

Wappingers Falls Police Reform and Reinvention

Draft Plan

In August, Dutchess County formed a collaborative of police chiefs and public officials to work on the Governor's Executive Order on police reform.

All police departments were asked to submit their Use of Force policy for review. The Dutchess County Sheriff's Office reviewed our policy and came up with the following areas that did not meet standard.

1. Definitions of Terms – Objectively Reasonable, Physical Injury, Serious Physical Injury, Deadly Physical Force.
2. Policy outlines when force is prohibited.
3. Policy outlines how force is determined to be “Objectively Reasonable”.
4. Policy mandates a duty to intervene.
5. Policy outlines training frequency and methods for use of force and related topics.
6. Policy posted on Agency website for public view.

All of the above recommendations were added to the policy. The Sheriff's Office also recommended that the Use of Force and the Deadly Use of Force be combined into one policy, the Use of Force.

Police Reform Suggested Changes for the Village of Wappingers Falls PD (Many suggested changes were already in effect for the WFPD)

Use of Force: All officers are required to submit a report if they use any force in an arrest.

Their report is reviewed by their sergeant, who then determines if the force was necessary. He then gives the report to the lieutenant patrol commander who then decides if the officer needs additional training or discipline before submitting it to the Commissioner.

Policies and Procedures: As Police Commissioner, I advised the committee about Lexipol, a company that produces policies and procedures documents for police departments. This company publishes policy and procedures for several police departments in Dutchess County and for many other police departments in New York State. The City of Poughkeepsie, Town of Poughkeepsie, and the Dutchess County Sheriff's Office are in the process of having Lexipol create their policies. The list below is some of the reasons why Village of Wappingers should be considering using Lexipol.

The following are issues that could be corrected in Wappingers Falls Police Department Policy and Procedures:

- Transparency
- Training
- Policy Review and management
- Third Party Review
- Understanding best practices (nationally)

Goal: Public Safety and Positive Community Relations

Lexipol creates policies with the intent to decrease risk and preserve life. Lexipol is successful since they are a non-bias third party that brings forth the best practices from around the country. This ensures that departments, like ours, are provided an outside perspective.

Partnering with Lexipol can assist us with this process in the following ways:

- Providing a solid policy foundation and a head start with 160 policies based on federal and state law, as well as best practices
- Requiring the police department to do a complete review and analysis of their current practices, while modifying the Lexipol manual to fit the needs of our agency and community
- Allowing for the sharing of key policies for community engagement and input
- Facilitating the engagement process by providing a legally sound policy to modify or adapt to local needs

Short Term Goal:

To completely update Policy and Procedures, that other than minor revisions, have not been changed since 2008.

Long Term Goal:

Have Policy and Procedures that meet New York State Accreditation Standards. This will assist Wappingers Falls Police to become an accredited department.

Community Survey: The Wappingers Falls Police will conduct a yearly survey of the community, to determine how we are meeting the needs of the community. Using the information, we obtain from the survey, we will be able to improve on our programs and training.

Training: The following is being added to in-service training. The additional course(s) will increase our training, each year, by 20 hours.

- **De-escalation tactics**, both verbal and non-verbal communication strategies, can often reduce the risk of a situation becoming violent. The Wappingers Falls Police Department officers began receiving this training last July and will continue every year.
- **Bias training** allows officers to recognize their own human biases and how implicit biases can affect their perceptions of others, that affect their behavior. Our department is sending Lt. Capparelli to become a Bias training instructor. He will then provide this training to officers every year.
- **Procedural justice** focuses on the manner in which law enforcement interacts with the public and how these interactions shape the public's trust of the police. Lt Capparelli and Officer Farrell are now trained as instructors in procedural justice and will be scheduling this training to the officers, beginning March 2021.

Citizen Advisory: Can offer a continuing and meaningful role in the decision-making process and keep the community informed of development and achievements made by the department.

Body-Worn Cameras (BWC): The Wappingers Falls Police Department has been requiring all uniform officers on patrol, to wear a (BWC) camera, since 2016. Our department was one of the first in Dutchess County to require (BWC). Uniformed officers must activate the (BWC) before they get out of the patrol vehicle after receiving a call for service, vehicle and traffic stops, or any interaction that would require recording. The recordings are kept for 280 hours, unless the incident resulted in an arrest, then the recordings are kept indefinitely.

Misconduct: The Wappingers Falls Police Department has an extensive policy and procedure regarding how complaints about personnel are received and the follow-up investigation process.

Recruitment and Retention of Police Officers: The Wappingers Falls Police Department has always had difficulty retaining officers. Since many of our officers are part-time and are looking for full-time positions, we are always hiring and training officers. This does not mean that we will hire anyone. The process we use is very selective. We use the same background process for our full-time officers and part-time officers.

Community Engagement: It is the goal of the department to form trust with the community, that encourages discussion about issues that need to be corrected and enables all to come to an agreement on what would be best for the community.