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Contact: City Manager's Office

Police Reform Plan

The City of Watertown is working on its Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative Plan as directed by Governor Andrew M. Cuomo in his Executive Order No. 203. The plan must be adopted and submitted to New York State by April 1, 2021.

The City is seeking public input on the plan. Virtual public listening sessions will be held on February 10th and 17th at 7 p.m. The links for the meetings will be released at a later date. A draft of the plan will be released in early March for public comments.

The guidance from the State on what should be in the plan includes the attached list of questions. The list of questions can also be found on the City's website (www.watertown-ny.gov) under "Press Releases." If members of the public have comments pertaining to the questions or anything else relating to the Police Department, they should email policereform@watertown-ny.gov.

For further information contact the Kenneth A. Mix, City Manager at 785-7730.

Police Reform Collaborative Process: Key Questions and Insights for Consideration

(excerpt from Executive Chamber guidance document)

What Functions Should the Police Perform?

1. Determining the Role of the Police

- How should the police and the community engage with one another?
- What role do the police currently play in your community?
- Should you deploy social service personnel instead of or in addition to police officers in some situations?
- Can your community reduce violence more effectively by redeploying resources from policing to other programs?
- What function should 911 call centers play in your community?
- Should law enforcement have a presence in schools?

2. Staffing, Budgeting, and Equipping Your Police Department

- What are the staffing needs of the police department the community wants?
- Should components of the police department be civilianized?
- How should the police engage in crowd control? Should the police be “demilitarized”?

Employing Smart and Effective Policing Standards and Strategies

1. Procedural Justice and Community Policing

- Specific policing strategies that have raised concerns among the public
 - “Broken windows” and “stop and frisk”
 - Discriminatory or bias-based stops, searches and arrests
 - Chokeholds and other restrictions on breathing
 - Use of force for punitive or retaliatory reasons
 - Pretextual stops

- Informal quotas for summonses, tickets or arrests
- Shooting at moving vehicles and high speed pursuits
- Use of SWAT teams and no-knock warrants
- Less-than-lethal weaponry such as tasers and pepper spray
- Facial recognition technology

2. Law Enforcement Strategies to Reduce Racial Disparities and Build Trust

- Using summonses rather than warrantless arrests for specified offenses
- Diversion programs
- Restorative justice programs
- Community-Based outreach and violence interruption programs
- Hot-Spot policing and focused deterrence
- De-Escalation strategies
- Can your community effectively identify, investigate and prosecute hate crimes?

3. Community Engagement

- Community outreach plans
- Citizen advisory boards and committees
- Partnership with community organizations and faith communities
- Partnering with students and schools
- Police-community reconciliation
- Attention to marginalized communities
- Involving youth in discussions on the role of law enforcement agencies

Fostering Community-Oriented Leadership, Culture and Accountability

1. Leadership and Culture

- Is your leadership selection process designed to produce the police community relationship you want?
- Does your officer evaluation structure help advance your policing goals?

- What incentives does your department offer officers to advance policing goals?
- Does your hiring and promotion process help build an effective and diverse leadership team?
- What is your strategy to ensure that your department's cultural-norms and informal processes reflect your formal rules and policies?

2. Tracking and Reviewing Use of Force and Identifying Misconduct

- When should officers be required to report use of force to their supervisor?
- What internal review is required after a use of force?
- Does your department review officers' use of force and/or misconduct during performance reviews?
- Does your department use external, independent reviewers to examine uses of force or misconduct?
- Does your department leverage Early Intervention Systems (EIS) to prevent problematic behavior?
- Does your department review "sentinel" or "near-miss" events? Does the department respond to questionable uses of force with non-punitive measures designed to improve officer performance?

3. Internal Accountability for Misconduct

- What does your department expect of officers who know of misconduct by another officer?
- Does your department have a clear and transparent process for investigating reports of misconduct?
- Does your department respond to officer misconduct with appropriate disciplinary measures?
- What procedures are in place to ensure that substantiated complaints of misconduct and settlements or adverse verdicts in lawsuits are used to reduce the risk of future misconduct?

- What controls are in place to ensure impartiality when reviewing potential misconduct or complaints? When appropriate, are cases referred to either the District Attorney or another prosecutor?
- Does your department expect leaders and officers to uphold the department's values and culture when off-duty?

4. Citizen Oversight and Other External Accountability

- Does or should your department have some form of civilian oversight over misconduct investigations or policy reform?
- Is there an easy, accessible and well-publicized process for members of the public to report complaints about police misconduct?
- Are investigation outcomes reported to the complainant? Are they reported to the public? Should the department or the citizen complaint review entity, if any, accept anonymous complaints?
- Does your local legislature engage in formal oversight of the police department? Should any changes be made in the legislature's oversight powers or responsibilities?
- Is your police department accredited by any external entity?
- Does your police department do an annual community survey to track level of trust?

5. Data, Technology and Transparency

- What police incident and complaint data should be collected? What data should be available to the public?
- How should your law enforcement agency leverage data to drive policing strategies?
- How can your police department demonstrate a commitment to transparency in its interactions with the public?
- How can your police department make its policies and procedures more transparent?

- How can your police department ensure adequate transparency in its use of automated systems and “high-risk” technologies?
- Should your police department leverage video cameras to ensure law enforcement accountability and increase transparency?

Recruiting and Supporting Excellent Personnel

1. Recruiting a Diverse Workforce

- Does your agency reflect the diversity of the community it serves?
- What are ways in which your agency recruits diverse candidates that better represent the demographics of the communities you serve?
- What are ways in which you can re-evaluate hiring practices and testing to remove barriers in hiring underrepresented communities?
- How can you encourage youth in your community to pursue careers in law enforcement?
- What actions can your agency take to foster the continued development and retention of diverse officers?

2. Training and Continuing Education

- How can you develop officer training programs that reflect your community values and build trust between police officers and the communities they serve?
- What training policies can you adopt to ensure that police officers continuously receive high-quality, relevant in-service training sessions?
- How can leadership training improve community policing and strengthen relationships between your police department and members of the public?
- How can your police department use its training programs to avoid incidents involving unnecessary use of lethal or nonlethal force?
- How can your police department use its training programs to avoid potential bias incidents and build stronger connections with communities of color and vulnerable populations?

- How can your training program help officers effectively and safely respond to individuals experiencing mental health crises or struggling with substance abuse?
- What practices and procedures can you put in place to measure the quality and efficacy of your police department's training programs?

3. Support Officer Wellness and Well-being

- What steps can you take to promote wellness and well-being within your department?
- Are there ways to address officer wellness and well-being through smarter scheduling?
- How can you effectively and proactively address the mental health challenges experienced by many police officers throughout their careers?
- How can you address the well-being of an officer after a traumatic event?