



Waterford Town Police Department

65 Broad Street
Waterford, NY 12188
Phone 518-237-3341
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WATERFORD POLICE DEPARTMENT **POLICE REFORM AND REINVENTION** **COLLABORATIVE**

Agency Overview

The Waterford Police Department is a full-service law enforcement agency which provides services to the residents and visitors of the Town and Village of Waterford, NY. The Department has a total of 15 full and part time employees and is overseen by a full time Public Safety Commissioner. The Public Safety Commissioner position is currently vacant and the Town Board has appointed an Administrative Sergeant to carry out the duties of the Public Safety Commissioner.

The patrol division of the Department consists of three full time sergeants and 6 full time Police Officers. A Sergeant is assigned as the training director, two Officers are assigned to Field training, three Officers are certified as bike patrol Officers and one Officer provides DARE to two school districts in the Town and Village and also serves as a school resource Officer. Additionally, Officers routinely walk foot patrol in the Village as well as at several annual festivals at the waterfront. The Department also employs a full time Administrative Assistant, a full-time animal control officer, one part time crossing guard, and two part time police matrons.

The communications function of the Department is provided by the Saratoga County Sheriff's Office who, in addition to providing dispatch services for police, also provides communications for five volunteer fire departments and a full time Rescue Squad.

The Police Department budget for fiscal year 2020 has total appropriations of \$1,450,935. In 2020 the agency responded to 5,112 calls for service.

The industries of Waterford include Momentive Performance Materials, which is the largest employer in Saratoga County. Mohawk Paper Mill on the historic Kings Canal is located in the Northside section of Waterford. Industries on Hudson River Road include Cascade, DeGussa, and Maximum Security Products. The New York State DOT and New York State Canal Corporation both operate out of Waterford and the Bureau of Historic Sites has their headquarters on Peebles Island, which is a New York State Park situated in Waterford. The Waterford harbor Visitor's Center is also located in the village



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along the Erie Canal and hosts numerous visitors, both foreign and domestic each boating season.

The Town of Waterford is home just under 9,000 residents and covers 7.5 square miles. Waterford is located in the southeastern corner of Saratoga County, 12 miles north of Albany at the junction of the Hudson and Mohawk Rivers, and the junction of the Erie and Champlain Canals. The Village of Waterford is located within the town and holds the distinction of being the oldest continually incorporated village in the United States having been incorporated in 1794.

New York State Accreditation

The Waterford Police Department first gained accredited status in September of 2010. The Department was re-accredited in September of 2015 and again in September, 2020. To date, the Waterford Police Department is the only municipal agency within Saratoga County to be Accredited by New York State.

The NYS Law Enforcement Accreditation Program provides formal recognition that an agency meets or exceeds general expectations of quality in the field.

The program is made up of 110 different standards. In order to become accredited, an Agency must demonstrate that they meet or exceed each of these standards. Of the 110 total standards, there are 51 Administration, 12 Training, and 47 Operations standards. These established standards contain a clear statement of professional requirements.

Agencies participating in the program conduct a thorough analysis of their organization to determine how existing operations can be adapted to meet established standards. A team of independent professionals then conducts an on-site assessment to verify that all applicable standards have been successfully implemented. The assessment team leader then submits a written report of their findings to the NYS Law Enforcement Accreditation Council. Based on this report, the Accreditation Council then decides if the agency is worthy of accreditation.

Once an Agency is initially accredited, the period of accreditation lasts five years. For re-accreditation, Agencies must demonstrate continued compliance with each standard. Regular program maintenance ensures that program files are kept up-to-date; and lapses in compliance with any standard are promptly identified and corrected.



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One requirement of the program is that an Agency conducts a thorough review of all written directives at least once during the five-year period of accreditation. Review of written Directives within the Waterford Police Department is a continual process.

Reform Process

On June 12, 2020 New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo signed an executive order requiring all local governments within the State to adopt a policing reform plan by April 1, 2021. The goal of the plan is to increase the trust and respect between police and the communities they serve.

In order to accomplish this task, the Waterford Police Department, in collaboration with the Town Board, followed the 4-phase work-plan suggested within the Governor's executive order. The process used is described in the following paragraphs.

Phase 1 – Planning – The planning phase was started in late September 2020 and involved 3 key elements - an internal audit of current policies and procedures, identification of key stakeholders to be involved in the reform process, and an assessment of how the Department currently operates. The following individuals were identified as key stakeholders and were provided with questionnaires covering several aspects of the Waterford PD and the reform process:

1. Saratoga County District Attorney Karen Heggen
2. Saratoga County Public Defender Andrew C. Blumenberg
3. Superintendent of Waterford-Halfmoon School Patrick Pomerville
4. Principal of St. Mary's School Matthew Rucinski
5. Town Attorney Donald Boyajian
6. Momentive Security Chief Robert Adams
7. Brian Bruso – Business owner – Waterford Beverage
8. Director of Saratoga County Veteran's Service Agency - Frank McClement
9. Mayor of the Village of Waterford J. Burt Mahoney



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10. Pastor Paul Barna – Waterford Wesleyan Church

11. Julie Wooley – Manager of Vanschoonhoven Square Adult Home

Phase 2 – Listening and Learning – A public meeting was held on November 23, 2020 at the Town Hall and included attendees both in person and via Zoom. The meeting was conducted by Councilman Dave Ball alongside Administrative Sergeant Michael Shudt and Sergeant Michael Dilbone and covered an overview of the Department as it is currently comprised along with an outline of the process to be undertaken in complying with the Executive Order. Written questionnaires were also sent out to those persons identified as key stakeholders and informal discussions were undertaken with citizens who had involvement or contact with Waterford PD. The responses from the stakeholders and other citizens along with the internal reviews conducted during Phase 1 helped shape what would become our draft and then final plan for reform.

Phase 3 – Draft a Plan – A draft plan was prepared and presented to the Town Board on February 16, 2021. This plan was posted for public review on March 19, 2021.

Phase 4 – Public Comment and Ratification – A presentation was made by Administrative Sergeant Michael Shudt during the Town Board Agenda meeting on March 30, 2021. This meeting was conducted via Zoom and open to the public. At the conclusion of the presentation, the plan was ratified by the Town Board.

Final Plan

1. **Improved conflict resolution and access to services** – The Waterford Police Department intends to develop policies on the utilization of outside resources to better serve our residents. This will be accomplished in a few ways:
 - A. Mediation – Through utilization of a company called Mediation Matters, officers will have the ability to refer people involved in minor disputes such as landlord tenant issues or neighbor disputes to mediation. This program would be completely voluntary on the part of those involved but the hope is that some of these minor conflicts could



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be resolved in the early stages before escalating to the point of an arrest being made.

- B. Increased utilization of available resources – The Waterford Police Department will be working closely with representatives from Well Spring and Mobile Crisis in order to develop policies that better educate officers as to the services these groups provide and what types of situations they are best equipped to assist with.
- In order to establish use of the above described resources, new policies and procedures will be written that more thoroughly describe the specific services available and in what circumstances they should be called upon. Officers will be trained on these new policies during in service shift briefing training sessions.
2. **Use of Force** – the use of force policy of the Waterford Police Department has been updated and currently meets the standards of the NYS Accreditation program. All officers have already been trained regarding the changes to the use of force policy and the changes are currently in full effect. The changes made focus on de-escalation strategies and the banning of chokeholds except in circumstances where deadly force is justified.
3. **Patrol changes** – Feedback from the community indicated that citizens would like to see an increase in our foot and bike patrols. These patrol tactics will be more heavily utilized going forward. The Waterford Police Department currently has 3 officers who are certified in bicycle patrol. Starting in the spring these officers will be strategically deployed to address quality of life issues that have become prevalent over the last few years such as disturbances in Town and Village parks.
4. **Body Cams** – It is the intention of the Waterford Police Department to institute a body cam program that will provide all officers with a body cam while on duty.
5. **Public Meetings** – In addition to the community events that we already participate in, the Waterford Police Department is going to begin holding regularly scheduled public meetings or events that focus specifically on the Police Department and will allow residents to interact with Police Officers and address any concerns they may have. The intention would be to use a, “coffee with a cop” type model where the interactions are informal and happen in a friendly setting. Sergeant Dilbone will be heading up the implementation of this program.



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- 6. 21st century neighborhood watch** – The Waterford Police Department will be asking residents and businesses to voluntarily participate in a modern-day neighborhood watch. This program will involve the police department compiling information on privately owned surveillance systems within the Town and Village so that we have a database of known cameras at our fingertips in order to assist in the solving of crimes. In order to accomplish this task, a form will be developed and made available to the public via the Town website. As we roll out the program, a public announcement will be made to notify residents of its implementation. After an as yet undetermined time frame the Department may consider other ways to encourage participation, possibly through the use of the community events described above. This program will be implemented by Sergeant Shudt with assistance from Officer McGreevy.
- 7. Vulnerable adults/children** – The Waterford Police Department will be reinvigorating our database of vulnerable adults and children living within our jurisdiction. This database will allow us to better track individuals in cases of missing persons, etc. A form is currently available via the Town website and some residents have taken advantage of completing it in the past. A reminder to the public of the availability of this program should help to increase participation by those in need. Administrative Assistant Paul McInerney will be responsible for this program.
- 8. Racial Disparity** – An audit of arrests spanning calendar years 2018-2020 showed that whites accounted for an overwhelming majority of arrests made by Waterford PD at 86%. Going forward, changes will be made to data collected on traffic stops and field interviews so that we can more easily track the race and sex of those individuals who have contact with police.

Closing

The process of complying with Governor Cuomo’s Executive Order #203 has been enlightening and has allowed us to more easily identify the types of services that the community would like to see from the Police Department going forward. The hope is that these reforms will propel the Waterford Police Department into the future and strengthen our bond with the community we serve.