

**VILLAGE OF HAMILTON, NEW YORK**

**Village of Hamilton Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative**

**In Response to Executive Order 203, Governor Andrew Cuomo**

**DRAFT REPORT**

**April 1, 2021**

**Mayor RuthAnn Loveless  
Village Trustee Russ Lura  
Village Trustee Sean Nevison  
Village Trustee Julie Dudrick  
Village Trustee Chris Henke  
Chief of Police Shawn Stassi**

Hello Neighbors,

Following last summer's tragic death of George Floyd and the social unrest that followed, Governor Andrew Cuomo directed all municipalities with a police force to participate in the NYS Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative. Each municipality was charged with tailoring its plan to local needs. In doing so, we sought broad input from the community.

An open and transparent process was important to the success of our plan. To that end, the Village Board and the Hamilton Police Department (HPD) held two sessions with our stakeholders (including Community Memorial Hospital, Hamilton Central School, Hamilton Area Community Coalition, Hamilton Area Anti-Racism Coalition, Colgate University, the Faith Community, LGBTQ, and Hamilton Business Alliance). We convened a community meeting and also met with two focus groups of Colgate faculty and staff of color. We reached out to Colgate students, and shared a community survey with Village residents.

We strive for Hamilton to be a welcoming community for all and we sought feedback to inform our plan and improve the HPD's services. Mutual respect between police and the community they serve has always been a top priority, as well as maintaining public safety. We are grateful to the more than 200 residents who shared their opinions and ideas which were critical as we evaluated current policing practices.

The data indicates respect for the HPD and also opportunities for improvement. The Board, administration, and HPD are committed to implementing these recommendations and working together to ensure an equitable experience for all. We consider this a "living document" that will guide our response to the ever-changing needs of the community into the future. In that spirit we look forward to an ongoing dialogue.

All the best,  
RuthAnn Speer Loveless, Mayor

### **The Village of Hamilton and the Hamilton Police Department**

The Village of Hamilton is located in the center of New York State and has a population of 3,814 residents.<sup>1</sup> The Village population includes 54% female and 46% male residents, and selected racial demographics include 5.2% of residents who identify solely as African American, 9.3% Asian, 0% Native American, 79.3 white, and 4.6% who identify with two or more races. Residents who identify as Hispanic or Latino (an ethnic identity) include 6.9% of residents. Madison County has a population of 71,205, including 50.6% and 49.4% female residents. County residents identifying solely as African American comprise 1.8% of the population, 0.9% Asian, 0.5% Native American, 94.6% white, and 1.7% identify with two or more races. Madison County includes 2.2% of residents who identify ethnically as Hispanic or Latino.

The staff of the Hamilton Police Department (HPD) currently includes 5 full time staff, including a chief, two sergeants, and 2 officers. HPD also has 10 part-time officers on staff. HPD full time staff are currently all male and white, and part-time staff include 8 men and 2 women, all white. Within the past 10 years, HPD has employed 2 African American officers and 2 additional women officers. The African American officers who left HPD staff took full time positions with other police agencies in the region. The small size of our police force and fewer opportunities for professional development, especially when compared with other, larger agencies in the region, means that competition with those other agencies is a significant factor in staff hiring and retention.

The Mission Statement of the HPD states: *The mission of the Hamilton Village Police Department is to work in partnership with the community, to protect life and property, solve neighborhood problems and enhance the quality of life in our village.*

### **Reform and Reinvention Study Process**

As part of the process of New York's Police Reform and Reinvention initiative, the Village of Hamilton has collected several different forms of community input. These include: a survey shared in print via direct mail to over 1,000 community households and businesses, and also in electronic format via the Village website and direct emails. These surveys garnered 181 responses. Two meetings were held with community stakeholder groups that includes representatives of key community constituencies (persons of color, LGBTQ+, clergy, health care, school, and social services), two focus group meetings with persons of color on the staff and faculty at Colgate University (a total of 4 participants), and one open community forum (15 participants). Village Trustees and administration also met with HPD Chief Shawn Stassi and Sergeant Matt Janczuk to solicit their opinion. Summaries of the results of the surveys and community meetings are included as appendices to this report.

In this report, we use the term "community of color" to refer to persons who identify as non-white and/or part of a non-dominant ethnic group. In the United States, these communities have historically been subject to inequities due to discriminatory public policy, including policing. While race and ethnicity are a central focus of New York's Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative and the work undertaken by

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<sup>1</sup> All demographic data is taken from the US Census Bureau, via Social Explorer (<https://www.socialexplorer.com/>). All numbers are 2019 estimates from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey. Note that students in residence at Colgate University are included in Census numbers; given that Colgate enrolls approximately 2,900 students, their demographics significantly impact the overall numbers presented here.

the Village of Hamilton under this executive order, we also recognize the vulnerability of other communities, including persons identifying with the LGBTQ+ community, and persons vulnerable due to their religion, citizenship, or national heritage. The composition of the solicited stakeholder groups and our data collection methods sought to maximize representation of persons and communities from these potentially vulnerable constituencies.

The data generated by our research process helped us to develop the following goals and recommendations for reforms and initiatives. For each of the eight main categories of goals listed below, we provide a summary of the findings from our study, a description of the current HPD activities and policies that already support those goals, and proposed initiatives that will provide additional resources and policies to further each goal. This report will be shared with the Village of Hamilton's Reform and Reinvention stakeholder group and with the broader community before discussion and adoption by the Board of Trustees.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

***Goal #1: The Village of Hamilton will re-examine levels of funding and support for implicit bias and cultural diversity training for all HPD staff. In addition, HPD staff will receive continued training in de-escalation techniques.***

**Findings:** Community members suggest and support training for HPD staff, especially including policing techniques that promote community engagement, cross-cultural communication and understanding, and de-escalation training.

**Current Activities:** HPD currently participates in annual training regarding firearms use, criminal law updates, and use of force. All HPD staff have received training in recognizing implicit biases, and in cultural diversity. In addition, in recent years HPD staff have received in-service training in the following areas: Responding to Hate Crimes, Sexual Offenses, Recognizing Respiratory Distress, Stop Stick Training (video), Commercial Vehicle Interdiction, Annual Legal Updates via DA's Office, De-escalation Training (video), Fire Arms Instructor Certification (Sergeant Jeff Worthley), Evidence Room Training (Officer Nick DiBrango), Spotlight Webinar on Human Trafficking (Chief Shawn Stassi and Sergeant Matt Janczuk), Field Training Officer School (Officer Michael Mordus, Sergeant Jeff Worthley, and Sergeant Matt Janczuk), Child Abuse Investigation (Officer Val Brogan and Sergeant Matt Janczuk).

**Proposed Initiatives:** The Village proposes increasing annual funding in the HPD budget by not less than 60% so that each HPD officer will receive at least 40 hours of training each year. These funds will support continued training for all officers on de-escalation techniques and other alternatives to use of force, as well as continued diversity, equity and inclusivity training. The Village Board will review the sufficiency of funding levels annually to ensure that training goals and objectives are being achieved.

***Goal #2: The Village of Hamilton will enhance its policies and procedures for collecting and disseminating data related to traffic enforcement.***

**Findings:** Responses to the survey and the focus groups highlight a need for increased and regular release of data to describe HPD's work in the community. Community members are interested in seeing data about the interactions that the police have with the local community, and with students, staff, and visitors of Colgate. Some respondents to the survey and participants in the focus groups designed as a part of this reform project describe a perception in the community that persons of color are pulled over at a higher rate than other groups, and ask the Village to share data that would allow the community to learn more about the issue. Those voices also call for this data to include information about the gender, race, and residency of those interacting with HPD.

**Current Activities:** HPD regularly collects data about the work they do in the community, as well as some demographic data about the residents and visitors with whom they interact. There are challenges, however, to using data from interactions such as traffic stops to provide a full picture of HPD's work in the community, or the community members and visitors they encounter, because HPD may not be able to collect or share demographic data about a driver who is licensed outside the state. This is especially relevant for the Colgate University student population, many of whom are licensed in states other than New York.

**Proposed Initiatives:** The Village recommends making distribution of data collected from traffic stops that result in the issuance of a ticket available to the public on a regular basis. The Village will also ask that officers provide regular shift reports of data from traffic stops that did not result in the issuance of a ticket, and that data from these documents be compiled and made available to the public as thoroughly as may be practicable. HPD leadership should develop a plan for this reporting on not less than an annual basis and share a written proposal with the Board of Trustees.

***Goal #3: The Village of Hamilton will engage in regular communication about HPD's work in the community. HPD will communicate about policies and procedures that protect citizen safety during encounters with law enforcement, especially restraint and arrest procedures.***

**Findings:** Data from surveys and community meetings shows a desire among the public for more interaction with the members of HPD and requests to know more about HPD—about what they do and who they are. This speaks to the positive relationship that Village officers have with the local community. At the same time, the data points to a lack of understanding about the work of the police in the community, and the difference between HPD and separate police agencies such as the Madison County Sheriff's Office and the New York State Police. Moreover, many residents are not clear on the distinctions in role, jurisdiction, and capacity when comparing HPD and Colgate's Campus Safety, which is a private security force, not a police agency.

**Current activities:** HPD is already involved in a number of community activities that serve to provide information to visitors and residents about the services that the department provides. This includes a bike rodeo, regular presence at the Village Farmers' Market, and special events in the village, at Hamilton Central School, and Colgate University. Through data collected in the survey and focus groups, it is clear that many community members are unaware of these activities. Discontinuation of public events during

the COVID-19 pandemic have likely contributed to this missing connection between HPD and the public. Some proposed changes to HPD policies and procedures are effectively irrelevant for the work of our police force. For example, except in cases of serious felony crimes, appearance tickets are issued in lieu of arrests, warrantless or otherwise. Choke holds are not an approved technique for restraint in New York State generally. The New York State Legislature is reportedly considering a ban on no-knock warrants at the time of this study.

**Proposed initiatives:** The Village of Hamilton will work to communicate consistently with community visitors and residents about the role of HPD. To do this, the Village will have a goal to publish an annual report of police work, to include the regular release of data described above. The first annual report should be shared at the conclusion of the 2021-2022 fiscal year, and published again in subsequent years on a regular timeline. The Village will also increase the amount and breadth of information on the HPD website with respect to department outreach activities and policies and procedures that promote citizen and officer safety.

***Goal #4: The Village of Hamilton will facilitate partnerships and opportunities for dialogue with the community, especially with Hamilton’s community of color and other vulnerable populations. Continued outreach and partnerships with our local schools and students is an important aspect of community relations and builds trust.***

**Findings:** Many community members expressed a desire for HPD to be more proactive and consistent in reaching out to the community and building trust. Members of Hamilton’s and Colgate University’s communities of color, especially African Americans, called on HPD to build connections with their communities in ways that, at the same time, meet them at their own level of trust and comfort. For their part, HPD staff noted the frequent rate of turnover in staff positions at Colgate University, as well as the continual turnover of representation in student government and other groups that liaise with the police, present a continuing challenge in maintaining these relationships. HPD staff often invest in relationships with a member of the campus community, only to find that person has left or transferred to a new position, meaning that the process needs to start again.

**Current activities:** The HPD policy manual requires the department to “establish close ties with and respond to the needs of community and to correct actions, practices and attitudes which may contribute to community tensions and grievances through a unified and coordinated community relations effort utilizing the participation, enthusiasm and skills of all agency personnel.” The manual emphasizes that, “(t)he ability of the department to carry out its mission depends in large measure on its relationship with the community. This relationship must also include the realization that public cooperation results in improved public effectiveness and must be built on an open exchange of information and views which results in a greater understanding between the community and the police.” (215.II)

The partnership between HPD and the Hamilton Central School is very strong and well-established, and the police maintain a visible presence at the school in order to make students and staff feel comfortable with Hamilton officers. This is a unique relationship, and serves to encourage Hamilton’s youth to have a positive, trusting relationship with police. Sergeant Matt Janczuk is trained as a juvenile officer, and is the

only officer in Madison County certified by the New York Police Juvenile Officers Association. Sergeant Janczuk was awarded the New York State Youth Officer of the Year Award in 2019 from the association for his work with students at HCS. Ongoing events that build connections with Hamilton Central School include a “back to school bash” and “end of school bash,” and coordination with the Hamilton Area Community Coalition on anti-drug education. Drug education and safety has also been a focus of HPD partnerships with Kinney Drug and Madison Lane Apartments, where HPD staff have facilitated “take back” programs for safe disposal of prescription medications.

In the past, the Village of Hamilton has also participated in regular events with students at Colgate University. HPD and Colgate Campus Safety begin each school year by introducing themselves at each off-campus student residence in the village, and they have participated in orientation meetings for members of the Colgate junior class who will be living off-campus in their senior year (Off-Campus Student Outreach program). HPD staff have also attended first-year student events to allow new members of the Colgate community to learn more about who they are and what services they provide. HPD have also participated in a meeting with members of the LGBTQ community in Hamilton, and approximately 25-30 people were in attendance to discuss the relationships between the community and the police. Chief Stassi has also participated in luncheons for women of color at Colgate, facilitated by the ALANA Cultural Center director at the time. As noted above, some of the activities have been temporarily disrupted due to restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Proposed Initiatives:** HPD, with the assistance of the Board of Trustees, will develop a regular program for interaction with community stakeholder groups to serve as a sounding board and means of direct communication between HPD and the Village and these community constituents. These groups will not have an advisory or oversight role over HPD, but HPD leadership will listen carefully to the community, their concerns, and suggestions via this interaction. Representation of communities of color and other vulnerable community members is a critical function of these regular interactions. The stakeholder group formed as part of this Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative may serve as a starting point for identifying these representative groups.

HPD should continue its existing outreach to community groups and build on this work via the advice and support of the community constituent groups. Community engagement and events sponsored by HPD ensure that Village residents, commuters, and visitors have a direct relationship with HPD staff and can express their opinions and concerns personally in an environment that is welcoming for both parties, and can serve to facilitate future interactions.

***Goal #5: The Village of Hamilton will ensure that members of the community understand the protocol for expressing concern about policing in the Village of Hamilton.***

**Findings:** Survey data demonstrates that a majority of the Hamilton community is satisfied with the work that HPD does in the village. However, visitors and residents may not be familiar with the protocol for making a complaint, or with the process of filing a report and the procedures the HPD will follow to act upon such a report.

**Current activities:** The HPD policy manual states that, “Community support for the police department and its mission is contingent upon citizen confidence in the integrity of the department and its policies, procedures, rules and personnel. It is the policy of the Village of Hamilton Police Department to courteously receive and fairly investigate all complaints made against the department and its activities, practices and personnel. The goal of this policy shall be to correct deficiencies in policies and procedures, detect and deter misconduct, instill confidence in citizens regarding the integrity of the department and its personnel, and seek redress for false accusations made against the agency and its members.” (211.II)

Any complaints about police work must be addressed in a timely manner, for both the complainant’s and the involved officer’s benefit. The HPD manual stipulates that the police supervisor will “receive, record and investigate complaints regardless of their source” and initiate an investigation at the time of intake (211.IV.C.1.a-b). The manual also states that investigations will be complete within 30 days of the complaint. (211.IV.C.1.e)

**Proposed initiatives:** The HPD manual indicates that the department “shall publish information entitled, ‘How to Commend or Complain about a Village of Hamilton Police Officer or the Village of Hamilton Police Department.’ This information shall be available to the public at headquarters, through any police officer, via the Police website or by mail if a citizen so requests.” (211.IV.A.2) In tandem with the initiative proposed in Goal #2, HPD leadership will update the Board of Trustees on compliance with this policy via a written statement.

***Goal #6: The Village of Hamilton will provide additional resources to the HPD to increase their visibility in the community.***

**Findings:** Many of the respondents to the survey and focus groups noted their appreciation for the visible presence that HPD maintains in the community, indicating that this presence adds to their sense of security and safety in the community. However, some of those who participated in the survey and focus groups indicated that they felt HPD’s presence in the community was not sufficiently visible, while others expressed a concern that a highly visible police presence may be viewed by some as a means of intimidating persons of color and others. The community should recognize that the police cannot always make their presence or their work arrangements known for reasons of public safety. At the same time, many residents felt that enhancing HPD’s ability to perform foot and bike patrols might provide more opportunity for positive interactions between the police and the community.

**Proposed Initiatives:** The Village of Hamilton is currently exploring the feasibility of hiring a Community Service Officer. The officer hired in this position would focus on community policing work, including support of the various community events mentioned above, as well as foot and bike patrol. More regular foot and bike patrols for all members of HPD will also be explored.

***Goal #7: The Village of Hamilton will continue to explore the use of new equipment and technology such as body cameras for HPD staff.***

**Findings:** Survey data demonstrates that the community is in support of equipping HPD officers with body cameras (97% support). HPD staff are supportive of utilizing this equipment and technology as well.

**Current activities:** Few Madison County police agencies are currently using body cameras, but there is a belief that New York State may soon mandate their use.

**Proposed initiatives:** The Village of Hamilton Board of Trustees will review information about the use of body cameras and other new technologies by HPD in the context of current and future budget discussions. Pending action at the state level (and the potential for state funding), the Village of Hamilton will work toward appropriating funds to purchase body cameras for all HPD staff as soon as it is fiscally responsible to do so. In cooperation with HPD leadership, the Board of Trustees will also explore the effectiveness of other new technologies that may be available to enhance public and officer safety.

**Goal #8: *The Village of Hamilton will work with the Madison County Sheriff's Office as they implement a mental health diversion policy.***

**Findings:** All emergency calls, or calls made to the 911 center, that are initiated within the village are received by Madison County rather than by the Village of Hamilton. The Madison County Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative Plan, released on March 3, 2021, includes a proposed Mental Health call diversion policy for emotionally distressed calls made in Madison County. The plan states that a “risk assessment, completed by 911 operators, will evaluate if an emotionally distressed caller needs assistance from either law enforcement or the Madison County Mental Health Department. The goal of the assessment is to provide the caller with the support they need in order to help return the caller to a stable state. Once the calls are deemed appropriate, the caller will be transferred to a licensed clinician for further assessment and de-escalation. If needed, the mobile crisis team can be dispatched. This new process of triaging hopes to limit police interaction with individuals in crisis who are not a threat to themselves or others as well as free up law enforcement to go on calls that require a police presence.”

**Proposed Initiative:** In addition to working with the County, HPD will ensure that members of the Hamilton community are aware of the policy. Information about this policy will also be included on the HPD website and in the annual report (consistent with Goal #3).

## Appendix 1: Survey Results

A summary of the responses from our paper and online survey is included below. Fifty-nine paper surveys were dropped off at the Village of Hamilton office, and 126 responses were submitted through a Google Form, linked to the Village of Hamilton website. Two duplicated entries were removed from the analysis, and four were used for qualitative analysis only. In all, we received 179 total responses. Quoted responses were not edited for grammar or spelling.

### Question #1: What do you feel is the role of HPD within the Community?

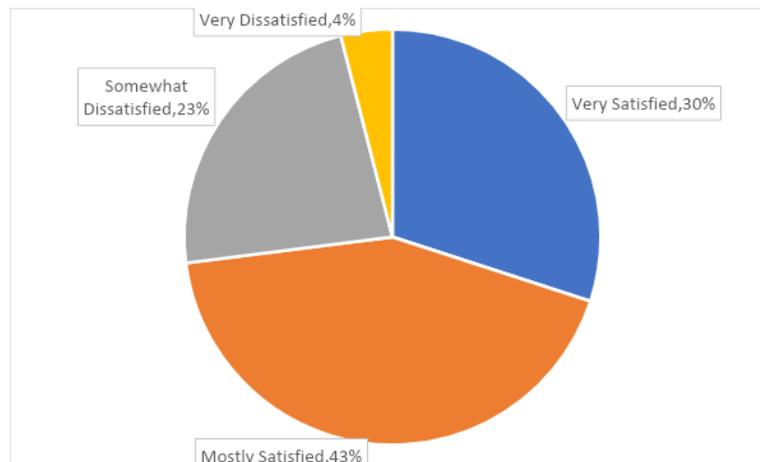
38% of the responses used the word *safety* to describe the role of HPD. Responses in this category include, “to keep members of the community safe,” “to ensure a safe environment for residents and visitors regardless of race, sexual orientation, religion, gender, ability, etc,” and “keeping our village safe.” Responses also regularly used the word *protection* (35%) to describe the role of the police, including, “to protect and keep our community safe,” “protect and serve its citizens,” and “to protect people and keep the community secure, to prevent conflict if they can be avoided in advance, and to promote reconciliation.” Fewer responses used the word *enforcement* in their response, and included comments such as, “enforce the laws that govern their jurisdiction,” “enforcement for all applicable motor vehicle and traffic laws and regulations,” and “to uphold and enforce the law with compassion, equality, confidence, and competence.” Seven percent of responses mentioned emergency response, in comments such as “first responders in matters of public safety,” “responds to calls for aid when needed, maintains a safe environment for responsible residents,” and “to be present for emergencies and help maintain the bodily safety of all people within their jurisdiction.”

### Question #2: What services performed by the HPD do you feel are most beneficial to the Community?

The most common responses to this question included words such as “traffic enforcement” (27%), emergency response (15%) and safety (13%). Similar to answers for Question 1, many of the written responses highlighted patrol and enforcement of traffic laws within the Village. Several responses also suggest a need for increased community engagement and visibility among HPD staff. Some responses emphasized the importance of HPD’s work monitoring and policing intoxication among Colgate students.

### Question #3: How satisfied are you with the level of HPD engagement and understanding of the Community?

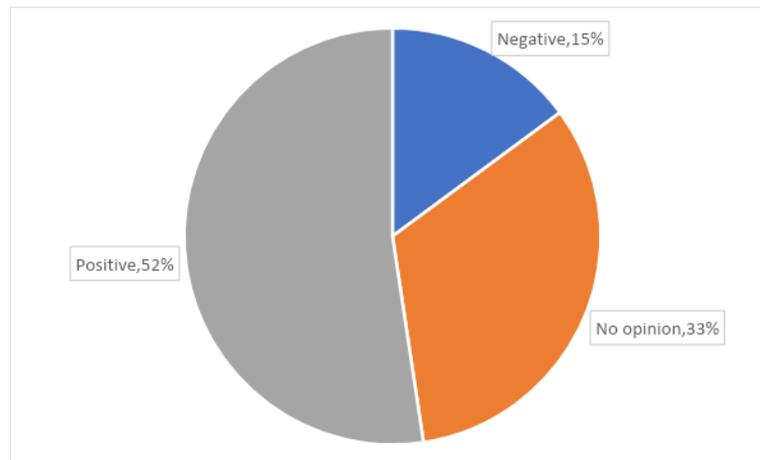
Of the survey participants who responded to this question, 73% indicated that they were very or mostly satisfied with the level of engagement, while 27% indicated that they were somewhat or very dissatisfied.



**Question #4: If you feel improvement is needed, how can the HPD and the community more effectively engage and build trust with one another?**

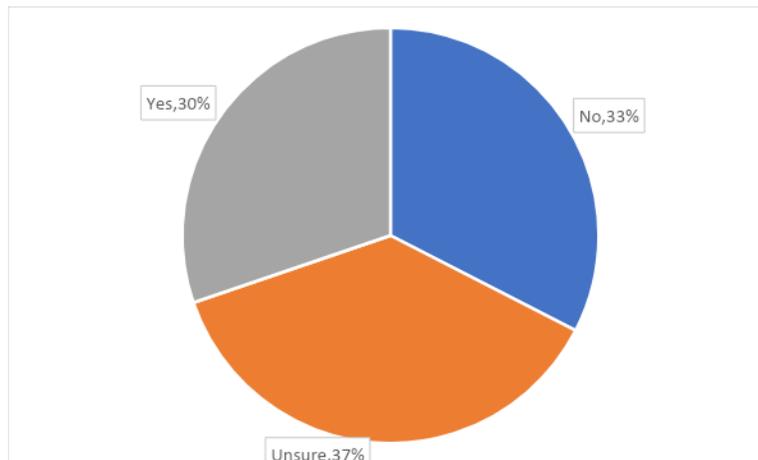
Partnering with schools and students was the most highly prioritized improvement, followed by community outreach meetings and foot and/or bicycle patrols. Citizen advisory boards and committees was the fourth most highly prioritized improvement, and partnership with Hamilton's communities of color and/or faith institutions was the fifth.

**Question #5: What is your general perception of the HPD leadership and officers? If you have had any specific interaction with an HPD officer, how would you describe your experience?**



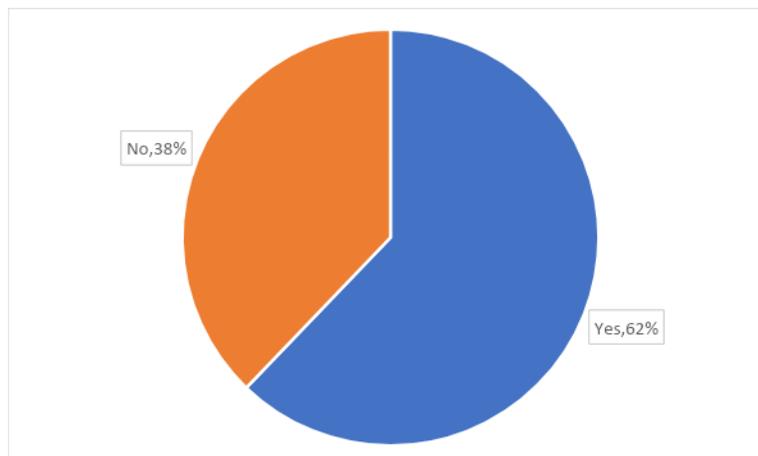
Residents report both positive and negative experiences when interacting with HPD staff. Many residents praised the staff for professionalism, positive and courteous styles of interacting with residents, and thoughtful attention to detail. Comments about HPD leadership were especially positive. However, survey responses also detail some negative encounters, including among community members of color, who feel disproportionate attention from HPD. Some comments called for HPD staff to be better trained to support community members facing trauma and assault. To protect community member confidentiality, we are not sharing specific comments in this report, but all survey responses have been shared with Village of Hamilton and HPD leadership for review and response.

**Question #6: Is the HPD sufficiently aware of and responsive to the rights and concerns of racially and socio-economically diverse constituent individuals within the Community?**



About thirty percent of the responses indicated that HPD is sufficiently aware of and responsive to the rights and concerns of racially and socio-economically diverse constituent individuals within Hamilton, while one-third felt that HPD is not. Respondents were more often unsure about this, indicating that they either don't have first-hand experience with this, or that they don't have enough knowledge of what the HPD does within the community to be able to respond. Some of those indicating they were unsure mentioned that they personally had never experienced insensitivity, but acknowledged that members of other groups might disagree at a higher rate, and indicate that they have "heard reports of racial insensitivity." This was especially true of respondents who identified themselves as white.

**Question #7: Do you feel that there is a need for greater transparency and accountability with respect to law enforcement within the Hamilton Community? If you answered yes to question 7 above, how would you recommend improvement in those areas?**

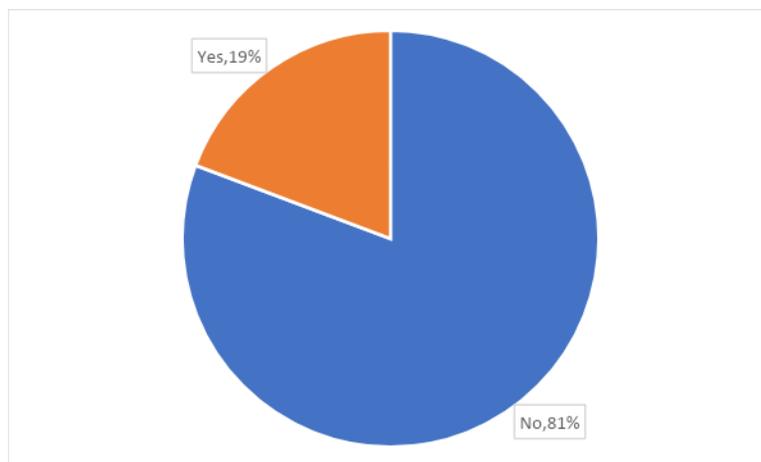


A clear majority of responses call for greater transparency and accountability in policing in Hamilton. Some of these responses requested "more community outreach just to inform us of what is going on at the HPD & in the community" and indicated that they "would like to know the officers through community presentations." Several responses in this category acknowledge that some details of police work cannot be

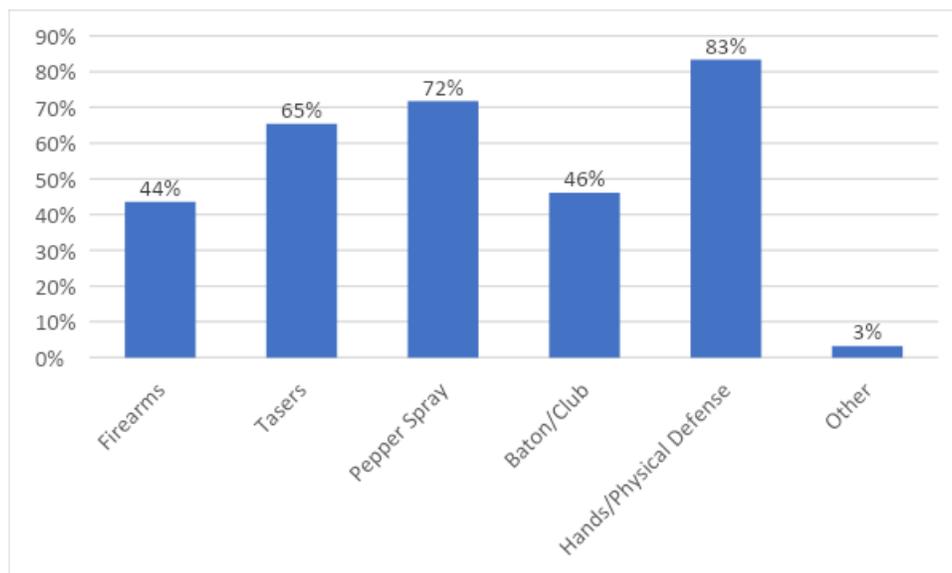
made public because of issues of confidentiality and public safety, but still indicate that “maximum allowable transparency will enhance police-citizen relations.” Finally, some responses mentioned that they would like to see “foot and bike patrol or friendly engagements” to better connect the police with the local community.

Thirty-eight percent of respondents felt as if greater transparency or accounting is not called for. Those who responded in this way indicated that they “cannot recall or remember any instances when HPD was hiding any informative information to the public,” or that the police “seem to be accountable to local citizens and village officials.”

**Question #8: Have you had any personal involvement with a member of HPD that you found unsatisfactory in any way? Such instances could include, but would not necessarily be limited to: traffic or other stops or arrests based upon race or ethnicity, national origin, gender, sexual orientation or religion; and/or other forms of unprofessional behavior.**

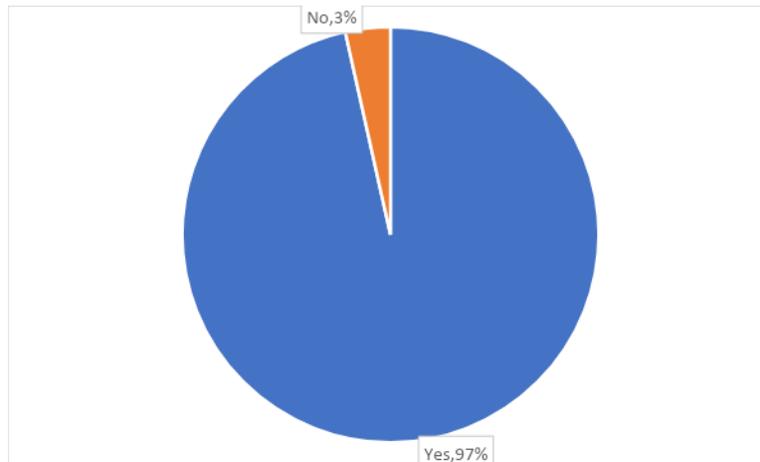


**Question #9: Which of the following do you believe are appropriate use of force measures to be exercised by HPD in the course of detaining and/or controlling suspects and/or in exercising self-defense? Check those that you favor.**



Several comments that accompanied Question 9 advocated for use of de-escalation as an alternative and means of preempting use of force: “We all need tools to deescalate a situation so that guns, etc. can be avoided.”

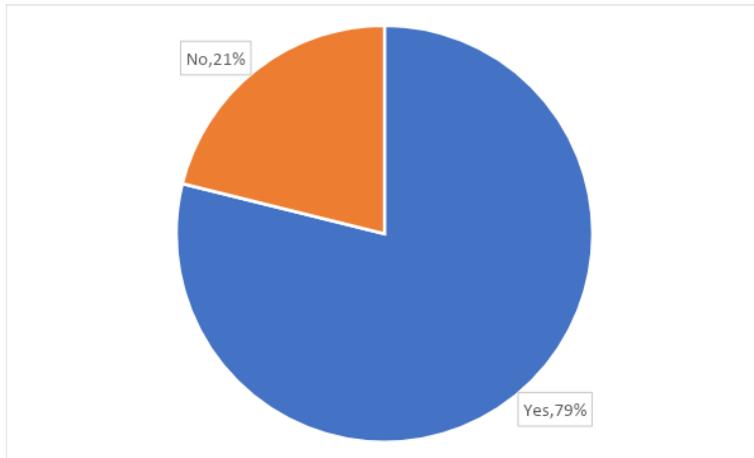
**Question #10: Do you favor the use of vehicle dash cameras and/or body cameras by HPD?**



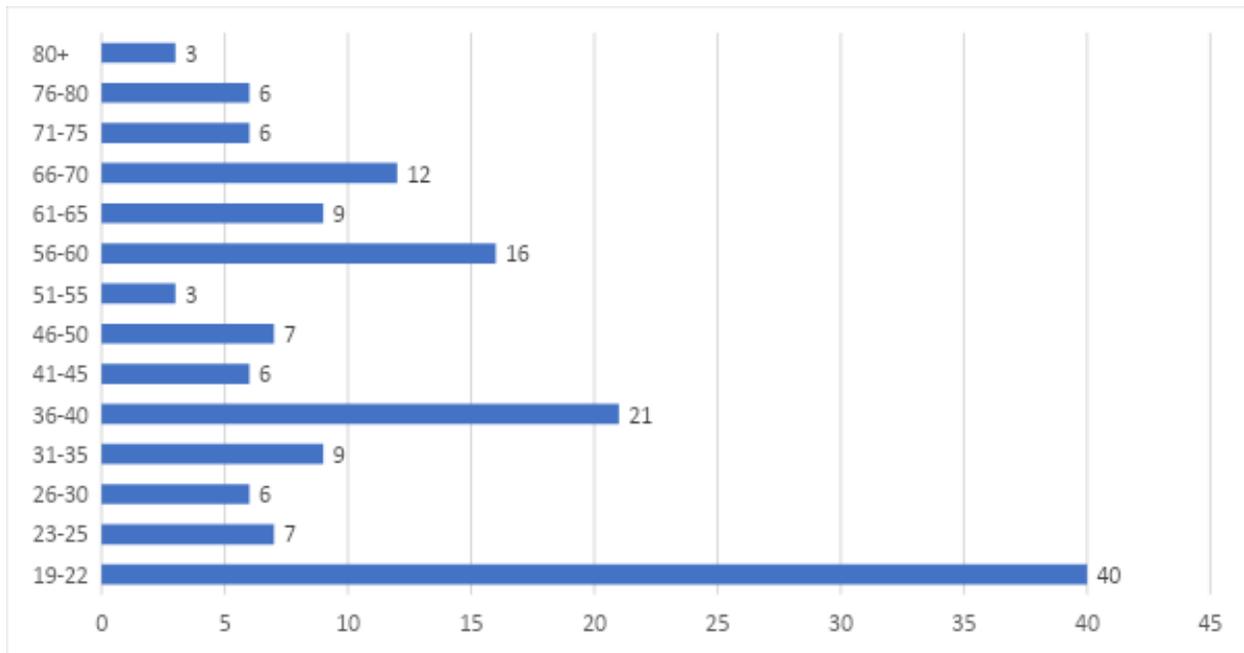
The survey data demonstrates that the Hamilton community shows overwhelming support for the use of dash and/or body cameras by HPD. Those indicating they were in support of this technology in local police work felt that it was “a form of transparency if needed in any civil or criminal lawsuits and/or courts,” and that dash or body cams should be used “absolutely and must be on all of the time.” Some respondents indicated they were in favor of the use of the technology to enhance public safety, especially in traffic enforcement. Only three percent of respondents indicated they were not in support of giving HPD access to the equipment or that they didn’t “know enough about this issue to make an informed decision.”

**Demographic Data**

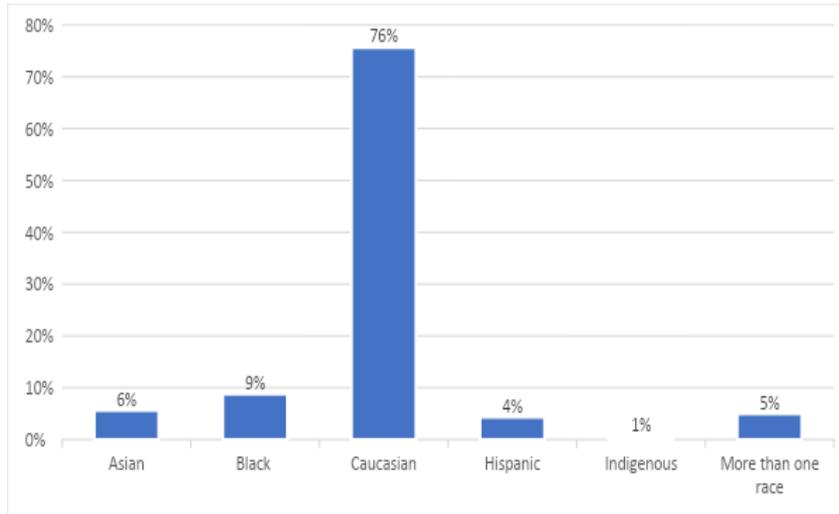
**Do you reside within the Village of Hamilton?**



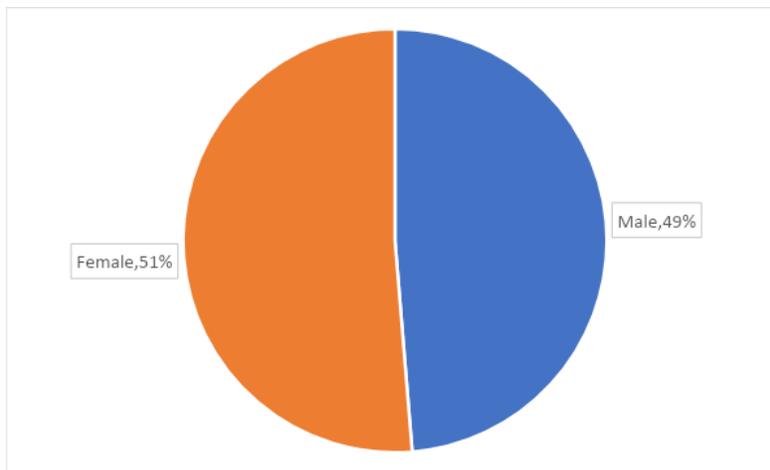
**What is your age?**



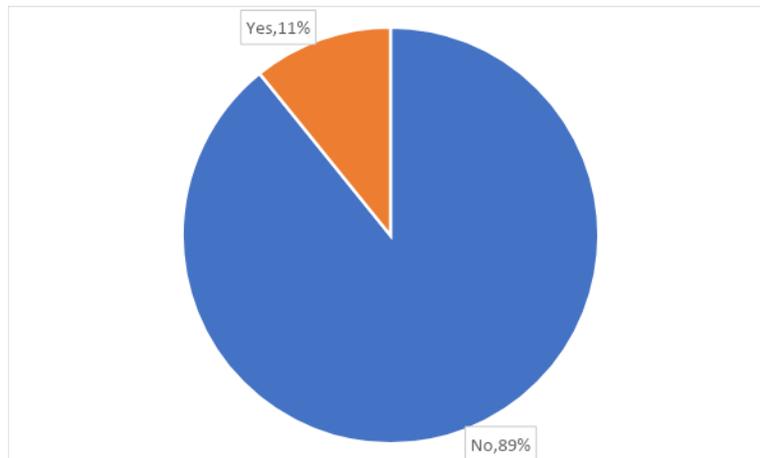
**How do you identify racially / ethnically?**



**What is your gender identity?**



**Do you identify as a member of the LGBTQ+ community?**



## Appendix 2: Results from Community Meetings

### Introduction

As part of the process of New York's Police Reform and Reinvention initiative, the Village of Hamilton has collected several different forms of community input, including several meetings with community members. This report provides results and analysis for two meetings with a stakeholder group that includes representatives of key community groups (persons of color, LGBTQ+, clergy, health care, school, and social services), two focus groups with persons of color on the staff and faculty at Colgate University (a total of 4 participants), and one open community forum (15 participants). These meetings were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed for key themes among the comments. The results reported here include six main themes: safety and daily life practices among community members, the importance of community outreach and building trust, experiences and perspectives of racial profiling, comments on other police procedures and support, police staffing policies, and comments about policing and Colgate's staff and student populations. Each section below provides a summary for each of the six themes along with some illustrative quotations from community members' comments. The report concludes with a set of recommendations submitted to the Village of Hamilton by the Hamilton Area Anti-Racism Coalition at a community forum.

### SAFETY-DAILY LIFE

Many comments across all the meetings reflected a similar shared sentiment among community members: in general, they feel safe, but that feeling of safety is qualified based on their time spent in the community, their own relative power and privilege, and their experiences and backgrounds with policing. For community members of color and/or LGBTQ+ community members, they often described the ways that they made choices and plans in their daily lives to maximize their safety and avoid interactions with locations and people that could be a threat to them, based on their identity. In some cases, these daily life strategies were connected to life in the Village, but several comments also highlighted the potential risks when traveling outside the Village, and the challenges of commuting into the Village. Comments about safety were often paired with calls for better communication and community building with the Hamilton Police Department (HPD), which is explored further in the next section.

I feel very safe in the community. (*Dec 14 Stakeholder Meeting*)

...as a white person, it's pretty easy for me here. But I also know that I've had uncomfortable interactions with the police. So I don't feel like the police make me feel safer here. Even as a white person. (*Dec 14 Stakeholder Meeting*)

Personally, as a, you know, as a white guy, and as a person with a somewhat of a position of authority in town ... I feel very safe in Hamilton, it was one of the things that drew me here in the first place. My conversations with HPD have been, I think, very positive and productive. I've enjoyed the opportunity to get to know [police staff] and to do a ride along. (*Dec 14 Stakeholder Meeting*)

Do I feel comfortable and safe? I feel comfortable and safe in the sense of I guess direct violence maybe. But do I feel comfortable and safe in general Hamilton---no. As a black man---no. I'm probably one of maybe what five or six adult black men in the whole town. ... I don't necessarily feel safe. Even running around here. Right? I have to be very cautious of running around the neighborhood, which is an activity that I tend to do. So much so that I invested in getting a peloton. Because I just like certain times certain areas, I may not be as welcome as a black person running through the neighborhood. *(Dec 14 Stakeholder Meeting)*

...if I [as a person of color] step outside the village, I'm in a totally different environment, right, where I may not be safe. And what informs that is just what's happening nationwide. Where there's violence against people nationwide who look like me, in those type of settings. So for me, it's one of those things where, you know, on a day to day, do I fear for my life? No. But am I overly cautious, and particularly in interactions with law enforcement? Yes. *(Dec 14 Stakeholder Meeting)*

...[as a person of color] I feel safe in Hamilton, but because I'm light skinned, because I'm a guy. For a lot of different reasons. I don't necessarily feel safe walking around speaking in Spanish on the phone. I wouldn't necessarily feel safe kissing my partner in public. So I think that's still a privilege that I have. *(Dec 14 Stakeholder Meeting)*

...the Hamilton police may provide a welcoming atmosphere for somebody that wants to go running. But if a state trooper who maybe isn't operating under the same sets of expectations comes to Hamilton with a different set of ideas in mind, how does the HPD move into a place as sort of a buffer between that and our own people? *(Dec 14 Stakeholder Meeting)*

[as a person of color] I don't I don't feel concerned about my safety unless I step outside of, you know, my normal activities. *(Feb 9 Focus Group)*

I also put in protection measures, right, so when I'm commuting to campus, I usually leave after daybreak, and I usually try to get out of town. So that at least I can make it within like a 10-minute radius of my house before it gets super dark outside. ... And so there's just things that I do to not find myself or to help mitigate the risk of me finding myself in a situation where I'm stuck in Morrisville, or just outside of Morrisville, and it's just me, and there's no lights, and a trooper. And that's not for any reason. I've never had a bad encounter with a police officer, but they don't know me, and I don't know them. And so yeah, I guess I would share that. *(Feb 9 Focus Group)*

### **COMMUNITY-OUTREACH-TRUST**

Many community members expressed a desire for HPD to be more proactive and consistent in reaching out to the community and building trust. As noted above, discussion of safety was often connected to this

theme, and meeting participants emphasized that persons of color and other populations that may feel vulnerable could feel safer in their everyday lives and be more comfortable reaching out to the police if they knew the staff and had a personal relationship with them. Community members suggested that these connections could be built through events, such as ice cream socials, where the police staff can meet and build trust with the community. Attendance at community meetings, increased presence in our schools, and less time spent in patrol cars were also suggested by community members. Finally, some participants called for more information to be available via the HPD website, and through publication of an annual report.

...I now have lived in Hamilton village for five years. I have no idea who the police even are.... I don't know anything about the police department other than a gentleman who sits on the corners somewhere near my house. So I think we the police has an obligation to share with the rest of the community, what it is they're doing and what their current function is. *(Dec 14 Stakeholder Meeting)*

If we're talking about like police with a big capital P, like I I'm apprehensive, I don't trust them by default. Because of how I was raised, because of what I saw happening around me, I was told from the age of five, if a cop talks to you or ask you a question, don't answer them. That was common knowledge where I'm from whether that's right or wrong. ... community engagement is about rebuilding policies that will rebuild certain relationships, because it might be that the officers in question are fine, and not homophobic and not racist. But most of us living in Hamilton are here from somewhere else. And so how do we have an ideal sort of model of policing that undoes some of that damage? So people know that that their safety will be valued if they do need to reach out? *(Dec 14 Stakeholder Meeting)*

So for me, knowing that a lot of times when people of color come into smaller world environments, that it takes a little bit more work for law enforcement to build those relationships, to build that trust to build that connection with that community. That is what's missing on a very foundational level ... that connection to people. *(Dec 14 Stakeholder Meeting)*

I'm curious about whether or not a process of healing and reconciliation might be helpful. Also, I heard a couple of folks say that while some of these things sound good, there's sort of a hesitancy to get too close to the police just yet. Like, maybe the trust isn't there, or the rapport isn't there? *(Dec 14 Stakeholder Meeting)*

...I don't think many people have a great deal of knowledge about what our police actually do all day. I've seen them sitting in their cars on Broad Street, and once in a while driving around the village, but I really don't know what our police department does. And of course, I know they do plenty but we don't know about it. What kind of communication could be opened up so that more of the people who live here in the village live and work here in the village. And find out what is going on. Many of us do not know, unless we're directly involved in an incident... *(Jan 26 Community Forum)*.

## PROFILING

African American community members reported some experiences of being racially profiled by HPD and also shared similar perceptions within the broader community of color.

I know, anecdotally, that people are racially profiled in our village. And ... people of color that I've talked to do not feel safe. And I don't want to represent, obviously, everyone's voices. But I want to say that it's not all roses. It's not all good here. *(Dec 14 Stakeholder Meeting)*

... I know anecdotally [that] people of color in the village are disproportionately stopped. ... I absolutely have been disproportionately stopped in the village of Hamilton. So I would like to see that addressed. And I think anecdotally from friends, we all get stopped by the same person repeatedly. And that's not okay. But because of my position, I have voice for it to stop and it has for me, but if I didn't know important people in important places, I don't know what that would mean for me in this community. *(Dec 14 Stakeholder Meeting)*

...I've been driving for 30 plus years, and I've been pulled over more in Hamilton than anywhere the rest of my life, four times in the first six months of living here. *(Dec 14 Stakeholder Meeting)*

...I have heard, you know, in the last year or two people of color talking about being profiled as it was, you know, a long time ago with [my family] It didn't feel like the entire Hamilton police department, but you know, one person in particular. So there was an extended moment where we were sort of anxious about one officer, and this person who was telling me the story was also anxious about a particular officer. Not everybody was doing it, it was just one officer. *(Feb 9 Focus Group)*

Yeah, I've heard of racial profiling incidents happening to friends or acquaintances all the time. Have I had encounters with police in Hamilton, where you felt your race or other identities shaped the way you're treated? Certainly, once---I've identified that one. *(Feb 9 Focus Group)*

...we have a lot of African Americans on staff in our department, who complain that you've been stopped for no reason. So that's what we hear. But in my own experience, personally, I feel 100% comfortable. *(Feb 11 Focus Group)*

## PROCEDURES-RESPONSE-SUPPORT

Comments about responsiveness and support from HPD were largely positive, and police staff were praised for being good patterns with our local hospital and school. Echoing the importance of

communication, emphasized above, some community members called on HPD to be better communicators when interacting with the public.

...we use the police department more often than you think [at the hospital]. They're very supportive to us. *(Dec 14 Stakeholder Meeting)*

And, you know, as far as an incident [at Hamilton Central School] last year, we had a weapons incident. And the HPD was very proactive in dealing with that, and helping us navigate that, and ease the tension and anxiety within our building and with our broader community. So very, very appreciative of HPD, and efforts that they provide us from a building level security standpoint. *(Dec 14 Stakeholder Meeting)*

I have noticed in conversations with HPD. They're just as likely to get sort of in the jargon of their own work, like any of us that have a sort of unique job do. And sometimes while that jargon is very precise, from the HPD perspective, it sometimes muddies the water for those of us from the community perspective. For example, in the spring and late winter, when we were talking about the family that was connected to the situation with ICE, there was some language that was a little bit unclear to many of us in the community about whether or not somebody had been arrested. You know, as far as I'm concerned, somebody that gets put in the back of a police car and taken to a station. I don't know anything about policing. So from my perspective, that looks like an arrest. HPD was pretty clear that it wasn't. But I think as we have those conversations, recognizing that those gradations of difference in meaning, are really important when they when it comes down to how the public perceives what's happening. *(Dec 14 Stakeholder Meeting)*

### **POLICE STAFF**

Participants shared experiences and perspectives on the size and composition of the HPD staff, including some suggestions about staff diversity and retention.

...I have nothing to say, but really good things about them. But as a resident of Hamilton now ... I know that there's a lot of issues as far as only having one officer on at a time sometimes. And it can get a little sticky if anything happens at the university. But I have nothing but good to say. *(Dec 14 Stakeholder Meeting)*

I'd rather see the department rid itself of problematic behavior than to try to mandate some type of arbitrary diversity count. Because people of all backgrounds can be great people, people of all backgrounds can be not so great people. *(Dec 14 Stakeholder Meeting)*

...you're continuing to try and recruit more women and people of color, right, I think it's an ongoing thing. And then also understanding why the people of color you hired left [the HPD]. Because that's also a good portion of how you would adjust your recruiting or the on the job in general. Is there a specific reason? Are they paying more in Syracuse? Is it

more like there's a reason that they're leaving? So what is that reason? Or what's the rationale, they might be different for every person, but at least [HPD has] an idea, okay, when I hire a person of color, these are the issues they might be confronting, or this is why they might leave. (*Dec 14 Stakeholder Meeting*)

...knowing the types of trainings that officers are getting on an annual or regular basis, whether it be bias training, whether it be de-escalation, like all of those things ... helps to build trust, because it's transparency about what we're doing, and how we're training our officers to do the work of protecting the community. (*Feb 9 Focus Group*)

### **COLGATE-STAFF-STUDENTS**

Many of the participants in our meetings are connected with Colgate University and commented on the role of policing in the lives of university staff and student populations. Some community members expressed concerns that negative experiences with HPD may in some cases push students or staff of color to leave Hamilton.

...I can tell you that, from working with some of our students of color, they may not feel very comfortable with Hamilton police, right, that's based off of anecdotal information, right? (*Dec 14 Stakeholder Meeting*)

...there's a lot of people who move in and out of our community, and who rent and who are deeply invested in the community while they are here. But who are not here for, say 10 years. And if you're one of those people, and you're here for say two years, and you have 1-2-3 negative encounters with the police, especially if you've come from somewhere else, where you maybe had even more frequent contacts of a negative nature with the police, that probably doesn't rise for you to the level where you're gonna feel a pressing need to go make a complaint to [the Mayor or Chief of Police]. But if you think about all of those data points over time, and what they might reveal, it's troubling. I've ... heard a lot of anecdotes over the years, from people who were troubled, by the way that they were treated as not having the same kind of right to be here. As people who look like me. I also worry about how information can be collected from people who chose to leave Colgate employment, partially for those kinds of reasons. ... how do you hear from the people who in part are choosing not to be here? (*Jan 26 Community Forum*).

### **HAARC RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Hamilton Area Anti-Racism Coalition submitted a list of recommendations to the Village at the January 26, 2021 community forum. Those recommendations include:

I. Create a Citizen Review Board including community members who have expertise and/or experience in: addressing racial and other social inequalities as they pertain to policing, policing strategies, policies, procedures, and practices and expertise and/or experience in addressing racial and other social inequalities

as they pertain to developing practices to better address the needs of communities of color and other marginalized communities, promote safety as defined by the community, improve community engagement and foster trust within communities of color and other marginalized communities.

II. Collect data in the following areas:

- Shootings by officers, firearm discharges, civilian injuries, use of force incidents, summonses, ticketing, and officer stops, warrantless searches and arrests. This data should be broken down by demographics such as race, gender, age, sexual orientation, and English language proficiency.
- Complaints against officers including summary of complaint, action taken, resolution, monies paid out.
- Crime stats that include hate crimes and intimate partner violence. Collect data that includes demographics such as race, gender, age, sexual orientation and primary language.
- Publish data quarterly.

III. Ban the following: no-knock warrants, positioning someone on their stomach while being restrained, application of pressure on someone's back while face down, use of force on an individual who is handcuffed and retaliatory use of force.

IV. Use summonses rather than warrantless arrests for minor incidents  
(this would decrease the impact of racial profiling)

V. Develop evidence-based pilot projects such as: 1) diversion programs that focus on the root issue (such as mental health or addiction), and 2) restorative justice programs 3) no longer performing routine traffic stops (or non-police traffic control).

VI. Use only mental health and medical professionals in response to mental health crises, substance use/overdose calls, and non-violent events.

VII. Create a policy where officers are required to inform individuals of their rights (not required by law) such as the right of a person to refuse a warrantless search and that the refusal would lead to the end of the interaction with no penalty or retaliation.

VIII. Create a policy where officers are required to give an individual/s a receipt with the officer's name and badge number, information about why the stop took place and where to file a complaint. Receipt data should be collected. (Buffalo has a policy like this)

IX. Develop effective community engagement and feedback processes for ongoing assessment and evaluation of policies, procedures and practices.