Draft Plan: 2/2/2021

Tioga County Police Reform & Reinvention Collaborative Plan – 2021

Martha Sauerbrey, Chair of the Tioga County Legislature established the Police Reform & Reinvention Collaborative as directed by Governor Cuomo's Executive Order of June 12, 2020. This process was structured according to the guidance provided in the New York State Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative and will require community input and participation, along with an assessment of Policing Policies.

Tioga County understands that maintaining public safety is extremely important and is one of the essential roles of government. In order to achieve that goal, there must be mutual trust and respect between police and the communities they serve.

The process for the Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative were as follows:

- Review the needs of the community served by the Tioga County Sheriff's Office and evaluate the department's current policies and practices.
- Establish and evaluate policies that allow police to safely perform their duties.
- Involve the entire community in the discussion by way of a public survey and possible Zoom community meetings.
- Develop policy recommendations resulting from this review.
- Offer information for public comment.
- Present the plan to the local legislative body to ratify or adopt it.
- Certify adoption of the plan to the State Budget Director on or before April 1, 2021.

Tioga County is a small county in upstate New York State with a population of 48,686 people and total 20,030 households. The poverty rate for the county is 10.5%. The 5 largest ethnic groups in Tioga County, NY are White (Non-Hispanic) (95.1%), White (Hispanic) (1.49%), Two+ (Non-Hispanic) (1.48%), Asian (Non-Hispanic) (0.705%), and Black or African American (Non-Hispanic) (0.595%).

The first step in the Tioga County Police Reform & Reinvention Collaborative Plan was to offer a Community Wide Survey that was available to all Tioga County citizens. A survey was created covering questions and issues suggested in the Governor's Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative workbook. The survey link was established via the Internet for individuals familiar with the internet and with paper surveys available for individuals who wished a paper copy. We received 537 responses from the community, which included comments and suggestions.

The second step in our process, a community- wide Zoom meeting that included people from all areas of the county. On the call was the Tioga County Sheriff, DA, Public Defender, Director of

Mental Health, Director of Probation, Police Reform Committee Member, Chair of the Tioga County Legislature and local media. The call most importantly consisted of citizens from every town in the County. Questions were posed to the Sheriff, which came from the Community Survey. The Sheriff was asked to explain process, policies, and recent changes to the law. The next part of the Community Conversation was an opportunity for the community to pose questions to the Sheriff and share comments.

During the presentation, the Sheriff explained the Accreditation Process of the State of New York and explained that each of the four divisions, which operates within the Office of the Sheriff in Tioga County, actively participates in, and has been awarded Accreditation.

Accreditation is a process, in which an agency must validate their operating policies and procedures and conforms to, or exceeds, standards established by a group of independent professionals within the Public Safety profession. These standards represent, and are widely accepted as Best Practices within the Public Safety field, and are meant to promote effective operations which are efficient, transparent, and promote public confidence. The Tioga County Sheriff's Office has a Use of Force Policy that governs its necessity. Use of Force is outlined in Policy #19 in the department's Policy and Procedures manual.

During the validation process, each division is inspected and evaluated by a team of independent professionals to verify that all applicable standards have been implemented. Collectively, more than 466 standards were reviewed and declared to have met or exceed the respective standards.

Accreditation is a significant accomplishment. It demonstrates an agency's commitment to establishing and maintaining high standards, which meet or exceed expectations of quality in the Public Safety field.

Division	Standards	Accrediting Organization
Law Enforcement	109	NYS Law Enforcement Accreditation Council
Corrections (Jail)	166	NYS Sheriff's Association
Civil Office	121	NYS Sheriff's Association
E911 Communications	70	NYS Sheriff's Association

What we learned in our community conversation was:

- The community would like the Sheriff's Office to build a positive relationship with the youth of Tioga County.
- They would like Officers to have more training on demonstrations and community bias.
- Community Conversation on Police issues: There was interest from a member of the community to meet regularly to discuss Policing in Tioga County and bring people together of different opinions to discuss issues.
- Body Cameras were a point of discussion and thought to have been a helpful tool in policing.
- Comments were shared concerning Mental Health incidents and whether officers are trained to handle issues when people are in a mental health crisis rather than committing a crime. They thought the idea of a ride-along Mental Health staff person was worth investigating but may not be practical.

Tioga County Plan for Police Reform and Reinvention (Draft):

The Sheriff's Office will look for opportunities for Deputies to connect with the youth of the community. Examples would be presentations and events such as the Annual Touch a Truck event, a truck and vehicle display that allows children and adults to get a close look at Snow Plows, Fire Trucks and Police Cars. This would be an opportunity for young people to speak with an officers and talk with officers and make friends. Officers would be open to speaking with community members and community organizations on what it's like to be a Deputy and share experiences.

The Tioga County Sheriff has plans for more extensive training in de-escalation and community bias through the New York Municipal Insurance Reciprocal (NYMIR) and will recommend policies that comply with specific training. NYMIR hosts extensive training programs for Law Enforcement on issues ranging from Emergency Vehicle Operations Course, (EVOC) for Law Enforcement, to The Varying Constitutionality of Searches by Canine Units, and more.

If the Community wishes to set up a community conversation to talk about issues and concerns, the Sheriff's Office is open to attending however, it is up to the community members to create and lead the planning and organization of such an event.

The Sheriff supports the idea Body Cameras but is concerned about the cost of retaining the cost of video, as currently it is extremely expensive to store. The Sheriff will look for opportunities for a more affordable option.

Mental Health Ride-Along. After speaking with Mental Health leaders in the County, we have learned Mental Health staff does not have the training, nor wants the training for Ride-Along with Deputies and does not support this. However, Mental Health suggested the use of IPads for communication with Deputies. IPads could be placed in each police vehicle and when an occasion arises, the Deputy can connect with a Mental Health Staff person for advice and counsel. The County will look into the use of IPads and will work with Mental Health and IT on how to proceed.