity Audit of the town’s Police Department and for Comptroller Alam’s identifying the funding source and consultancy, CNA, to conduct the audit. Thank you to Town Board members Councilwoman McGraw, Councilwoman Jaquith, Councilman McPartlon and Councilman Della Ratta for your consideration and support of this document and this important effort. Thank you to the town residents for taking the time to review and submit your comments regarding this plan. Your input was appreciated and helped to make this plan stronger. Lastly, thank you to the Police Officers who served on the Collaborative for having the courage to address and find solutions for the issues identified as a result of this process and for your dedication to improving the field of law enforcement.

- Yasmine A. Syed, Supervisor, Town of Niskayuna
III. Niskayuna Police Department

On March 12, 2021, in response to discussions had with the Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative Committee and in response to public comments made during the March 9, 2021 Public Hearing, current Police Chief, Frances Wall issued a General Order with the following amended mission statement of the Niskayuna Police Department:

"The Niskayuna Police Department is committed to Public Safety, and reducing crime through effective implementation of crime prevention and intelligence driven policing strategies. We will actively investigate crimes when they occur to ensure the expeditious arrest and prosecution of criminal offenders.

We will deliver the highest quality police service possible including the fair and impartial enforcement of the law. We will work in partnership with the community and adhere to the framework of the U.S. and New York State Constitutions.

We will conduct ourselves as consummate professionals, both on and off duty."

The Niskayuna Police Department currently has a total of 29 sworn officers. Of those 29 sworn officers: four (4) are women, three (3) are African American officers, and one (1) officer is of North African descent.

A significant proportion of the Niskayuna Police Department’s enforcement activities deal with individuals who are not residents of the Town.

The Town allocated $3,789,714 for police services for the year 2021 out of its $26,445,467 total budget.
IV. Implementation Plan and Collaborative Recommendations

Implementation Plan:

Ratification of this document by Town Board resolution and its subsequent submittal to the Director of the Division of the Budget will suffice to satisfy the threshold set forth by Executive Order No. 203; however, the Town recognizes that the Collaborative Report and Recommendations should not be regarded as a static work and that collaboration needs to continue. To that end, the following plan for implementation is the embodiment of our commitment to the pivotal work that must continue. The steps are as follows:

1. Establish a Police Reform Implementation Task Force, to be considered a sub-committee of the Police and Public Safety Committee, by Town Board resolution comprised of the following:
   a. Town Supervisor or his/her designee
   b. Chairperson of Public Safety Committee
   c. Chief of Police or his/her designee
   d. Town Comptroller or his/her designee
   e. Town Attorney or his/her designee
   f. Five (5) community stakeholders (each Town Board member and the Town Supervisor, should suggest one individual for appointment)

2. Once established, the Police Reform Implementation Task Force shall then divide and rank the recommendations set forth in both the CNA audit report and the Collaborative’s report as follows:
   a. Recommendations shall be divided into two categories concerning financial implications:
i. Impactful to the Budget – if so determined, assign a projected value

ii. Not Impactful to the Budget

b. Recommendations shall be ranked into the following categories:

   i. Implement Now (within three months)

   ii. Implement Soon – if so determined, assign a projected implementation timeline (i.e. within six months, within a year, etc.)

3. The Police Reform Implementation Task Force shall provide a status update during monthly meetings of the Police and Public Safety Committees.

4. The Police Reform Implementation Task Force shall engage quarterly community conversations, with an emphasis on engaging minority stakeholders, to promote on-going dialogue, ensure transparency of process and provide public-facing progress updates.

5. The Police Reform Implementation Task Force shall be constituted with the primary goal of implementing said changes to the extent practicable by, or before, October 2022.

**Collaborative Committee Recommendations:**

All of the recommendations made by the Steering Committee are incorporated herein. The total Committee report can be found in Appendix B hereto. For those recommendations that the Town has already begun working on the implementation of, a response will be set forth below. The Town will work to address all other recommendations through the simultaneously established Police Reform Implementation Task Force. The Report promulgated by the Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative Committee will serve as a guide for all future discussions had by the Town and Police Reform Implementation Task Force. While all recommendations are taken seriously, the implementation of the recommendations will be influenced by budgetary constraints, union negotiations, and other related factors.

**Functions of the Police Recommendations from the Steering Committee:**

1. NPD should establish a clear process for ongoing communication between NPD and the community to help ensure that every person is safe and feels safe, regardless of race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, disability, familial status, immigration status, veteran status, health status, housing status, economic status, occupation, proficiency with the English language, or other personal characteristics.
2. NPD should move towards a comprehensive set of qualitative and quantitative metrics that define “procedural justice” in Niskayuna.

3. We support the CNA audit recommendation of routine body-worn camera use by officers while on duty, in addition to the existing Dashcam to ensure the quality of procedural justice.

4. The NPD and Niskayuna school district should follow the best practices for law enforcement for community policing in that the police should not be used in schools for routine discipline. The Niskayuna school district should engage in internal conversations about having police officers present in the schools, as student feedback has indicated that there are concerns among students.

5. NPD should invest in training officers in student outreach, as well as provide opportunities for mentorship while maintaining an open line of communication with the school administration. The Steering Committee supports the CNA audit’s preliminary recommendation for officers to do formal youth outreach, and to educate the students about their rights/the complaint process but disagree with the recommendations for SRO training.

6. In view of the dynamic nature of the Town’s needs, in order to fully assess what the staffing needs of the police department are, the community, town government, and the police need to engage in an ongoing dialog about how to ensure equitable procedural justice access for all community members. This process should be formalized at the Niskayuna town level and should be ongoing.

7. Analysis of data from the Town of Niskayuna and NPD, as well as information derived from research, analysis, and evaluation should be used in determining positions, duties, training objectives and roles within the department.

8. Ongoing community dialogue is needed to determine the need and opportunities for demilitarization/ civilianization of NPD, including for functions like data analysis, communications, citizen outreach, etc.

9. Continue to engage in cooperative and strategic advance planning with the organizers of public demonstrations.

10. Address the use of force in the context of assemblies to minimize injury.

11. Develop clear policies to manage disorderly members of large, otherwise peaceful assemblies.

12. If working with outside agencies. e.g Mental Health agencies, the Sheriff's department, outside police departments, clarify roles of each agency in advance and establish clear and defined responsibilities, and any planned use of force and dispersing techniques in order to protect civilians.
13. The Steering Committee supports Chief Wall’s strong commitment to keeping the department away from a “warrior” mindset. Militarizing of the police force will serve to alienate and otherwise harm the community.

**Response to Functions of Police Recommendations:**

The Niskayuna Police Department (NPD) continues to open its doors to our community for ongoing communications regarding how we can build stronger relationships and evolve with community needs. We currently hold a public safety meeting monthly, at which the public is welcome to attend and speak. There is also the ability to submit questions or comments directly to the Niskayuna Police Department through the Town of Niskayuna’s website. We are actively looking for any and all ideas on how the community would like to engage in communication further.

The NPD has already completed procedural justice training for our Officers through the newly established Police One Academy training as of January 1, 2021. We agree that the NPD needs to work towards establishing qualitative and quantitative metrics with respect to procedural justice in Niskayuna. Niskayuna Police Department has begun this process by undertaking a comprehensive policy manual revision, utilizing a nationally recognized law enforcement policy company named Lexipol, in which there will be newly formed policies addressing procedural justice. These policies will include department wide goal setting based on procedural justice, performance evaluations for all officers, and active community engagement to further discuss how we can better implement the tenants of procedural justice for our community.

The NPD agrees that body worn cameras must be a priority for the department, giving greater transparency of community interactions beyond the established patrol dash camera system. The Chief of Police has already begun the process of conducting research into different body camera systems. The body camera system implementation is a great undertaking that needs to be researched prior to implementation and will require exploring grant opportunities and forming a plan for funding. The Town Board via Resolution 2021-50 recently hired a grant writer and will have the grant writer review possible grant funding options for a body camera system.

The NPD agrees that its partnership with the Niskayuna School District should continue to not be used for routine discipline. In addition to the public safety committee meeting, there should be a monthly meeting with students from the school creating open dialogue regarding how to better foster relationships between the NPD and the student body. The Town will continue discussions with the Police Chief, and Police Reform Implementation Task Force regarding the possibility of creating a community resource officer position as a liaison for meetings such as these. The NPD looks to further its relationship with the school administration.
by continuing the well-established, ongoing lines of communication. The NPD will be requesting input from the school administration on how the Department can further establish mentorship opportunities, with student-led feedback on these opportunities. Currently, the NPD does assist with school tours of the department, allows for internship programs with student ride alongs, and on a routine basis has officers walking through all the schools in the district for informal contact. Although the NPD believes a well-run SRO program has immense value in further establishing police and student relationships, the Town respects the wishes of the school members in finding other ways to continue student engagement and relationships.

The NPD believes that a large piece of providing procedural justice access for all community members is the availability of adequate staffing. Niskayuna Police Department agrees with the recommendation in the commissioned CNA report about their staffing recommendations, specifically regarding filling both the vacated Lieutenant position and the community resource officer positions. We believe these positions are crucial to the service of our community. The Town Supervisor, Town Board and Town Comptroller will work with the Police Reform Implementation Task Force to continue conversations regarding the juggling of budgetary restrictions with staffing levels to create a plan to improve staffing as it relates to the goals of the Collaborative Steering Committee. The NPD has begun establishing a more comprehensive data collection system and will be utilizing this data to further develop deployment of resources to create a data-driven police force. NPD’s continued review and implementation of the new policy manual will encompass data-driven specialized positions, duties, training objectives and roles within our department.

The NPD acknowledges the need for further ongoing community dialogue and outreach. Although policing is generally quasi-military based from a discipline and command structure, the NPD does not actively prioritize or promote militarization within the organization. The NPD will be looking to seek further input regarding this from the community with ongoing community-based surveys.

The NPD has a long-standing history of engaging cooperative and strategic advanced planning with organizers of public demonstrations and will look to further enhance this relationship with the various community organizations for future planned events. NPD’s continued review and implementation of the Department’s new policy manual will specifically address the use of force in the context of assemblies, as well as assist in the development of clear policies to manage disorderly members of large, otherwise peaceful assemblies. These policies will have established guidelines for the authorization of and deployment of outside agencies when appropriate. The NPD has already begun furthering officer training on civil rights and lawful assemblies through the Police One Academy trainings and has also started to send officers to civil disturbance training for a more hands-on, advanced training. With respect to Mental Health agency deployment, the NPD has recently established a stronger relationship with Northern Rivers Mobile Crisis and utilizes their services in a partnership for Mental Health related calls on an almost daily basis to better serve the community.
The NPD continues to view itself as being the “guardians” of the community and has memorialized this in the preface section of the new policy manual as the Department’s guiding principle.

**Employing Smart and Effective Policing Standards and Strategies Recommendations from the Steering Committee:**

1. The Police Chaplaincy Program: This program will utilize area clergy to assist officers in performance of their tasks. Clergy will assist in “death-notification” as well as aid in other emotionally charged situations as deemed needed by the on-duty officer—follow up to domestic situations, acts of violence to persons and/or property, etc.

2. Creation of a Community Affairs Officer position, who can liaison with churches, LGBTQIA communities, English as a New Language, speakers of language other than English, and Limited English proficiency residents. This officer should have opportunities to integrate members of immigrant communities into community discussions on policing. Use Niskayuna School staff members with knowledge of LGBTQIA issues, diversity situations, etc. as well as other community leaders, this group will utilize various community resources and integrate it into the police department through [but not limited to] officer continual education, officer resources during situations, etc.

3. Consider working with experts and members of the disability community to create training programs to educate officers to identify and work with disabled community members and their families.

4. Better education on culture and offering courses to officers to obtain a basic language skill in most common languages other than English in the Town as well as better access to translators.

5. Promote and market the monthly Town Council meetings on Policing as a way to create better community feedback. Meetings could start with a format similar to “Privilege of the Floor”, where members of the community are invited to share experiences, grievances, and concerns. It is the responsibility of the Town Council member to assign follow up and ensure adequate responses to individuals voicing concerns. Accountability will be in the form of a monthly report to the greater Town Council. To ensure confidentiality, reporting will be in generalities, unless the Council and Police Chief deem necessary to report specifics.

6. Annual Community Forum To Address Issues in Community: In a Town Hall format, open discussion on community issues and need policing consideration:
a. Discussing how policies, culture, engagement, and other mechanisms can change to create a more transparent system built on trust.
b. Communicating a willingness to improve as well as acknowledge past and continuing harm.
c. Open forum to discuss significant issues such as [but not limited to] racism, drugs, traffic, robbery, sexual assaults and domestic violence.

Response to Employing Smart and Effective Policing Standards and Strategies Recommendations:

The NPD continues to review and implement the Department’s new policy manual, as well as provide ongoing in-service trainings, in order to reinforce and further outline the NPD’s deployment of smart and effective policing standards and strategies. The Police Chaplaincy Program has been a long-standing program in the Department, and we will seek to utilize this program in new appropriate ways. The NPD believes that when a plan can be created for a community resource officer position to be filled, it is anticipated that this position would be a liaison for all of our various community groups and appropriate resources that will best serve our community. This position would have the ability to have more real time feedback from the various community groups on how we can enhance our service for their individual needs. The Town understands the importance of and the need for community-based policing; however, this goal as it relates to funding, a more detailed plan will need to be developed to provide a plan for funding within budgetary constraints. The possibility of a grant funded position could also be explored.

The NPD believes in partnerships with experts and members of the disability communities to better service these specific communities within our town. Our officers have received in-service training regarding responding to calls when person(s) with disabilities are involved, and will continue to be further educated with ongoing trainings through the Police One Academy. The NPD currently has implemented the Take Me Home Project in conjunction with partnering with some of our more vulnerable community members who are voluntarily signed up for this service to better service their needs when appropriate. The NPD believes this particular area could be a point of emphasis for a community resource officer upon the creation of this position.

The NPD does have resources available for interpreting that have been provided to all officers for any real time needs with the interpretation of common languages, other than English, when appropriate. The Town in conjunction with the NPD will certainly explore opportunities available to its officers regarding learning the basics of a second language, as funding allows. The Town will also take into consideration the ability of future applicants to be able to speak a second language in its hiring evaluation process.

The NPD supports the recommendation of promoting the monthly Police and Public Safety meetings and believe having a privilege of the floor could greatly enhance the direct
communication with our community when issues arise. The current structure of the Police and Public Safety meeting does already provide for public comment, but does not have a prescribed privilege of the floor as a matter of meeting order. The Town of Niskayuna website provides for comment submission specific to any issues that arise in the community that need police attention, but NPD believes this system also should be further promoted. The NPD is currently looking into ways of improving communication and feedback through community surveys and social media and would like to continue to engage in ongoing community input on how to best provide new channels of communication. The NPD supports having a community forum annually, but would seek this discussion to be agenda driven, with the ability for the NPD to be able to research potential questions or problem area comments in advance to have the ability to provide researched problem analysis and potential solution driven responses to community members. The NPD believes in transparency and real time open dialogue with our community members, and would seek this input continually, outside of the forum, for any identified areas of need from the community. Additionally, the NPD will work with the Town and the Police Reform Implementation Task Force to ensure transparency through the posting of Department policies as well as use of force data on the Town’s website.

**Recommendations for Fostering Community Oriented Leadership, Culture & Accountability from the Steering Committee:**

1. Develop a formal performance evaluation process for sworn and non-sworn personnel, a database that will keep track of the promotion related data, and analysis to identify racial, ethnic or gender-based disparities.

2. Define the community-police relationship that the community would want through stakeholder survey(s) to assess attitudes, priorities and needs, and consider a leadership-track training program that prioritizes community policing.

3. Educate officers about their ability to access their personnel files, and that NPD should develop a General Order that outlines the performance evaluation process.

4. To incentivize personnel, NPD should increase participation in creation of goals, internal/external recognition, awards, training and increased responsibilities, and promotions.

5. When NPD is able to roll out a community policing program, we recommend the establishment of awards for excellence in community policing and include community-policing standards and accomplishments in evaluation and promotion criteria.

6. Publicize individual officer achievements.

7. The police department should not hire officers who refuse to sign a waiver for release of information.
8. Track the use of force in the officers’ annual evaluation. All uses of force should be reviewed during the performance review. Any excessive/ outlier amount of use of force should be reviewed during the regular personnel evaluation as well as after the incident. Implement remedial training/ corrective action if an officer is found to use force in an unjustified fashion.

9. Identify a way that the subject’s narrative is included in the use of force report to allow a more unbiased review of the report.

10. The Steering Committee recommends banning chokeholds and recommends that in use of force incidents which involve multiple officers, all officers should submit forms, not just one. NPD should produce and publish a publicly available annual report that summarizes the use of force incidents in the department.

11. Create an independent Civilian Review Board as recommended by the NYS Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative Resource Guide. This may allow for better scrutiny over incidents of force that are more severe than others. Implement a process in which unbiased, external reviewers examine use of force incidents within the NPD, including those offenses which are not considered to be most serious or severe (non-deadly physical force incidents).

12. Use of force incidents involving any officer should be recorded through dashcam and body worn camera.

13. NPD should develop policy detailing how the command staff will debrief with officers after critical incidents.

14. The Civilian Review Board should review all substantiated complaints of misconduct and settlements or adverse verdicts in lawsuits to improve policies and processes. The Civilian Review Board should report to the Niskayuna Town Board and the Supervisor. The Steering Committee recommends a Police General Order that ensures full cooperation with any investigation.

15. Niskayuna Town Board should establish community advisory groups, the groups should represent the larger community with targeted recruiting in an open fashion through public outreach. The groups can serve to provide tailored input and presentation of options for complex issues that the town and police face. Selection for participation should be determined based on the focus of each advisory group. The advisory groups should report to the appropriate committee of the Niskayuna Town Board, and the Supervisor.
16. Off-duty officers must avoid inappropriate behaviors (e.g., harassment, bullying, trolling, doing activities that would attract law enforcement attention, binge-drinking, making controversial social media posts, etc.) both in-person and online.

17. Establish and publicize an easy and accessible process for members of the community to report complaints about police misconduct. Consider multiple methods, including online, hard-copy, telephone, etc. The complaint process should be publicized.

18. Design and conduct meaningful community surveys and follow them up with interactive public discussion forums. The Steering Committee recommends reaching out to local academic institutions for assistance with survey design and implementation plans.

Response to Fostering Community Oriented Leadership, Culture and Accountability Recommendations:

The NPD also supports the recommendations to develop a formal performance evaluation process for sworn and non-sworn personnel and are currently working on this recommendation through the review and implementation of a new Department policy manual. The NPD is still researching the best method to track these documents, as well as promotion related data and analysis. The NPD is currently researching the best approach to a full assessment, community-based survey to better define the community-police relationship. NPD has historically prioritized community policing informally throughout the Department, but the Town realizes that a more formal approach is necessary and will be doing an analysis with community feedback on how to construct and implement this.

The NPD has communicated to its officers that personnel files may be accessed upon their request and will be implementing a full process through the implementation of a new policy manual.

The NPD will be implementing recommendations with regard to public acknowledgement and awards programs through the implementation of the new policy manual.

The NPD will not hire any officer who refuses any part of a required background check as prescribed by applicable law and policy, to include waiver of release for information.

The NPD is currently creating a data base to track use of force as well as traffic stop data. The NPD will research the possibility of utilizing a data base to track annual evaluations as prescribed in the new manual policy. Remedial training/corrective action has always been a priority for the NPD and will continue to be utilized in identified areas of need.

The NPD will need to research the recommendation with respect to use of force events, as there may be legal conflicts with regard to taking statements from arrested individuals that force was used upon. Further, taking statements from individuals that may have had force used upon them who have been taken into custody due to MHL 9.41 may not be possible or appropriate.
The NPD has banned the chokehold with respect to any chokehold used outside of authorized deadly use of force as prescribed by article 35 of the NYS Penal Law, but still currently allows it in the extremely limited situation where it may be their only means of force available when lawful deadly force is authorized as prescribed by law.

The NPD would like to actively continue ongoing dialogue regarding the creation of a civilian review board. The creation of this board is a great undertaking that would require extensive research, training, and discussion. This will be a topic of discussion for the simultaneously created Police Reform Implementation Task Force.

The NPD and Town of Niskayuna currently receive formal complaints through the Town of Niskayuna website, as well as in person complaints that can be filed at the NPD in person or via phone. NPD will continue to review this process to make sure it is as easy and accessible as possible for the community.

The NPD is currently researching the best method to deploy community surveys for real time feedback and would incorporate these findings in potential public forums for discussion.

**Recommendations for Recruiting and Supporting Excellent Personnel from the Steering Committee:**

1. Encourage and formalize civilian input during the recruitment and hiring process. This can be achieved through the formation of a diverse civilian board with rotating membership with knowledge of the community’s needs and desires. Not only will this ensure that the citizens have input, but also that through their knowledge of the community, the board can help NPD screen out officers who are not a good match for the community, esp. if they have a history of unprofessional conduct.

2. Additional 1 FTE for a data analyst position. This will allow for robust data analysis to better serve the community’s needs while ensuring that the community’s civil liberties and rights to privacy are respected and protected. Such data analysis is necessary not just to ensure that resources are directed effectively, it also serves to inform the leadership of challenges that range from disparities in policing, to the disproportionate use of force to a greater need for community outreach. This data analysis can help set appropriate short term, intermediate and long-term training goals.

3. Increase recruitment efforts to promote greater linguistic, ethnic, gender and racial diversity to better represent all the communities they police. The NPD shall focus on reaching out to potential recruits who have a greater knowledge/background in a wider range of cultural and religious areas.

4. Outreach to Asian, Hispanic, and African American clergy not just to benefit from their cultural and community perspective about serving the community, but
also to request help with recruitment efforts. Expand clergy outreach to include a wider selection of faiths.

5. Advertise and promote the announcement for the civil service exam, test prep to the community via town website/newsletter, other appropriate means, as well as a robust digital strategy to reach town residents before civil service testing application deadline. Incorporate “Coffee with a cop” program, as well as regularly scheduled sessions at the library to include information on the civil service exam and test prep.

6. Niskayuna graduates should be encouraged to consider serving in the local police department as a worthwhile way to serve their community. We recommend a robust discussion with the school district to identify ways that such career paths can be encouraged and can include venues like career education/career day presentations as well as others that the school district may identify.

7. Surveying the community for input is necessary. There may be many venues for that, including that NPD may participate in the “Thought Exchange” type program.

8. NPD to establish both short- and long-term policing goals and then align its training with these goals. Goals to be targeted in the short term to achieve specific results in how the police functions. Long-term goals to be designed to move the department forward as society changes and the requirements of the police force change with it. Both sets of goals should be evaluated and reformulated each year. Involve officers in the formulation of short- and long-term goals designed to both meet current needs and move the individual and the department forward.

9. Niskayuna should allocate adequate funds specifically for training and long-term career advancement for its police workforce.

10. Use of professional grant writing expertise, possibly as a shared resource with the Town to apply for State and Federal training grants available for law enforcement agencies.

11. Encourage officers to seek out opportunities to improve their individual skills and their knowledge base and ensure that the staffing of the department allows for these opportunities.

12. Pursue NY Division of Criminal and Justice Service accreditation.
13. Establish police-community relation metric(s).

14. Encourage training opportunities between NPD officers and officers in other police and fire departments both on the local and state level.

15. NPD should engage in learning about and implementing Trauma Informed Policing.

16. De-escalation training, reality-based training, best practice training should be regularly reviewed both in group and individual settings with officers.

17. After major incidents, require debriefings in accord with policies with the purpose of understanding what worked and what might be improved in the future. Debriefings are not punitive but to recognize accomplishments and improve future response. Establish a crisis debriefing team that meets and helps those involved in an incident, by working through both short and long-term consequences.

18. Develop and implement policies, practices and training that encourage the safe and proper management of bystander behaviors.

19. Ongoing Implicit bias training for all levels of NPD is recommended. Instead of generic training, we recommend meaningful training and exercises that incorporate NPD’s data analytics and inform the officers regarding local issues like the history of race relations. Local well reputed experts can be sought who can provide meaningful training that incorporates information relevant to the Capital District area.

20. Training/Education programs available through both the town and police department that should be designed to educate and build cohesiveness. The first responders across different Niskayuna departments who show up for incidents should have undergone bias trainings that meet similar (high) standards. Training/Education programs available through both the town and police department that should be designed to educate and build cohesiveness.

21. Mental health emergencies are some of the most difficult challenges that the NPD members respond to within the community. Mental health and domestic dispute calls within the NPD make up over 350 calls per year. Due in part to our current health systems’ failure to provide adequate outreach and mental health services on a consistent basis, police officers are often called upon to deal with those in mental health crisis. It is imperative that NPD leadership has procedures in place that incorporate best practices for dealing with these issues. NPD officers
had complained in the course of the Collaborative meetings about inadequate emergency mental health resources in the community when dealing with individuals in the midst of mental health crises. The Steering Committee recommends close coordination between local, county and state agencies to look for gaps in the existing system resources and to identify solutions. Schenectady County’s recent agreement with Northern Rivers Mobile Crisis is a new development which may alleviate this issue. Since the program has just launched recently, the Collaborative is looking forward to its success.

22. Use training resources that are already available in the area. Examples include, but are not limited to: Mental Health First Aid for Public Safety (MHFA), this course does have communication skills built in as training points and is supported by CIT International, IACP, etc. https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/, Justice Clearing House. https://www.justiceclearinghouse.com/calendar-page/. The group supported the current use of Lexipol. Local police officers in the Capital region who are known to have expertise in training in de-escalation and carry out such training. The NY Office of Mental Health can provide train the trainer classes.

23. The NPD should take advantage of training opportunities provided by other departments and agencies in the area and, when available, statewide.

24. Pursue and maintain DCJS accreditation.

25. Evaluate NPD for quality of training, and then strive to improve the metrics. Since this is an area that is undergoing immense change at present, we recommend a formal relationship with local academic organizations and, or research groups who specialize.

26. The Steering Committee recommends regularly scheduled Leadership Luncheons where the department’s officers can spend time (in person or remotely) learning from outside speakers who can range from senior law enforcement leaders to academics to clergy members. The Capital region in general and Niskayuna in particular have an abundance of highly achieved individuals who are considered experts in their fields. In addition to outside experts, the Steering Committee strongly encourages seeking qualified local volunteers for the Leadership Luncheon. Invite mental health professionals to Leadership luncheons.

27. Officer driven wellness programs should be encouraged. A department wide wellness approach that not only destigmatizes the process of help seeking, but also encourages it, shall help create a resilient police force, which will ultimately enable compassionate policing for the community. The departmental culture should value, and incentivize physical fitness, proper nutrition, and rest. NPD
should create opportunities for wellness practices like mindfulness and meditation training for officers. Supervisors, leaders, and trainers should evaluate police fatigue, stress, post-traumatic stress, health, safety, and injury with officers in a coherent, supportive, and compassionate fashion. NPD should collect baseline and ongoing data on officer fatigue, health, and stress, as well as consider shift lengths’ effects on officer wellbeing. NPD needs to increase data collection about accidents, near misses, and injuries. The department shall maintain an easily accessible regularly updated list of counselors and clergy who are trained and available for helping officers deal with issues related to the stress of their job as well as to help them with difficulties from outside their job that impact on their mental health.

28. Review staffing levels needed and establish limits for overtime/continuous shifts. Analyze data to determine the number of times 16–22-hour shifts are implemented and if there is a disproportionate number of these being assigned to the same officers. Consider shift structures that allow officers to get more sleep, work less overtime, and improve their work-home life balance.

29. NPD leadership to explore participation in law enforcement focused suicide prevention programs that are being offered by outside agencies.

**Response to Recruiting and Supporting Excellent Personnel Recommendations:**

The NPD would like to continue ongoing dialogue with the Town of Niskayuna and community regarding the recommendations related to hiring as it will require more research and development. The NPD has already implemented outside panel members for a recent assignment to the Detective Division. The NPD strives to be a more data driven police agency. Currently, the Department is utilizing a Detective who has the technical skill to achieve parts of this recommendation, but he is limited with how much time he can dedicate for the data analysis due to also having separate job duties as a Detective. NPD will continue discussions with the Town Supervisor, Town Board and Police Reform Implementation Task Force regarding potential funding for a dedicated data analyst position.

The NPD welcomes and would certainly support any and all help from clergy who are willing to help with wider faiths and diverse cultural and community perspectives. The NPD would request the input of interested Clergy in the community regarding moving forward with this outreach.

The NPD will continue to research how to better recruit for vacancies within the confines of Civil Service Law. While the current civil service exam announcements are already promoted by Schenectady County Civil Service, we would certainly agree that
this could be further promoted through the Town of Niskayuna website, as well as applicable town social media. The NPD would seek community assistance in developing any prep programs for the civil service tests.

The NPD and with the support of the Niskayuna School District, would welcome promotion of policing careers in the schools in partnership with NPD.

The NPD is in the process of researching the best methods to engage in community surveys. The NPD already has goal setting on all levels of the department as a part of its policy manual and will continue to do so with the implementation of a new policy manual.

The Town of Niskayuna has funds available for training and long-term career advancement for its police force, and currently has police members utilizing them to further their career through higher educations.

The Town Board recently, by Resolution 2021-50 hired a grant writer. The Town through the Police Reform Implementation Task Force will work the grant writer to identify potential funding sources.

The NPD does currently encourage staff to improve their individual skills for individual career growth and allows them to take trainings outside of the department when applicable.

The NPD is actively pursuing NYS DCJS accreditation and has recently provided accreditation training to leadership in hopes of moving forward with this process. The NPD realizes the need for this and will do so through the implementation of a new policy manual, training, goal setting, and community feedback.

The NPD was recently engaged in joint training with multiple community police and fire agencies with a rescue task force training. NPD recognizes the necessity of joint trainings for mutual understandings on critical incident responses. There is also a newly developed Schenectady County Training Committee, for shared training amongst local police departments. The NPD currently has two officers trained as trainers to conduct reality-based training in conjunction with scenario de-escalation training and will be implementing this program moving forward. Purchases for equipment for this training are complete and will continue to be budgeted for moving forward.

The NPD will be implementing a mandatory debriefing policy in conjunction with its newly formed policy manual.
The NPD has already completed training in Implicit Bias for all NPD members, and will continue to do so on an annual basis. NPD will evaluate the availability of the necessary resources and staff availability to incorporate meaningful exercises utilizing this recommendation.

The NPD has begun partnering with Northern Rivers Mobile Crisis to address the recommendations of the Steering Committee relative to responding to mental health related calls in the community and has also tasked a member of the NPD to be a liaison between the available Schenectady County resources and NPD to be able to provide for our community needs. Northern Rivers has conducted mental health specific training to NPD this month and will continue to provide training as requested. The NPD has further assigned mental health training through Police One Academy and will continue to do so on an annual basis.

The NPD has recommitted itself to training department wide. The NPD researches training opportunities on an identified community and department need basis. The NPD will continue to send its members to trainings that are identified as being appropriate depending on need.

The NPD is currently researching and working with the Town’s Attorney’s Office to establish an officer wellness program utilizing the Asher model, as well as establishing early employee identification for the necessity of officer wellness through a prevention policy in our new policy manual.

The NPD continually evaluates the need for staff and is working in conjunction with the Niskayuna Town Board and Town Comptroller in order to meet the identified staffing needs while remaining within the Town’s budgetary constraints. The NPD believes staffing is a major component in not only accomplishing the recommendations of this committee, but also for the wellness and safety of our department members.

V. Conclusion

The Town recognizes the recommendations contained herein as a collective effort made by the Steering Committee as a whole and thank each representative for their tireless efforts in creating the list of thoughtful recommendations. The Town further recognizes the Police Chief and the Niskayuna Police Department for their commitment to fulfilling the mission of the Police Reform and Restoration Collaborative. Throughout the Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative process the Niskayuna Police Department has been actively engaged with the Collaborative. In advance of the adoption of the implementation plan the NPD has taken the initiative in each of the four major areas, outlined herein, to begin the process of reform and reinvention.
The Town recognizes this as a work in progress, but is very proud of its residents, stakeholders, employees, and leaders for coming together to create positive change.

VI. List of Appendices

Supporting Documents that informed the development of the Collaborative Plan

A. NYS Executive Order #203
B. Niskayuna Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative Steering Committee Report
C. Resolution 2020-159
D. Resolution 2020-189
E. CNA Racial Bias Audit Final Report
F. Sub Group analysis and recommendations
G. UCC Call data from 2014-2020
H. Use of Force Data
I. Kick-off meeting Presentation dated November 16, 2020
J. Resolution 2021-44
K. Niskayuna Police Department Data Presentation