

Village of Red Hook – Police Reform & Re-invention Project 2021

WORKING DOCUMENT – DRAFT FEB 5- 2021

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Here in the Village of Red Hook we have worked hard to create a smart and modern Red Hook Police Department (RHPD) to protect and serve our residents. This work began in earnest 10 years ago and continues. An underlying concept has always been “community policing” and maintaining a guardian role as its primary policy and operational goal. Red Hook and its elected officials acknowledge the strength and benefits of a diverse community so we welcome people of all races, cultures and ethnicity.

For general knowledge, the village itself is home to 2,000 residents and is the economic hub within the Town of Red Hook (Town) which has 11,000 residents. The Town is also home to Bard College which educates about 2,000 students annually in the academic year cycle, a significant percentage of whom live off-campus. Demographic data for the Village from the 2018 US Census indicates the base population is 95% White; 3.5% Hispanic; 1.7% Asian; 0.66% Black. Median household income is \$62,000. Demographic data for the Town is 89% White; 5.7% Hispanic; 3% Black; 4% Asian. Town median household income is \$85,000. Bard College reports its demographics on an annual basis to a national data base. The current Bard College data indicates a student body that is 53% White; 11% Hispanic; 14% International; 6% Black; 4% Asian. (Technically, this should be reflected in the Town Census composite data) Bard also attracts large numbers of visitors to world-class concerts and other events. The well-regarded Red Hook Central School District (RHCS D) draws its student population from the same geographic areas (village/town) so has equivalent demographics as stated above. It operates out of three separate buildings; an elementary school, the middle school and the high school. RHPD provides contracted service to RHCS D for School Resource Officer (SRO) services and to the Town for road patrol and related law enforcement coverage. The commercial center of the Village is on two NYS highways with Average Annual Daily Traffic counts that indicate over 10,000 cars a day pass through the main thoroughfares.

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RHPD is a small department, a composite of full and part-time officers. It operates within NYS Civil Service guidelines, under the management of one Sergeant who reports to the Village Board. There are three full-time officers and optimally 10 part-time officers; one of whom acts as a detective. Currently there are seven part-time officers, plus the three full-time and one part-time secretary. We do not have 24/7 shift coverage and rely on NYS P and DC SO for non-shift coverage and back-up. Communication and computer data linkages are with the New York State Police. RHPD has no SWAT Team or military style vehicles.

Budgeted annual costs to operate RHPD total \$593,500 which equates to 26.75% of the overall Village budget. RHPD generates revenue from contracts and grants which run at \$203,000. Tax cap rules apply to all village departments and funding availability is limited. The Village has remained within the cap for the last 5 years and this year the cap is 1.31%

In August of 2020 Governor Cuomo challenged and required all municipalities to review and generate a Plan to reform and reinvent their police departments after we all witnessed many tragic and fatal outcomes involving police interaction with Black civilians that year. Although we are tasked with police redesign/reform by NYS EO 203, we are also committed to assuring that all people, local residents, students or visitors, understand that our police department operates in the role of guardians, to protect the Red Hook community as a whole. But, we witnessed events across the nation in 2020 where we actually saw police interaction with people of color go horribly wrong that reverberated into all police departments; George Floyd and Breonna Taylor to name some, and over other years there have been many others. We also saw the result of civilian activity that resulted in death to people of color; Ahmaud Arbery and Trayvon Martin come to mind, and over the years many others.

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All of us have the duty to prevent this and a special moment in time is here. Some of us have more authority and opportunity to act and assure that underlying biases and errors of judgement do not persist. The elected officials here in Red Hook want to assert our belief in the need for continuously upgrading all our operations, including police. Red Hook strives to have a police department that is valued and respected by all of our community and a department that respects our citizens; as well as a community that values and respects diversity.

Over the past several months we have worked with the Dutchess County Police Reform Collaborative team that provided discourse, policy review and professional expertise to help Red Hook's local elected officials and police department leadership work on the project. We also had the benefit of several community forums and face to face stakeholder meetings; plus multiple workshop meetings with stakeholders and the public providing input.

With assistance from our stakeholders, we developed a list of key themes, concepts and words that arose in each of the forums and contacts. Ideas developed from these community forums, direct meetings, stake-holder review all lead to certain steps we can take:

TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Current –

Each month the police department provides the Village Board with a summary report and attaches a detailed report of activity. This includes incidents, arrests, vehicle and traffic tickets issued.

On major cases, police management notifies the Mayor and generates press releases.

Plan –

At six month intervals, for numeric/data strength, add a demographic breakout on arrests so an analysis of minority component can be noted. And, explore any method to identify V&T demographics that may arise with changes in NYS law and regulations.

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Early in the project we committed to body worn cameras. The Village has already reviewed and ordered Watchguard body worn cameras. These will require police policy manual insertion and possible inclusion in the collective bargaining agreement.

BUILDING TRUST THOROUGH SUSTAINED RELATIONSHIPS

Current –

RHPD currently holds strong respect and trust in the community. The village looks for and expects community policing with the guardian mindset. Interactions already exist in many forms; SRO at the schools, interaction at professional levels for school security, details at high school games, Senior Prom programs, Bard events, interaction at professional levels with Bard Administration, sponsoring and helping with major community events. (Eggscramble; Hardscrabble; Winterfest; RH Halloween). Officers have received NYS Awards for Valor and County DWI Enforcement Awards that keep us safe; plus life-saving awards.

Plan –

Do more: In order to have a more identifiable, physical presence in the community, establish a required foot patrol protocol for the RHPD. Set a required walking schedule per daylight shift for the village center to also include/ maximize bike patrol in season.

Communicate the Mission Statement.

Restore the Bike Rodeo – Tour de Red Hook. (Helmets, tune-up, agility/safety) for young bike riders.

EQUITY

Current –

Hiring practices are thorough and include review of social media presence by applicants. We hire the best candidates and are predominantly a part-time officer model so we can screen without civil service list ranking. We are an Equal Opportunity Employer EOE entity and state that prominently.

Procedural Justice and Implicit Bias Training is underway for current staff.

Annual firearms and Use of Deadly Force training already occur.

Plan –

Continue deep, thorough review and vetting of candidates and hire those who understand Community Policing and that have already attended a certified police academy. Require [annual](#) Procedural Justice, [Crisis Intervention](#) and Implicit Bias Training ([or updates](#)) in policy and labor contracts and consider other in-service training requirements or incentives.

Continue working with the Dutchess County Human Rights Commission on a best practice for communicating a social compact complaint or a police complaint to parties that need to know and take action.

CLARITY AND ACCESSIBILITY OF INFORMATION

Current –

The Village of Red Hook PD is dispatched on emergency calls via 911 calls made to that Dutchess County based service. This is a very professional operation and puts radio calls out to the field for radio acceptance and response. In our area there are three main agencies: NYSP, DCSO and RHPD but our PD is not the full-time responder for Town calls. RHPD is not staffed for local, in-house dispatch so local phone calls (non 911) roll to NYSP dispatch who can radio our staff or respond. Neither NYSP or DCSO have enough presence in the Town or Village to guarantee timely response...we fill that gap with a locally managed department. RHPD has vehicles and uniforms clearly marked with our name, logo. Routine patrol is in the Village of Red Hook, not Tivoli, and on Town roads during contract time periods. Serious, life safety calls from the Town are responded to even off-shift.

Plan –

All officers wear standard issue, dark blue uniforms with their name tag and uniform patches to identify them. Make sure that all have business cards to present to the citizens they encounter. Any decision to publish individual photos or more specific info on social media will be made with serious regard for employee safety and protection and may require collective bargaining review as a condition of employment.

Complete the migration of the RHPD website to the latest platform [by June 1, 2021](#).

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THE FUTURE

The Village of Red Hook fully intends to activate and install the various items in the Plan but it does not intend to stop there. The plan will be sent off to NYS by April 1, but the included steps will take time, oversight and management work to implement. Some are geared for near-term application and immediate impact; there are others to work on long-term and for broader impact. The Village is the named employer of RHPD and the Village Board has direct budget, hiring, discipline and operations review authority of all departments.

Plan –

Create a volunteer, formal advisory committee to the Village Board. This will enable in-depth contact and communication with the minority community to continue with this project and further explore how we can best assure that all our residents, visitors, students know that Red Hook, as a village, is actively involved in work to eradicate racism and related biases and that the Village welcomes diversity. [Explore the concept of a new county-wide subcommittee to the current Criminal Justice Council.](#)

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TASK ITEMS – LIST – NOT TO BE LEFT HERE AT FINAL VERSION—INCLUDED ELSEWHERE

- Set a shift component of time for foot patrol/bike patrol, seasonally adjusted.
- Purchase and utilize body worn cameras with the related insertion of policy procedures; organized labor contract and the related budgeting.
- Assure attendance and annual updates of Procedural Justice, Implicit Bias and Crisis Intervention training. Further develop an internal training capacity with role playing.
- Explore the county Criminal Justice Council subcommittee concept.
- Continue the SRO Program with Red Hook Schools and events at Bard College.
- Redevelop contractual expectations and analysis of town exposures with an eye toward increased sharing and transfer/consolidation.
- Data compilation and review every six months on arrest/v&t demographics, presented to Village Board
- Update and staff website/social media link for RHPD, circulate good news and compliments.
- Business cards for all patrol officers and management.
- Work with HRC/Others/PD to develop a social compact complaint process that works best for BIPOC community. TIER COMPLAINTS? – Meaning, tier levels on nature?

Link for Board Completion

https://www.nycom.org/images/documents/POLICE/GOVNYS_Police_Reform_and_Reinvention_Guidance_PDF.pdf