

Broome County
Police Review Taskforce

Location: Zoom Video Conference Meeting

Date: January 12, 2021

Time: 1:00 p.m.

MINUTES

Meeting Called to Order 1:02 p.m.

Members Present: Kevin McManus, Sammy Davis, Michael Baker, Sandra Felton, Kathleen Newcomb, Amber Jennings, Colleen Wagner, Mike Korchack, Scott Baker, Mario Williams, Nancy Williams, Kim Myers,

Members Absent: N/A

Others: Michael Tanzini

Previous Meeting Minutes Approved

Kevin McManus: Agenda Overview

- Reminder about Zoom Listening Session 1/13.
- It will be recorded and put on the website.
- The taskforce will hear recommendations from the public to include in the final report.
 - Each commenter will be allowed three minutes to speak.

Presentation from Broome County Sheriff's Office: Captain Newcomb

Introduction to Officer Wellness and Wellbeing

- Critical incident stress relief
- Police officer team
- Team that is put together by office of emergency services
- Dependent upon availability and incident driven based on what deputy was involved in
- EAP offered through Broome County
- Annually as part of in-service training: mental health segment geared toward first responders and services that are available in the community
- Psychologists also work with the sheriff's office

Question & Answer

1. **Amber Jennings:** Are these services required or mandated or are they optional?

Captain Newcomb: They are required when an officer is involved in an incident when they discharge their weapon - they are put on administrative duty to make sure they are fit for duty from a mental health perspective. This is the only time they are required. Other times it is offered to them, they are not forced to attend, the only exception to that would be if we had some sort of flag that someone wasn't fit for duty - then we would take steps to get them help.

2. **Kevin McManus:** Who investigates?

Captain Newcomb: There's a normal procedure most agencies employ. Generally speaking, we would have an outside agency investigate, although that is not always the case. If we had an officer involved shooting, we would call in the NYS Police Forensics Investigation Unit to investigate and prepare an in-depth report on that particular incident.

Continuing Education Opportunities Presentation by Sergeant Davis:

- We understand things change, sometimes day to day, sometimes year to year
- Every year we have in-service training
- There are certain things we review every single year like firearms, use of force
- Surveys are sent to officers to get input on training
- We also get together with community members, groups to see what issues are occurring and base training on that.
- Policy changes are included in training
- In-service training happens between 3-4 days
- At the academy level:
 - Information goes to every new hire
 - 19 different agencies attended academy last year
 - It is not just Broome county officers who are trained
- Sometimes we have to outsource training – this is something we continually look at, different classes, opportunities
- We are always looking at ways to better and improve our officers to help them serve our community
- Online education is continuous
- We understand how important the education is

Question & Answer

1. **Mike Baker:** One of the training I made everyone go through here is implicit bias. NYPD has that as mandated now - have you heard anything from DCJS on this coming down as required training?

Sergeant Davis: No. We have done that here as part of in-service. I have taken more classes than most people have, we have done implicit bias not this year, but this past year.

Mike Baker: It was such an important thing for our office to go through and something I reflect upon in almost every interaction I have.

Sergeant Davis: We did this before things blew up in the public eye - now everyone is jumping on it. People should make it part of yearly training.

Mike Baker: It makes us reflect on every interaction we have, and the interactions clients have with us. One of the most eye-opening trainings I ever went through. I would be happy to share training materials.

2. **Amber Jennings:** How does an officer decide which training to attend? How is it determined where they will go for training?

Sergeant Davis: It is usually based on your jurisdiction, area, what is close to you. DCJS sets minimum standards. It is up to the administrators. What we are seeing now - so many departments are trying to fill their needs, it is also costly to send to an academy. We keep our costs low by utilizing instructors from our area.

3. **Amber Jennings:** In thinking about when you were originally talking about the training - I was taken aback at how many times you said nobody requires this I just do it because it is important to me. This sparked concern for while I understand there is a minimum training that officers must receive by DCJS - that didn't include de-escalation. When you talk about public perception - the public groups together the police - so someone's actions reflect on everyone.

Sergeant Davis: It is very true - I just understand that I am in a position to make a difference, so I listen to the comments of people like yourself which is why I try to make those changes on what is important. We can't do everything - financial elements, short staffed. We in Broome County are fortunate to have a Sheriff who allows us to make the assessments necessary. It's a cumulative decision to be made on what needs to be changed and allows us good judgement. We open up our doors to every police agency in Broome County. Things also depend on what is going on in society -and there are changes all the time.

4. **Amber Jennings:** The continuing education classes available throughout the year - are those free for officers?

Sergeant Davis: I can only speak to BCSO - outside of yearly training, my job is trying to find trainings that benefit officers. Some of the classes are for free, some we pay for. I have a budget and that all comes out of my budget. I bring it to the Sheriff. We pick and choose what is going to be of value to our officers and our community.

5. **Mario Williams:** I want to go back to when we were talking about the hiring process. Back in the day when you took a civil service exam - there was a quorum on hiring a certain number of minorities. Civil service also allows 4 points for people who served in the military - how do you address that?

Sergeant Davis: We as an agency have nothing to do with that - that is an Albany thing, civil service thing. Personally, that is something I have learned to accept because that was a standard that was set long before my time.

Mario Williams: When I was coming out of the service, I wanted to go into the police force - but a lot of the military personnel had those same qualifications. I am just concerned about the mental state of those individuals - it is very difficult to turn off those real-life situations taking place - how do you manage those coming in to the police force who have served?

Sergeant Davis: I am very lucky to sit on our hiring panel, there are 7 of us total. We can sit with someone for hours and do the best you can to know them - do people learn how to hide things? Absolutely? We have questions that we ask to try to get to know somebody the best that you can. We do background investigations prior to these interviews. It is not an easy process. If there are things that come up, we try to target that. Everybody that gets offered employment has to take a psychological test. We work with a company who has trained individuals who analyze if they are qualified to do this kind of work. We have checks and balances in place and do the best we can - sometimes people do slip through the cracks, but we do our best to ensure that doesn't happen.

Captain Newcomb: Not only do we have an extensive hiring and recruitment process - they also go through academy - and 18-month probation. This affords a time frame to observe the person and any issues that may come to light.

Mario Williams: Is the Sheriff's Office obligated to hire someone who was in the military with those extra points if it is the top candidate? Or is there a list to go down to reach the most suitable candidate.

Captain Newcomb: We interview everybody who is eligible unless there is something that precludes them from going through the interview process. They need to pass the physical agility test and background investigation.

6. **Kim Myers:** Is an applicant told why they did not get an interview?

Sergeant Davis: Once we do an interview - if you have not heard from us in x amount of days, they can call me and I will try to give them some information/explanation. We do not share particulars.

Captain Newcomb: Budgeting Opportunities/Ideas for the future

- Our budget process:
 - The Sheriff's office has \$39 million budget – which includes all the departments.
 - Around late spring, early summer it is budget prep time.
 - The budget is divided into law enforcement, corrections, civil division, training budget (divisions within the Sheriff's Office)
 - Each person meets with a fiscal officer personally to discuss budgeting past - what we spent money on in previous years - if those funds should be adjusted for the current year we are budgeting for.
 - Our budget year to year is pretty stable
 - We look at state of the art technology
 - We sit down and prepare each of our respective budgets - then further sit down with the administration and look at our budget
 - Then the County Executive's office sits down with us - with the Office of Management and Budget and we further review and dissect the budget line by line

- Then it gets looked at by the Broome County Legislature
- Ultimately gets adopted
- The largest portion of our budget is spoken for through the Corrections Division
- Law enforcement/training is a small part of the budget as a whole
- We look at Federal/State grants to offset local tax dollars - take advantage of those fully
- As far as opportunities - we pretty consistently talk about year to year: Police consolidation.
- Does the taskforce have any input on budget opportunities?

Kim Myers: Cost savings of co-responder program, mental health services?

Nancy Williams: Does everyone know what that model is that Legislator Myer mentioned? Right now, MHAST operates crisis mobile and most law enforcement agencies have been trained in that model. Another model - not yet adopted in Broome County is the co-responder model where a law enforcement officer co-responds with a mental health professional. This has shown reduction in admission to crisis evaluation centers and a reduction in arrests. It is a model that we have looked at, here at mental health we do fund part of the crisis respite - this has been effective in other parts of the state.

Captain Newcomb: We have had some barriers with the unit- sometimes they are not always available. The unit just isn't big enough yet.

Nancy Williams: Workforce is a huge issue in all mental health agencies.

Mike Baker: Scott - as a first responder how often do you see this?

Scott Baker: Honestly, I think it is a fantastic idea to have this available to law enforcement and first responders in general. We come across this all the time - and not all the time do we have law enforcement with us. We need more training throughout all of first response in de-escalation and a push for mental health response kind of units. I truly think there is benefit to that.

Nancy Williams: MHAST also has crisis respite called Our House. If people have an issue with where they are living and are in a mental health crisis and need somewhere to go for a cooling off period. A good thing is they are applying to be funded through the Office of Mental Health which will give them sustainability and allow them to expand their services. They have applied to be OMH crisis respite for adults which will hopefully make them more sustainable.

Captain Newcomb: The problem with a lot of these great thoughts and ideas, the realities of putting them to use is not as easy as it sounds. There are often certain criteria that needs to be met. What sounds great isn't always a reality or good choice for law enforcement. Where the rubber meets the road - in reality is it really going to work - that is what we need to think about or find funding for. We need someone who can immediately respond with law enforcement, not have to wait 2-3 hours for.

Nancy Williams: They currently have some very strict guidelines to who they can accept - with OMH they will have to expand that which will help. Hopefully within next 6 months those restrictions will be lifted. We also have the 911 diversion program - if they are in

emotional distress they will get diverted to CPAP or mobile crisis - if it can be diverted, they try to divert it.

Mike Baker: DA Korchack and I see this - maybe Kate and Sam can tell us how much law enforcement has changed in the past 20 years and what percentage now are mental health, substance use?

Captain Newcomb: I do not have a percentage in front of me, but it has greatly increased for mental health issues people, with substance use disorders. I would always suggest a ride along for any of our Legislators - think it would be an eye-opening experience. What we respond to needs an immediate response and we need to take action. It is hard for law enforcement officers who aren't clinicians to make distinctions. I just wanted to point that out that most time when law enforcement is called it is an emergency, crisis and not something that can wait for.

Scott Baker: How much time is law enforcement going to wait for someone to come in from mental health to evaluate a person? We transport more mental health patients in the EMS world than we do medical patients. The entire system is overloaded. We have a place that we have to drop these patients off at. Does CPAP get overwhelmed? Absolutely. Can it be fixed, and can it be changed? We need to look at that, but we cannot forget how that process is working now.

Kevin McManus: Thank you Captain and Sergeant for taking us through the process of becoming an officer, mental health, and continuing education.

I would like to now open this up to the panel. We had some thought-provoking questions on the agenda and want to know any comments/concerns/questions that you would like to share. We will have an opportunity to listen to the public tomorrow.

Comments:

Amber Jennings: One of the things we haven't touched on in great detail is social media and public image, things like that. I know there is a lot of community engagement that would be done in person, but because of COVID social media has become even more important. I had the opportunity to go through BCSO Facebook page - who manages the account?

Captain Newcomb: We have social media platforms: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter. Deputy Robert Stapleton who is our SRO/Community Engagement manages them. You can never underestimate the power of social media. We also use it in criminal investigation sometimes which has been highly productive.

Amber Jennings: I looked at the 2021 budget that had descriptions of different options - I saw school resource officer - that does the social media. Is it possible for that person - in budgeting opportunities - is there opportunity to have conversations about messaging - what you want to communicate - is the social media achieving that goal - I think that may be worth a conversation.

Kim Myers: Amber - I think you are dead on. To me - my assessment of everything that we have been presented, perception is reality. Every time there is something great - like Sergeant Davis is talking about SROs and the interaction the Sheriff's Office has with the youth - highlight that in a prevalent prominent place where the community can see that. My other thought was - when we were talking to the DA - all the loud voices that are saying these things - the one I remember clearly - you need to let the people out of jail - they are dying from COVID. The DA explain the process for someone being released early. It is kind of buried in the website - my suggestion would be if there is outrage in the community - is there some way to put out the information regarding that? There are many people who refuse to be confused with the truth - maybe it would help with the spread, perception public has about law enforcement.

Captain Newcomb: I think those are all great ideas and appreciate your input.

Kevin McManus: As we move toward recommendations: **What is the current perception of the Broome County Sheriff's Office in the community?** Understanding this agency is not responsible for handling all geographic areas.

Scott Baker: In my private work capacity, work with multiple police agencies in NY and PA - I think BCSO is one of the finest police agencies I interact with. The responsiveness I see out of the sheriff's office - from a first responder world - is above par across the board. They have been fantastic to work with over the years and I have a very high opinion of them.

Kevin McManus: **If our community is having issues of trust in relation to the Broome County Sheriff's Office, are there any suggestions on how we as a community can address the situation?**

Kim Myers: More PSA - announcements of the training that is going on, can dispel perceptions - use of weapons, de-escalation, put that out there so that it will sink into the public. I think there is always a small section of population who are going to believe what they are going to believe.

Mike Baker: One suggestion I have - I know Sheriff's Office has had informational meetings and the turnout has been disappointing. Throughout the pandemic what we are utilizing is virtual. Maybe have a once a month zoom meeting to explain trainings etc. it is more accessible. The only fear is that you want all voices heard - but sometimes loud voices overshadow. A monthly meeting where these things can be explained could be beneficial.

Scott Baker: A FB live event with for example Sergeant Davis could be beneficial.

Mario Williams: The national media has painted a picture of law enforcement as being the bad guy, and this is where some of the trust issues come from the public. I do not think we do enough to inform people on what the police force is actually doing. People have a tendency to lump everyone in the same lump. Since coming to Broome County, I have been very happy with the Sheriff's Office, local police departments. A lot of times

we throw out numbers, but people want to see that, see action. Decline in crime, criminal activity - what else are we doing?

Kevin McManus: Meeting Wrap-up.

MEETING ADJOURNED 2:30 p.m.