

**Minutes**  
**Allegany County Sheriff's Office Police Reform Public Forum**  
February 18, 2021  
Zoom & Facebook Live

Attendance – Michelle Denhoff (recording minutes), Carissa Knapp (County Administrator), Sheriff Whitney (Allegany County Sheriff's Office representative)  
Public attendees were not identified, unless speaking.

### **Overview**

The meeting was called to order at 3 pm. Ms Knapp opened the discussion and presented a Power Point of the presentation, explaining other methods of outreach to the public and how the process will move forward.

Executive Order 203, issued June 12, 2020, was discussed and details were provided. Members of the committee were outlined. Ms. Knapp stated that all public input is also being considered during the reform process either by this forum, email, online survey, and letters.

Four steps to meet the required terms of the order:

1. Comprehensive review of the current deployments, strategies, policies, procedures, practices.
2. The County Administrator is slated to create the plan.
3. The plan must be offered for public comment and Allegany County will be ratifying the plan by resolution, not law, by April 1, 2021.
4. The plan must also be transmitted to the New York State Director of Budget, for approval.

It is not clear what state funding will be affected if Allegany Count is not in compliance with the order by April 1.

An overview of roles and responsibilities was provided for the County Administrator, Sheriff, Team Members and the general public (largest stakeholder). Implementation and measurement of success was also described.

The Sheriff's Office employee breakdown was provided including law enforcement, corrections, 911 dispatch, support staff. An organizational chart was also provided for the Sheriff's operations (can be found in the Sheriff's Office Annual Report). Details of hiring standards and local deployment was discussed.

### **Public Discussion**

Deputy Deployment:

1. Racial Bias – Ms. Krull, Cuba Cultural Center, stated she found it difficult to make an assessment because the statistics on racial demographics were not yet publicly available.

Employees: 3 AA employed. Arrests: Sheriff did not have that readily available but will look into it. Mr. Healey, District 2 Legislator, asked where that information can be found. Ms. Knapp indicated that we are only one of three Counties that do not offer a road patrol, so since we don't have a full-time police presence, it is more difficult to implement the review. Ms. Kelley, Public Defender, stated that she believes the DCJS website offers the breakdown of arrests and sentences by race and ethnicity per County, and it is also available by department breakdown. Public comment requested that these resources be provided on the website to increase the public transparency that this reform is supposed to create. Ms. Knapp indicated that the links will be added to the police reform website for easy access. She also stated that the slides being presented today will be available.

2. Policing communities of color – no comments
3. Other problem with deployment practice – no comments
4. Do we need fewer or more deputies – no comments

Use of Force: We need to provide OC Spray and Taser Policy on the website.

1. Do you have questions related to these policies – A suggestion to add definitions for terms used would be very helpful.

Procedural Justice/Bias: New policy will be available on the website.

1. Equal and fair treatment – Ms. Krull asked, has there been any training regarding trauma, not just for the police force but also for public? (i.e.) trauma informed response, violence, living in poverty, etc. No trainings have been publicly provided, but trainings are currently under consideration. Former SS Commissioner was working on trauma informed responses before retirement; however, COVID impacted implementation.
2. Additional steps – Mr. Jones gave an introduction of himself and his purpose in the community with Allegany Hope, offering his thanks and recognition of the programs that the Sheriff's Office already does. He is concerned of the current process, indicating that he felt the committee was not diversified enough and that interested non-profits were not included as they should have been (salvation army, or other NP). Further examples were provided of how to engage the people this should represent. He felt that a 3 pm meeting is not accessible to the general public, nor the outreach efforts had reached the right demographic. After this plan is completed, he hopes there is an attempt for a deeper outreach and engagement. Ms. Krull offered similar comments mentioning power authority and a lack of racial diversity on the group.

De-escalation:

1. Questions/suggestions – no comments

Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion:

1. Are there additional programs to offer – Barb Kelley offered a suggestion of a group related to mental health crisis intervention. Wellsville Police Reform discussion discussed this and stated there was a lack of funding. She felt like a mental health response team would offer a great benefit to all of our communities, many people end up in jail because there is no way to deal with this type of crisis. Ms. Knapp agreed, and said that she thought there was some pending legislation related to that in New York State. Mr. Jones stated he thought it was more holistic than funding related – the plan to implement is what is lacking. Much of the

items discussed are inter-related, trauma, mental health, poverty, etc. Debbie Bigelow, Concerned Citizens of Allegany County, asked if this would relate to DMV violations, repeat offenders that are stopped for other things and found to be in violation of something else.

- a. Is there a way to stop the cycle? Ms. Kelley identified that there is new legislation waiting to be implemented where driver's licenses will no longer be suspended for lack of payment of fines, etc. Her office currently sees a lot of those cases and is expecting that there will be a large decline in cases.

Restorative Justice: Ms. Knapp reviewed the slide related to topic. No comments provided.

Community Based Outreach and Conflict Resolution: does not apply to Sheriff's Office. Security checks at schools and community events are completed; however, a road patrol is not in place.

1. Can we expand outreach? Mr. Jones offered that a better presence with children and people of color would be beneficial, citing an example related to police week events in other areas, and how to engage parents and other attendees during the events. Ms. Knapp responded that the Trunk or Treat event held locally was very well received by the public and that it has been very successful. Sheriff Whitney offered additional examples such as emergency exp at Riverwalk in Wellsville, Child Safety Day at Alfred State Campus in Wellsville, and Read Across America event at local schools.
  - a. Mr. Jones offered an additional suggestion of better publicity. Offering more detail of what will be offered at each event will bring more attendance and exposure.

Problem Oriented Policing and Hot Spot Policing: No road patrol, less applicable.

Focused Deterrence: No road patrol, less applicable.

1. Any crime problems that could be best addressed by Sheriff's office devoting more resource?

Crime Prevention through Environmental Design:

1. Who should be responsible for identifying problems? Ms. Bigelow suggested that it should be responsibility of the insurance agent, not necessarily through patrol. Ms. Knapp suggested that maybe more press releases related to this could be helpful.

Violence Prevention and Reduction Interventions:

1. Suggestions on reduction strategies that could be implemented? Mr. Jones offered that he felt this is collaborative and should include all local departments. If they are all providing the same information to the press it will have a more significant impact and spread further.

Model Policies: Our local Use of Force policy is a model policy from MPTC.

Agency Accreditation Standards: This is not a mandatory accreditation; however, Allegany County Sheriff's Office is in the midst of seeking accreditation and was doing so prior to this executive order being placed.

Next Steps:

1. What current services are beneficial – no comments
2. What services could be offered that would be beneficial, but are currently not – no comments

3. What services are not beneficial – no comments
4. What are the 2-3 top issues – no comments
5. Equality and social justice, what does it mean to you? Ms. Krull discussed community involvement, outside of stakeholders, would be more equitable and just. Mr. Jones stated he felt that people in the community would be a great advocate to spread the word, rather than the police doing so directly.
6. Transparency and accountability? Mr. Jones felt it should be a primary focus. When these are lacking, the disconnection happens. He felt the Sheriff's Office has been very good at both, so far. Not all departments are like that.
  - a. Ms. Krull mentioned having the data and policies available online would be very beneficial and that with the lack of internet access it tends to be an issue.
  - b. Mr. Jones offered that libraries could be a huge asset on this front, as they are a huge provider of information, and could help provide the information to our people.

## Close of Meeting

Ms. Knapp stated that it was the end of the Power Point, discussing how the process will continue and how ideas will continue to be captured by the survey that is currently open to the public. Sheriff Whitney indicated that he felt a good effort has been made to reach the public utilizing Facebook, radio ads and newspaper articles, there isn't a lot more that can be done. He also offered that agencies have been reached and can be involved through any of the public outreach efforts. Ms Knapp thanked all of our public commenters. Phil Stockin mentioned that since COVID, public transparency has increased greatly through Facebook live feeds of all the legislative meetings, providing an element of exposure that didn't exist previous.

Meeting was concluded at approximately 4:20 pm.

Minutes respectfully provided by Michelle Denhoff.  
Allegany County Office of Planning