

REPORT OF THE SPRING VALLEY  
COLLABORATIVE COMMITTEE  
TO STUDY POLICE REFORM



## BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Governor Andrew Cuomo issued an executive order directing that each municipality with a police force select a Committee of Community Stakeholders representing divergent groups resident in each community to study reform(s) to be recommended concerning its police force. Numerous topical issues pertinent to police reform on a national basis were suggested and an effort was to be made to determine the applicability to the specific local. An effort was required to recommend change if needed in each communities police rules, regulations, methods and procedures relating to how its police department policed the particular community studied. Hopefully the need for reform would be measured from the perspective of all resident stakeholder communities.

## THE PROCESS

The effective date of Governor Cuomo's Order was June 12, 2020. Pursuant to same the Chief Executive of the municipality was directed to form a representative stakeholder committee to participate in the study. Committee members were selected by The Mayor's Office with input from the Village Board and staff. By example, the President of The Spring Valley branch of the NAACP was selected together with a past president. Representatives of the Spanish Community were selected, as were representatives of the Jewish Community including a Hassidic Rabbi. A leader in the business community was selected as well as a Assistant District Attorney, Assistant Public Defender, and the Vice Chair of the East Ramapo Board of Education.

Initially the committee meetings were in person at Village Hall and upon request in subsequent meetings some committee members participated remotely.

Committee meetings were held on September 24<sup>th</sup>, October 29<sup>th</sup>, November 12<sup>th</sup> and December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020. Additional meetings were held on January 7<sup>th</sup>, January 28<sup>th</sup> and February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

Prior to the first meeting all rules, regulations, training and policies of The Spring Valley Police Department were reviewed and analyzed, and those found relevant to the Governor's Order were reproduced and furnished each committee member. A memorandum concerning the relevance of each item to be reviewed was prepared and given to each committee member.

Governor Cuomo's executive order was reproduced and given to each committee member. Also, the Governor's staff produced a resource guide of pertinent and topical issues relating to policing and reform. This guide was reproduced and similarly furnished.

It was determined that all topics contained in the resource guide would be discussed with The Committee, a determination of relevance to Spring Valley was to be made and a determination would be made if a recommendation need be made, without exception. After each meeting The Chair added to a list of issues where there was seeming committee consensus in discussion.

Presentations were made to the committee by The Rockland County Police Academy, The Rockland County Behavioral response team and The Mental Health Committee of The Rockland Coalition to end the new Jim Crow.

Recommendations were formulated to be made to the Village Board and Police Commission to effected subject to their approval when feasibly and fiscally possible and appropriate in their discretion.

Notice was given by the Village Clerk to residents of the committee's recommendations for public comment.

Thereafter the plan and recommendations were forwarded to The Spring Valley Village Board where the recommendations were to be considered.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

After publication and opportunity for public comment, the following are the Collaborative Committee's recommendations to the Spring Valley Village Board and Police Commission, subject to The Village Board's discretion for adoption as policy and to be effected by The Spring Valley Police Department:

1. Body worn cameras to be secured and provided to police officers on patrol.
2. Police car video cameras be secured and installed on patrol vehicles.
3. Alternative methods of funding including available grant funding should be explored to finance the purchase of body worn cameras, police car video cameras and the storage and retrieval of recordings. A statewide storage and retrieval site should be established for recordings produced by smaller jurisdictions outside of the City of New York.
4. The police department will formalize policy that there is no bias or prejudice in demographics of persons taken into custody.
5. The police department will formalize policy that there be no prejudice or bias in the demographics of persons stopped, issued motor vehicle violations, police contact or official actions by any officer.
6. That cultural sensitivity training be provided the department concerning all the diverse communities resident in The Village of Spring Valley.
7. When school reopens select train and make available a school resource officer to Spring Valley High School
8. That a citizen advisory committee be formed and meet with the police command on at least a bi-annual basis to discuss needs, concerns and to facilitate information exchange. This committee should be representative of the diverse communities resident in Spring Valley.
9. Funding be explored and once secured used to establish a community police unit.
10. Police training should include and address how to interact with mentally ill and developmentally disabled persons in crisis.
11. Police training should continue to address how to interact with drug and alcohol impaired persons.
12. Police training should continue to address information on positional asphyxia and how to avoid same with persons taken into custody.
13. Police training should include and combine de-escalation techniques with use of force training.
14. Procedure should be standardized and added to the rules and policy of The Spring Valley Police Department concerning citizen complaints regarding police misconduct.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

15. It is recommended that Rockland County ensure that 24 hour and 7 day emergency mental health crisis assistance be available for all serious mental health emergencies including those which might involve the use of force.
16. A registry be established at the police department where parents, relatives or guardians can supply information concerning mentally ill or developmentally disabled persons to facilitate safer police responses.
17. That the Spring Valley Police Department become accredited.
18. Initiate further training for police dispatchers to call for emergency mental health and medical services at the earliest feasible time.
19. Encourage patrol officers to continue to interact with the diverse communities resident in The Village.
20. Encourage officers to continue to communicate with and be aware of the problems and needs of the business community.
21. Continue to support the Youth Police Initiative and to seek out and encourage participation by the Village Youth.
22. Formalize the process and procedure for use of force reports to be reviewed by supervisory staff.
23. Continue to use appearance tickets when custodial arrests are not required.
24. Utilize and refer residents to educational, vocational, mental health and substance abuse services whenever feasible in the circumstances.
25. Avoid no knock search warrants unless a clear need has been demonstrated for same.
26. Continue to identify high risk individuals and determine if assistance is available and can be provided.
27. That a recommendation should be forwarded to Rockland County that the 911 System be expanded to include a 111 number for mental health assistance for non-violent emergencies.
28. That a recommendation should be forwarded to Rockland County that the plans formulated by the Mental Health Committee of the Rockland Coalition to end the new Jim Crow concerning Rockland County emergency mental health crisis response be reviewed and all components of such plan found to be feasible be adopted and implemented by Rockland County.