



# **Village of Brockport Police Reform and Reinvention Committee Report**

**Presented in a public hearing 3-01-2021  
Report recommendations adopted by Village Board 3-15-2021**

**Available:** <http://www.brockportny.org/government/village-board/policies-adopted-by-village-board>

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Village of Brockport appointed a Police Reform and Reinvention Committee in August 2020, as required under Governor Cuomo's Executive Order 203. The committee met September through February, researching current issues in policing nationally while framing these issues locally, asking the questions: do these issues apply to our local police force and how. They reviewed current policies and activities of the Brockport Police Department (BPD), reached out to and heard from stakeholders, conducted an online survey to solicit opinions and suggestions from greater Brockport area residents, and recommended changes. The conversations and research were a collaborative effort between the committee, village leadership, and the Brockport Police Department.

The committee saw this Executive Order not as an indictment of our local police, but as an opportunity to better understand police policy and practice. It served as a 'listening tour' to collect praise, concerns and suggestions that ultimately would provide a step towards formalizing a closer, sustainable relationship between local government and the police department, as well as provide a path towards educating the public and promoting transparent law enforcement practices. The result of this exploration of policing in our community are recommendations to formalize current best practices and to foster continued growth for the Brockport Police Department in the areas of: training, accountability, community policing, and outreach and diversity hiring.

The public survey was designed to capture a snapshot of resident perceptions of the Brockport Police Department and solicit suggestions for the committee to consider. The survey was open to anyone with access to the internet and was administered during a time when the SUNY Campus was closed. While the response rate was higher than expected, we acknowledge the opinions of several important populations (youth, non-White) are not captured by this survey. Despite its limitations, the survey allows for several conclusions to be drawn. In general, the BPD is viewed favorably by the respondents, who claimed that the national conversation on the use of force in law enforcement does not impact their perception of BPD performance. Community policing is important to the respondents and BPD should continue to promote and expand community policing. Lastly, a smaller number of respondents had a favorable impression of BPD response times and their equitable treatment of people regardless of gender identity, race, religion, disability, immigration status, or ethnicity, suggesting opportunities for growth in improving public understanding of BPD activities.

The committee also urges changes to larger county, state, and national systems that constrain and impact local departments, such as changes in the New York State Civil Service system to encourage more eligible candidates of color and women, as well as changes in police academy training to incorporate greater education in de-escalation techniques and shifting the overall culture from "warrior" to "guardian."

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **TRAINING**

- Require annual training in Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI).
- Commit to sustained training in issues related to immigrant farm workers.
- Complete Crisis Intervention Training (CIT)—all BPD officers will complete this training, which heightens their understanding of people in crisis and experiencing mental health challenges.

### **ACCOUNTABILITY**

- Maintain NYS accreditation.
- Provide annual report of police activities, training, crime statistics; present to Village Board and publish on website, <http://brockportny.org/departments-services/bpd>.
- Post General Order 305 on the BPD page of the Village website; providing citizens easy access to filing a complaint.
- Formalize notification protocols.

The Police Chief or their designee (when applicable) will make verbal notification to the Mayor and Village Manager or if either unavailable, the Deputy Mayor, when any of the following occurs with any employee of the Village of Brockport Police Department. The list of required notifications includes but is not limited to:

- a. Death or serious physical injury to any person as a possible result of police action taken whether on duty or off duty.
- b. Any serious physical injury to any Brockport Police Officer whether on duty or off duty.
- c. Notification of any serious crime or incident that occurs in the Village of Brockport.
- d. Notification prior to (when possible) of any information released to the news media.
- e. Notification prior to the start of any internal investigation relative to members of the Brockport Police Department.
- f. Any complaints made against the Chief of Police to be investigated by the Mayor's Office.
- g. Any report made to the Department of Criminal Justice Services regarding use of force.

### **COMMUNITY POLICING & OUTREACH**

- Add community policing to General Orders; formalize existing commitment.
- Create a Law Enforcement/Community Partnership.
- Develop and administer a Police Citizens Academy.

### **DIVERSITY HIRING**

- Commit to diversifying the Brockport Police Department.
- Create a policing internship, coordinate with the SUNY Brockport Criminal Justice program, and participate in SUNY's internship and job fairs for recruitment purposes.

## Introduction - Executive Order 203

The New York State Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative issued by Governor Andrew Cuomo on June 12, 2020 requires each local government in the state with a police department to adopt a policing reform plan by April 1, 2021. State aid to localities is conditioned on the adoption of such a plan. Although the governor laid out specifics, he added, “Each Community must envision for itself the appropriate role of the police.”

Specifically, the order requires that the committee must:

- review the community’s policing needs and evaluate current policies and practices;
- involve the entire community in a collaborative process;
- develop policy recommendations resulting from this review;
- establish policies that allow the police to safely and effectively perform their duties;
- offer a plan for public comment;
- present the plan to the local legislative body for ratification; and
- certify adoption of the plan to the state budget director on or before April 1, 2021.

### 1. The Brockport Community

Situated at the western edge of Monroe County on the Erie Canal, the Village of Brockport is both a college town and a suburban bedroom community for the City of Rochester.

Main Street Brockport, on the National Register of Historic Places, is a commercial hub for the surrounding towns, with shops, food establishments, and bars. A Welcome Center on the canal with docking facilities hosts tourists from around the world during the canal’s navigation season.

The main employers within the Village include SUNY Brockport, Brockport Central School District, Bonduelle (frozen food packaging), Allied Frozen (food) Storage, Sunnking (electronics recycling), and URMC Strong West (health care).

The Village population (estimated 2019) is 8163; 87% is white, 6% Black or African American, 3% Asian and 3% two or more races. 43.5% of village homes are owner occupied. Median household income is \$40,083, and the poverty rate is 25.7%. These last two figures are affected by the high percentage of college students residing in the community. The demographics of the College are somewhat more diverse than the Village.

Census data indicate that 9% of the population is disabled. There are group homes for disabled persons within the Village, as well as disabled persons who receive services but live independently.

SUNY Brockport lies almost wholly within the Village limits. College enrollment is close to the village population (approximately 8000), 2300 of whom live on campus and an additional 3200 live off campus in close proximity, many in rental properties within the Village.

Oliver Middle School is the only school of the Brockport Central School District (BCSD) within village limits. The remainder of the district campus is immediately adjacent to the Village in the Town of Sweden. BCSD serves approximately 3200 students who reside in the towns of Sweden, Clarkson, Hamlin, and a small corner of Ogden. Within the student body, 79% identify as white and 46% are classified as economically challenged.

Area farms surrounding the Village employ approximately 1500 immigrant farmworkers, many of whom are year-round residents. Most are Spanish speaking and a number are undocumented.

The population served by the Brockport Police Department includes not only the Village residents, but also others who come into our Village: College students and staff, School District staff, students and their families, employees, shoppers, immigrant farmworkers, Canal tourists, and truckers making deliveries to the food storage and packaging businesses.

## 2. Committee Members and Affiliations

Co-Chairs:

Margay Blackman, Mayor

Annette Crane, Village Trustee

Administrator/organizer:

Erica Linden, Village Manager

Police Department:

Chief Mark Cuzzupoli

Lieutenant Steve Mesiti

Community Members:

Orlando Benzan, Social Studies Teacher and Equity and Inclusion Specialist, BCSD\*

Dan Brockway, Pastor, First Baptist Church, village resident

Robert LeSuer, Associate Professor of Chemistry, SUNY Brockport, village resident

Karen LoBracco, village resident

Melanie Macdonald, Special Education Teacher, BCSD

Bill Plews, Brockport Ecumenical Outreach Committee (BEOC)

Jackie Smith, Monroe County Legislator

Katy Wilson, VP for Student Affairs and Enrollment, SUNY Brockport

Howard Ward, Associate VP for Auxiliary Services, Finance and Administration,  
Rochester Institute of Technology

*\*BCSD = Brockport Central School District*

### 3. Brockport Police Reform Committee

*Mission: The formation of a committee of community stakeholders along with the mayor of the Village and the Village Police Chief for the purpose of reviewing current police force deployments, strategies, policies, procedures and practices. The Committee will develop a plan that reflects the needs of the community and identify improvement opportunities. The committee will promote community engagement that fosters trust, fairness and legitimacy as it relates to policing.*

From the outset, the Village of Brockport and the Brockport Police Department (BPD) leadership viewed Executive Order 203 as an opportunity for deep conversation and discussion. It provided a step towards formalizing a closer, sustainable relationship between local government and the police department and a path to educating ourselves and the public about police policies and procedures. Executive Order 203 also provided the means for broadening the horizons of police policy and practice. What this exercise was NOT was an indictment of our local police. Committee members agreed to basic rules of decorum, pledging to speak respectfully, to listen fully, and to engage honestly in meetings.

Our Committee of 14 was broadly representative of the greater Brockport Community. The Village Mayor and a Village Trustee served as co-chairs, and the Village Manager as administrator/organizer. Committee members included our Police Chief and Lieutenant, a County Legislator from our district, representatives from SUNY Brockport and the Brockport Central School District, representatives from the Faith community, and community residents. Two members were people of color. From September 2 to January 20, we held 11 meetings, the proceedings of which were recorded in detail in the meeting minutes that are included in Appendix A

Meeting topics included:

- Expectations from the police department
- BPD General Orders
- Training current and proposed, including use of force
- Accreditation and its value
- Community Outreach and Community Policing
- Round table discussion with Brockport High School student members of the Diversity Club and Gay-Straight Alliance.
- Round table discussion with SUNY Brockport Student Government Officers
- A survey to elicit the views of the general public
- Discussion/analysis of survey results

- Final report discussion

The events happening nationally with Police Departments in the wake of Black Lives Matter demonstrations were close to the surface of many of our meetings. The young people participating in the round table discussions were open and articulate about their concerns with police generally and held more negative views of police than committee members. The thin blue line flag and the significance it has acquired as a symbol co-opted by white nationalists sparked an intense discussion. The police held strong positive views about this flag, which is associated with respect and support among law enforcement members and their families, that were not shared by others.

A discussion about police presence and community policing brought out a striking contrast about views of the police in our village. One committee member, who had previously lived in large urban areas where police were seldom seen, felt that they were uncomfortably omnipresent in Brockport patrolling village streets. Older, long-term village residents, on the other hand, frequently comment that police presence in their neighborhoods is reassuring.

The committee touched upon the role of police in mental health calls and professional mental health assistance. How to recruit a more diverse police force in a small, overwhelmingly white, rural community was relevant to the current lack of diversity in the BPD. Training on racism, inclusion, and implicit bias was discussed in more than one meeting. The immigrant farmworker community in our area and the relationship between ICE and local police provided an area for discussion and a recommendation for training. Our final meetings turned to public outreach with an online survey about the BPD which is discussed in detail in Section 6 below.

A writing group of five committee members drafted this final report which was reviewed and edited by the entire committee before publication on the Village website. A public hearing on Zoom was held on Monday, March 1, 2021 to receive public input on the report prior to it being finalized.

#### 4. The Brockport Police Department

*It is the mission of the Brockport Police Department to provide unequivocal and indispensable law enforcement service to the Brockport Community by providing guidance, protecting life and property, keeping the peace, ensuring justice, upholding the law and preserving Democracy. We will continuously strive for excellence, through our dedication and commitment and we will treat all those we interact with in the same manner we, ourselves, want to be treated.*

Brockport's police department dates back 192 years to 2 constables who served the newly chartered village. Today, the department employs 19 people: 14 police officers, 1 officer vacancy, 1 administrative assistant, 1 part-time clerk, 2 crossing guards plus a police canine. Thirteen officers are male, 1 is female. All department members are White. The department has been under the leadership of Chief Mark Cuzzupoli since April of 2018. Ranks and specialties within the department include 1 Lieutenant, 2 Sergeants, 1 Canine Officer, and 1 Criminal

Investigator who was assigned to the Greater Rochester Area Narcotics Enforcement Team for approximately 18 months.

The Brockport Police Department became accredited by the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Service in December of 2004 and has been continuously accredited since. During the most recent re-accreditation process, completed in December 2019, the BPD met all of the 110 standards required to be awarded accreditation. The Department is among the 30% of NYS police departments which have earned this distinction. The Brockport Police Department operates under approximately 77 general orders which detail various activities of the profession such as: The Professional Conduct and Responsibilities of Officers and Supervisors, Training, the Ride Along Program, Use of Body Worn Cameras (since 2015 by the BPD), Professional Standards and Internal Affairs, Responding to Calls for Service, and Use of Physical and Deadly Force. As a village police force, the BPD is not militarized and does not possess riot gear. The Brockport Police Department maintains a close working relationship with all Law Enforcement Agencies in Monroe County and routinely collaborates with the SUNY Brockport University Police and the Monroe County Sheriff's Office (MCSO). Chief Cuzzupoli is an active member of the Law Enforcement Council, comprising virtually every law enforcement entity in the area, and the Monroe County Chiefs Association, both of which meet regularly.

The BPD operates 24/7, with road patrol, bike patrol and directed walking patrol in the village. The police department gives special focus to several areas of the 2.2 square miles of jurisdiction. Police officers walk not only the downtown business district but walk and bike the canal path, neighborhoods, and the 9 village parks. The police blotter is typical for a densely populated village hosting a college, and village residents are vocal about enforcement of quality of life issues. The police officers work to educate off-campus college students about the Village Code whenever possible before issuing appearance tickets.

Traffic enforcement is critical in a village with a large number of people who enjoy walking, biking, and running. The Brockport Police Department is responsive to community concerns related to aggressive driving and regularly directs special attention to areas where residents have legitimate safety concerns. The village maintains 5 speed sentry units that display the speed of oncoming vehicles and record data for police department review and additional enforcement. The police also enforce the Village Code by issuing parking tickets, an important detail in a college town with a large commuting student population. Other services provided by the police department include, but are not limited to, checking the doors of downtown businesses after hours to make sure they are locked and house checks for residents who are out of town. The calls for service totaled 20,266 in 2020. **The average response time for calls designated as priority by Monroe County 911 is 3 minutes.**

Community outreach is a notable feature of the BPD's activities. The department hosts a pharmaceutical drop off box in the lobby which is widely used by residents. Officers regularly touch base with bar owners, host visits of elementary school children at the police department on a yearly basis, and visit the Middle and High Schools to speak with students and staff. K9 Brock is a popular staff member on community visits. For the past three years the Brockport

Police Department has partnered with University police and the SUNY Brockport's Men of Color group in an afternoon and evening of games and socializing. More recently, the partnership between the BPD and the College was expanded during COVID. College and Village personnel partnered to educate off campus students about masking and gathering policies. Results of weekend late-night patrols of student housing areas in the village were reported directly to the Office of Student Conduct and Brockport Village government. These best-practice efforts helped keep the Village safe and SUNY Brockport open during the pandemic. Under Chief Cuzzupoli the department has greatly expanded its commitment to community policing and to interactive community engagement. A full accounting of these efforts is in appendix B.

## 5. The Public Survey

An attitudinal survey of the residents in and around Brockport was conducted in order to assess perceptions of police performance. The full questionnaire is provided in Appendix C and was modeled after similar surveys developed by the Monroe County Sheriff's Department and the City of Cortland. The survey was advertised via the Village of Brockport's website and Facebook Page, SUNY Brockport Daily Eagle, BCSD as well as the Westside News weekly publication and was open from December 11, 2020 to January 4, 2021. Three hundred (300) community residents responded to the survey. Aggregate responses to individual questions are provided in Appendix C and highlights from the survey and a preliminary interpretation are presented here. Unless otherwise noted comparison data were obtained from [www.towncharts.com](http://www.towncharts.com).<sup>1</sup>

**Validity of results.** The margin of error for the survey is estimated to be 6%. The percent of survey respondents who identified as White (88%) is comparable to the 87% reported by the Census Bureau. The percentage of respondents who identified as Latino (1.8%) is much lower than that of the Village (5.9%). Of the respondents who chose to answer, 60% identified their gender as female which is higher than the reported average for the Village (55%).

Figure 1 depicts the breakdown of survey respondents by age, compared to the distribution for Brockport as reported by the Census Bureau.<sup>2</sup> The survey respondents tended to be older than the median age for Brockport (22 years) and significantly over-represents the 35-54 year category. The survey excluded residents who are minors and was administered at a time when SUNY Brockport was not holding in-person classes, which can account for these discrepancies. Figure 2 shows the educational attainment of survey respondents. The respondents tended to belong in the categories of higher educational attainment (BS degree and higher) as compared to the general population.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.towncharts.com/New-York/Demographics/Sweden-town-NY-Demographics-data.html> accessed on February 1, 2021.

<sup>2</sup> Comparison data was rescaled to exclude minors and a uniform distribution was assumed for decade ages (e.g. 20 – 29, 30 – 39) to provide a more suitable comparison to the data as collected by the survey.

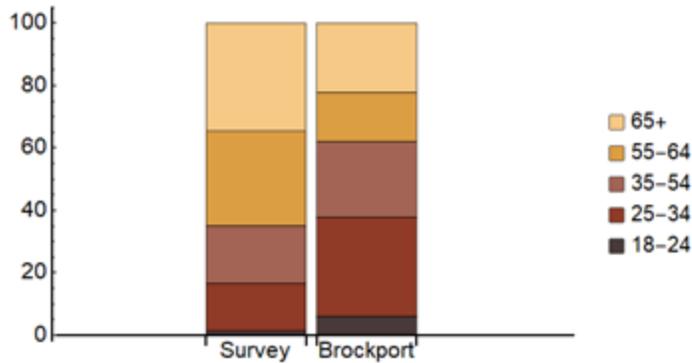


Figure 1. Age distribution of survey respondents.

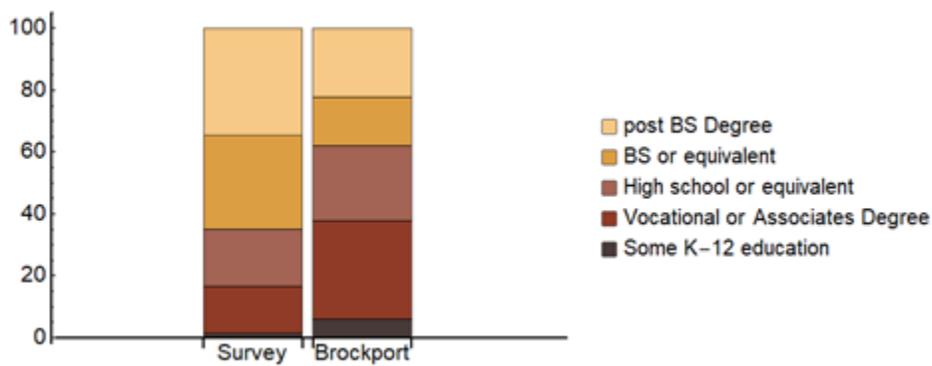


Figure 2. Educational attainment of survey respondents.

In summary, the survey results are skewed towards female, older residents with higher educational attainment. Due to the low number of non-White respondents, the survey is not able to identify differences in perceptions based upon race or ethnicity.

**Overall perception of Brockport Police Department.** The first part of the survey consisted of 10 statements. Respondents were asked to indicate if they strongly agree (5), agree (4), are neutral (3), disagree (2) or strongly disagree (1) with the statement. Table 1 summarizes the survey responses by reporting the percentage of respondents who selected Agree or Strongly Agree for each of the 10 statements. In general, the respondents agree with the definition of community policing provided and 83% of respondents agree that community policing is an important aspect of keeping the Village safe. Fewer respondents, 61%, agree that the Brockport Police Department is committed to community policing, suggesting that there is an opportunity for additional public outreach and education activities that highlight the Department's community-policing efforts. Most of the respondents did not believe that policing issues communicated at the national level have an effect on their perceptions of the Brockport Police Department. Overall, there is general agreement that the Brockport Police Department makes

residents feel safe, and that they are accessible via 911, although there is less consensus about response time of the Department as well as the equity of their treatment of residents.

Table 1. Percent of respondents who agree with survey statements

Statement	% Agree
The current national conversation about law enforcement has had an impact on my opinion of the Brockport Police	26
The current national conversation has improved my view of the Brockport Police.	37
Overall, I am satisfied with the level of service provided by the Brockport Police.	73
Having a police force in the village makes me feel safer.	75
The Brockport Police treat people equally, regardless of gender identity, race, religion, disability, immigration status, or ethnicity.	65
Community policing is where the police and community work closely together, allowing for joint problem solving.	86
Community policing is an important part of keeping Brockport safe.	83
The Brockport Police are committed to community policing.	61
I am satisfied with the response time of the Brockport Police.	66
I am comfortable calling 911 when I need to get in touch with the police.	81

The survey was designed to allow for an aggregate favorability score to be calculated. Summing the responses from a respondent results in an overall BPD favorability score, which ranges from 10 (no favorable impression of the BPD) to 50 (highly favorable impression of BPD). Figure 3 depicts the aggregated BPD favorability scores segregated by gender. In general, the overall favorability score is high, indicating that the respondents generally agree with the statements made in the survey. The most common favorability scores are 46, 44 and 43, representing 21% of the respondents. The most common favorability scores among men are 46, 45 and 43, representing 21% of the respondents identifying as male. The overall favorability score of female respondents is slightly lower, with the top three scores – 44, 35 and 36 – representing 24% of respondents. Those who preferred not to answer the gender question or identified with neither male nor female represented a small number of respondents (11). Approximately 45% of these respondents had an overall favorability score of 43 or 46.

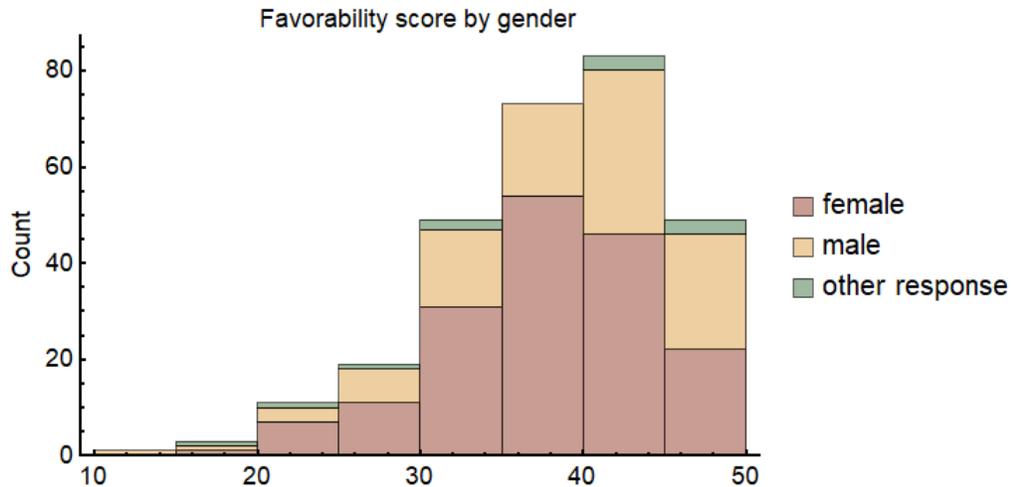


Figure 3. Favorability score by gender.

**Suggestions from respondents.** Survey respondents were asked to provide suggestions for changes to the Brockport Police Department. Several recommendations were provided along with an option to describe recommendations that were not listed. Forty-four percent (44%) of the respondents indicated that the department should be left “as is” with no changes. Smaller percentages identified the following possible improvements: that additional opportunities to interact with the police informally would be of interest (28%); opportunities to understand local policing practices (16%); and establishment of a citizen oversight board (22%). Focusing on the 10% of respondents who had a low (< 30) Brockport Police Department favorability score, the most frequent suggestions include creating a citizen oversight board and reducing the size of the department (which includes defunding and dissolving the Brockport Police Department). There is little evidence that the demographics (gender, race, ethnicity, educational attainment) differ significantly between the respondents with low favorability scores and the survey respondents as a whole. Most of the respondents in this category reside within the village boundary.

**Conclusions drawn from the survey.** While the survey generated a larger amount of feedback than anticipated, some care must be taken in interpreting the results since the opinions of several important populations (youth, non-White) are not captured by this survey. That said, several conclusions can be drawn from the survey results.

- There is a generally favorable view of the Brockport Police Department.
- Community policing is important to Brockport residents and the department should continue to promote and expand community policing.
- There is a perception that the Brockport Police Department could improve response times.
- There is a perception that the Brockport Police Department could be more equitable in their treatment of people regardless of gender identity, race, religion, disability, immigration status, or ethnicity.

## 6. Recommendations and Background

### Training

- Annual training in Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI). We anticipate that this might be training adopted at the county level for all police departments.
- Commitment to sustained training in issues related to our immigrant farmworkers. This effort will begin with a workshop with an immigration lawyer in the spring of 2021.
- Crisis Intervention Training (CIT)—all officers of the BPD to complete this training.

**Background for recommendations.** This past July, the entire police department participated in a 4-hour workshop on racism and implicit bias that was inaugurated and arranged by the police chief. Annual in-service training includes in-house and enhanced (County and Department of Criminal Justice Services) training. Training covers many areas: firearms, taser, OC (pepper spray), active shooter, safe zone, sexual assault, mental health, and stop DWI. The very basic current requirement for in-service training is 21 hours; the Brockport Police Department (BPD) exceeds that requirement. In 2019 total training hours completed by BPD members ranged from 34 to 156 hours. Most of the enhanced training is free.

In every direction the Village of Brockport is surrounded by farms. To a large extent the fields and orchards of those farms are tended by immigrant farmworkers whose lives began in Central America. These workers walk and bicycle throughout our community. They differ from many of us in skin color, language, and culture. We commit to ongoing education to help our police officers in their understanding and appreciation of this important part of our population.

The Brockport Police Department is one of eleven Monroe County law enforcement agencies that partner with the Forensic Intervention Team (FIT) of the Monroe County Department of Public Health. FIT clinicians work with law enforcement to improve an individual's connection to the mental health outpatient services that can help them. FIT collaborations with the BPD have increased 10-fold in the last three years. The program is designed for a more personal and immediate follow up by professionals who can help with specific services. FIT clinicians help to develop a plan of action that often will result in fewer calls to law enforcement. The FIT program is forward thinking, but more staffing and resources are needed for the program to be successful.

A part of this program is Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) a police-based training to help officers perform more effectively in their work with FIT. The program emphasizes de-escalation, being patient, empathetic and compassionate while still maintaining the safety of all involved. Currently 10 of the 14 officers have completed the 40-hour training program. Within one year the remaining four officers will receive the training. Additionally, all future hires will complete this training. The intent is that all officers have a greater understanding of helping people in crisis.

## Accountability

- Maintain NYS accreditation
- An annual report of police activities, training, crime statistics to be presented to the Village Board and published on the BPD website.
- General Order 305 should be posted on the BPD website allowing citizens easy access to filing a complaint.
- The Police Chief or their designee (when applicable) will make verbal notification to the Mayor and Village Manager or if either unavailable, the Deputy Mayor, when the following occurs with any employee of the Village of Brockport Police Department. The list of required notifications includes but is not limited to:
  - Death or serious physical injury to any person as a possible result of police action taken whether on duty or off duty.
  - Any serious physical injury to any Brockport Police Officer whether on duty or off duty.
  - Notification of any serious crime or incident that occurs in the Village of Brockport.
  - Notification of any information released to the news media.
  - Notification of the start of any internal investigation relative to members of the Brockport Police Department.
  - Any complaints made against the Chief of Police to be investigated by the Mayor's Office.
  - Any report made to the Department of Criminal Justice Services regarding use of force.

**Background for recommendations.** Accreditation confirms that a police department adheres to a number of professional standards including increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of law enforcement agencies utilizing existing personnel and equipment, enhanced training, increased cooperation and coordination among law enforcement agencies and other agencies of the criminal justice system, and promoting public confidence in local law enforcement.

The Brockport Police Department has an established procedure in General Orders 305 for filing citizen complaints against police officers.

Notification of the Mayor and Village Manager has been unfailingly unprompted, consistent, and routine under the present Police Chief, but there is no requirement for doing so in General Orders. We believe the current climate should serve as a model for future leaders of the BPD.

## Community Policing and Outreach

- Community policing to be a permanent commitment of the BPD
- Creation of a Law Enforcement/Community Partnership
- The BPD develop and administer a Police Citizens Academy

**Background for recommendations.** The current police chief is passionately dedicated to community policing and has extended it during his tenure. Police chiefs change and the

community policing model Chief Cuzzupoli has created should be a permanent commitment of the BPD going forward. The police should expand efforts to engage with the public on an informal basis and outreach should include populations who have reported feeling alienated from police officers such as teens and young adults of color and persons identifying as LGBTQIA+

To enhance information sharing, build mutual understanding, and increase trust between citizens and police, we recommend establishing a Law Enforcement/Community Partnership. Members of this standing committee would be appointed by the BPD and Village Board, respectively. It would meet quarterly to review police activity, discuss issues and concerns of both parties, foster community outreach, and engage in jointly agreed upon activities.

A BPD officer recommended the creation of a Police Citizens Academy. These academies teach adult citizens how and why the agency operates the way it does, familiarizing citizens with the operations of the police department. Topics can include, among others: patrol procedures, criminal law, narcotics, search and seizure, firearms demonstrations, canine training, and participation in reality-based training (RBT).

### **Diversity Hiring**

- The Brockport Police Department should make a concerted effort to diversify the department.
- BPD should take advantage of the Criminal Justice program at SUNY Brockport by creating an internship in policing and participating in the college's periodic internship and job fairs for recruitment purposes.

**Background for Recommendations.** The Brockport police department is overwhelmingly White and male but is as eager as the committee to see diversification in its ranks. Currently, there is a shortage of candidates for police hiring, including those who are racially or ethnically diverse. Hiring is further complicated by rigid civil service rules based on test scores. This is an issue that needs to be resolved at the state and county level.

## **7. Concluding Reflections**

We undertook this work in September, after a summer of protests against police violence. For some of us, those protests were something viewed on TV, while others were participants or close to participants in rallies in Rochester, Hilton, Spencerport, Sweden, and the surroundings. While acknowledging the common training of all police officers in Monroe County at the Police Academy, the camaraderie among all of law enforcement and the persistence of racism in American culture, we nevertheless found ample and consistent examples of community policing based on service and respect among members of the Brockport Police Department.

The bulk of published research on police accountability deals with big city police forces and many of the reforms suggested are not realistic for a village force of 15 officers. Our starting impression of the Brockport Police Department was positive, and after significant study our recommendations are aimed at institutionalizing the positive but informal practices that exist and expanding the communication and transparency components of community policing. In the end, this process has been both a humbling and an educational experience for the committee. We realize that we have only scratched the surface of what is possible in understanding police department functions, community needs, and charting a course for greater accountability and collaboration with the goal of a safe Brockport for all. To that end, we encourage additional study on how the BPD and all members of the Brockport community can better engage with one another. Additionally, we acknowledge that as a predominantly White community, we each have a responsibility to engage in anti-bias conversations and initiatives. We invite the greater Brockport community to work with us to become more welcoming, inclusive, and accountable.

## 8. Statement from Mark Cuzzupoli, Police Chief

First and foremost, I would like to thank the men and women of the Brockport Police Department for their dedication, loyalty and commitment to excellence. In 2018, when I became the Chief of Police, my goal was to continue to improve our efforts in community policing and establish a more personal approach to engagement. Through this philosophy we have attempted and, I believe, gained a higher level of trust in our community. Not only with the Village of Brockport residents but with all who visit our beautiful, historic village. I am extremely proud of our police department for embracing this initiative and therefore doubling our community engagement.

Being a smaller department of 15 police officers (currently 14) and 19 total employees, it is extremely difficult to maintain and excel in the NYS Accreditation Program. This program consists of an ongoing examination of policies and procedures along with the thorough task of completing our annual compliance by providing documented proof of adherence, not just the mere existence of policy for every standard. The NYS Accreditation full assessment that we completed in October of 2019 was very successful. All 110 Standards were found to be in complete compliance. The final briefing to the Brockport Police Department Accreditation staff along with Trustee Katherine Kristansen left me extremely pleased with our excellent review. The full magnitude of this achievement can only be fully appreciated with a closer examination of the final accreditation report.

From the beginning of the Governor's issuance of Executive Order 203, we believed this would be the perfect opportunity for our police department to further engage with community stakeholders and build upon our already strong community policing philosophy. This experience highlights a quote I firmly stand by, "True wisdom is gained by understanding that you don't know everything. True ignorance is established when you believe that you do." -Michael Gallien

The Brockport Police Department understands that we have a continuous need to grow and learn. We will always strive to be better. As the Chief of Police, I fully embrace the final recommendations of the Police Advisory Committee. I sincerely appreciate their time and commitment to this process. I encourage further engagement as we discovered there is an enormous opportunity to learn about the inner workings of our police department. My door is always open!

## 9. Acknowledgements

Our deliberations were greatly assisted by the following guests and presenters at our meetings: Chief Sam Farina of the Fairport Police Department, Lee Struble and Clifton Manns, Dr. Torrence Jones, students from the Brockport High School Diversity Club and their advisor, Kerry Gant, students from Brockport High School Gay Straight Alliance, advised by Kelly Lincoln, SUNY Brockport Student government officers, Kalista Cherry, Daniel Jimenez, and Anthony Santana. Susan Smith assisted with the recording of meetings. Immigration lawyer, Emma Buckthal, also met with a subgroup of the committee.

Chief Mark Cuzzupoli and Lt. Steve Mesiti participated as active members of our committee, attending meetings, joining in discussions, and answering questions about policing. They could not have been more cooperative in a process that put their department and policing in general under critical scrutiny. We thank them for their sincere engagement and their collaboration in this effort.

The committee salutes the work of Village Manager Erica Linden in arranging for presenters and panelists who challenged the status quo and compelled us to discuss uncomfortable topics. Older white members sometimes felt challenged because their interactions with and impressions of local law enforcement differed greatly from that of youth and young adults of color. Our recommendations do not shy away from these difficult conversations going forward but see them as an essential component of community policing.