Part I: YPD Information & Data
Dear Yonkers Police Reform Committee Members,

Thank you for playing a key role in the New York State Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative. The part you serve on the Yonkers Police Reform Committee is one I know you will thrive in because of the communities you represent, coupled with your unique perspectives.

As stated in the Governor’s resource guide, communities across the country are working to overcome issues concerning their police departments. We share in a common objective to improve police-community relations by reinventing law enforcement for the 21st century.

Since the beginning of my administration, the Yonkers Police Department has enacted over 100 different reforms to reimagine how local law enforcement interacts with the community. I am proud to say that the Yonkers Police Department has become a model for other law enforcement agencies to follow.

The recent incidents involving excessive force by police officers in cities across America speaks to the need to continue along a path of evolution. The Yonkers Police Department is committed to working hand-in-hand with this committee to help bring about recommendations and reforms that reflect both the needs of our communities and those of the men and women who serve and protect our city.

This initial report references Part 1, Section I of the New York State Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative Guidebook and serves as a resource for you to understand the department better. I hope that you use this initial report as a guide to suggest further improvements to the Yonkers Police Department.

Together we will continue to lead by example.

MIKE SPANO
Mayor
INTRODUCTION

Over the last decade New York State has enacted measures aimed at reforming the criminal justice system and ending mass incarceration in New York. As cited in the New York State Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative Resources & Guide for Public Officials and Citizens (“the Guidebook”), these statewide measures have included the repeal of Section 50-a of Civil Rights Law, banning chokeholds, prohibiting race-based 911 calls, appointing the Attorney General as Independent Prosecutor for police involved deaths, measures to reduce prison population, bail reform, discovery reform, speedy trial reform, raising the age of criminal responsibility to 18-years-old, requiring videotaping of interrogations and permitting photo identification into evidence.

The following initial report presented to the Yonkers Police Reform Committee does not offer an opinion on the effectiveness of these measures nor any others. Instead, the information and data presented in this report describes the current functions and operations of the Yonkers Police Department in alignment with the topics and questions stated in Part 1, Section I, of the Guidebook. It is the intent of the City of Yonkers to provide unbiased, factual information to the committee to assist members in their formulation and submission of effective recommendations that will serve to improve police-community relations and public safety.
PART 1: KEY QUESTIONS AND INSIGHTS FOR CONSIDERATION

SECTION I.

WHAT FUNCTIONS SHOULD THE POLICE PERFORM?

1. Police/Community Engagement – Adopting Procedural Justice
   The Yonkers Police Department utilizes a New York State Department of Criminal Justice endorsed Procedural Justice training curriculum to provide training in two (2) eight-hour training modules. The first module is Procedural Justice 1 (PJ1). The curriculum focuses on the four tenets of procedural justice – treating individuals with dignity and respect; giving individuals a voice during law enforcement interactions; being neutral and transparent in decision making; and conveying trustworthy motives. Procedural Justice 2 (PJ2) focuses on implicit bias.

   The Yonkers Police Department embraces Procedural Justice with the recognition that while highly publicized abuses of authority by police officers fuel distrust and erode legitimacy, less publicized, day-to-day interactions between community members and law enforcement are also influential in shaping people’s long-term attitudes toward the police. Procedural Justice training for police officers has been found to be effective in lowering incidences of excessive force, overall number of complaints and substantiated complaints.

2. What role do the police currently play in your community?
   a) What are the primary activities of police officers in your community?
      The YPD Crime Control Strategies Division meets weekly to discuss crime trends, offender status, resource deployment, etc. Members of the Yonkers Public Schools security team and representatives from Probation and Parole are also present. Through intelligence sharing and dialogue, strategies are developed for best focusing the YPD’s precision policing model with respect to top offenders and active crime trends. The result of each meeting is a strategy for the most effective deployment of resources for the upcoming week.
The graphs below break down crime stats for 2018, 2019, and 2020 year-to-date which demonstrate the types of criminal activities YPD are responding:
b) Why are people calling 911?

The graphs below show the number of 911 Dispatcher Calls for 2018, 2019 and 2020, as well as the reasons for the 911 call. The types of calls depicted are categorized by the public safety dispatcher. The outcome of the event may differ from the reason for dispatch.
(Service Calls: general calls responded to by YPD; Part 1 Crimes: categorized by the FBI as murder, manslaughter, sex offenses, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, motor vehicle theft, and arson; Aided Calls: EMS responded; misc. various complaints; P.S.D. Calls: public safety dispatcher was able to satisfy the caller)
c) In what situations do police self-initiate interventions with the community?

YPD officers do not generally self-initiate interventions with the community. Exceptions include community policing initiatives and homeless outreach.

d) How often are complaints made about the police?

![Community Complaints about YPD](image)

e) Do particular units or assignments draw an outsized share of complaints?

![Complaints by Precinct from 2012-2020](image)
f) Do complaints come from a particular portion or portions of the community?

![Complaints by Ethnicity](chart1.png)

- Black: 181
- Hispanic: 115
- White: 101
- Asian: 9
- Unidentified: 44

g) What type of conduct is commonly complained about?

![Type of Complaints about YPD](chart2.png)

- Rudeness: 103
- Lack of Service: 99
- Improper Police Conduct: 80
- Excessive Force: 68
- Harassment: 34
- Missing/Untagged Property: 24
- False Arrest: 22
3. Should you deploy social service personnel instead of or in addition to police officers in some situations?

YPD’s Homeless Outreach is currently staffed by a P.O. and a Sgt. with assistance from 2 additional P.O.s who are assigned to Getty Square. The current duties include:

- Daily response to calls for service relating to the large homeless presence in Getty Square. During these encounters they offer assistance with various available services including placement in shelters, medical care, psychiatric care or substance abuse counseling.

- Proactively approach homeless individuals and again offer the above mentioned services. Homeless Outreach P.O. conducts a 3 hour ride-along during his tour with Lamont Brown Sr. who is a Case Manager, Mobile Mental Health Team for the Westchester Department of Social Services. Again, they attempt to locate homeless individuals and encourage them to take the services provided by the Department of Health. At times they are assisted by substance abuse counselors and mental health specialists who also work for the Department of Health. During some of these encounters, YPD Homeless Outreach is able to provide care packages that include snacks, water, socks and other hygienic sanitary items.

- Weekly patrol of known spots where the homeless tend to sleep overnight, including the train station, parks, parking garages, business vestibules and other areas where complaints of homeless people sleeping overnight are received. Officers offer services and attempt to get the individuals to make use of the shelters that are located in the City of Yonkers.

4. Can your community reduce violence more effectively by redeploying resources from policing to other programs?

a) Community Based Outreach and Violence Interruption

The Guidebook suggests implementing SNUG, a program that uses an evidence–based model to identify individuals with a high risk of engaging in gun violence. As noted in the Guidebook, Yonkers has a robust SNUG program that has effectively assisted with community based outreach with regard to violence interruption.
b) Parent Support

The Yonkers Police Department has developed, offers and promotes information on programs available for parents/caregivers needing assistance with guiding a wayward child. Examples of programs include:

**SUPPORTING A CHILD’S MENTAL WELLNESS IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER!**

- Reassure children they are in a safe environment. Home should be a NO judgment zone to talk about their current feelings.
- Keep daily structure and routine. Promoting mental wellness starts with appropriate sleep, physical activity and a healthy diet.
- Limit Media Exposure. Provide current information in an age appropriate and easy way to understand.
- Be a Role Model. Practice healthy coping skills and stress related reactions.
- Trust your gut! Quarantine is tough for all but if you notice your child is having extreme difficulty, there is support.

Supportive Resources are available thru the Yonkers Police Department.

Contact our Youth Advisor Alison Licht
914-803-2479
Alison.Licht@ypd.yonkersny.gov
c) Youth Development & Addressing Trauma & Preventing Violence at Home

The Yonkers Police Department has created various programs in support of youth development and supporting a strong and healthy home:

- **Youth Court Membership**
  Offered to Yonkers youth between the ages of thirteen (13) and eighteen (18) years-old with an interest in the juvenile criminal justice system and law. Members must be students in good standing and complete an in-house training program prior to participating. The Yonkers Youth Court are provided opportunities to speak with professionals in the judicial field.

- **Youth Court Community Service**
  Youth Court participants complete community service assignments with a focus on building their skills for future employment and their resume. YPD partners with organizations such as the AFYA Foundation and Groundwork Hudson Valley to offer these opportunities to youth.

- **Youth Community Service**
  Volunteer placement for local youth in search of community service opportunities and experience is provided. This program provides for positive interaction between local youth and police and aims to counter the stigma of community service only being a punishment for criminals.

- **Police Athletic League (PAL) Programs**
  - **Boxing:** Since the mid 1970’s, the PAL has offered free training in boxing for all Yonkers youth. Participants are given intensive diet and exercise regimens and trained daily in fundamentals. Eventually, after gaining enough experience they are given the opportunity to spar and then participate in actual matches. The Yonkers PAL Boxing Program has produced multiple world champions and Olympic medalists, not to mention several Golden Gloves Champions. It is and always has been free of charge and is currently run by retired Yonkers Police Officer Sal Corrente.
  
  - **Baseball:** The PAL Baseball Program is another free program that has produced dozens of scholarship-winning players from the City of Yonkers and currently has multiple former members playing at the college level. Players are introduced to the basics of the game and are provided the opportunity to learn and practice year-round inside the facility's large gym which includes a batting cage, a pitcher's mound, a mixed-use turf area for ground balls and hitting, and a weight room. This comprehensive baseball program is as much about mentorship and creating outstanding individuals as it is about learning the game. The program is currently run by retired Yonkers Police Officer Victor Mendez.
  
  - **Karate:** The PAL's low-cost Karate Program, offered in the facility's Dojo Room, teaches discipline and martial arts and is currently run by former PAL karate graduate Eric Camacho who is a Sergeant with the NYPD. This program does have a fee, but is substantially lower in cost than most private programs.
- **Basketball:** The PAL Open Gym Basketball Program has been run continuously since the PAL took over the armory building on North Broadway roughly 20 years ago. Open gym basketball provides youth a safe, warm, and free place to play after school between the hours of 2:45 PM – 7 PM. There are six hoops which host continual games and youth are free to play wherever they feel most comfortable with no restrictions on time, skill level or age. Youth as young as 10-years-old and as old as 18-years-old can play and are expected to conduct themselves responsibly. All youth voluntarily comply with a dress code and respect the rules and rights of all others. Open gym basketball is a year-round program that is free for all Yonkers youth and fosters structure and safety; the program is administered by the PAL police officers assigned to the Community Affairs Division.

- **Food Distribution:** The PAL, in collaboration with Feeding Westchester, has created a large scale, monthly produce distribution program. The PAL also became a “Backpack” location, meaning that every month the PAL receives and distributes non-perishable items in individually packed bags.

d) **Design of Public Spaces - Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design**

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) examines how environmental features create opportunities for crime and how those features can be adjusted to eliminate those opportunities. Adjustments can be implemented to:

1) Control or make access more difficult
2) Deter offenders by increasing the risk of apprehension
3) Increase visibility
4) Increase or encourage guardianship
5) Regulate or adjust behaviors and routines; or
6) Reduce the rewards for crime.

Examples of environmental features that could create opportunities for crime include trees and shrubbery that block visibility; lack of lighting; traffic direction or lack of signaling; abandoned buildings; alleyways or cuts in between buildings; and empty lots hidden from the street. Adjustments that address these features may include cutting down shrubs to increase visibility; adding lighting to a dark alley; boarding up abandoned homes; or improving traffic conditions by adding signage, signals and speed bumps.

CPTED has been implemented in Ella Fitzgerald Park and Mill Street Courtyard.

5. **What functions should 911 Call Centers play in your community?**

a) **Who currently staffs your 911 call centers?**

   Trained City of Yonkers Public Service Dispatchers who are provided approximately four months of training.

b) **Are all calls routed to law enforcement, fire, or EMS?**

   Yes, all calls are routed to Police, Fire, or EMS.
c) Are there other social services that should be more fully integrated into 911 call centers and the triage process? Would call-takers need new training if your community wanted to shift response functions toward social services?

New call-takers would require additional training and resources in a shift towards integrating social services into 911 call centers.

d) Should 911 call centers be operated by law enforcement, other social service agencies, or a combination of agencies?

Call centers maintain focus on emergency services. In the past, YPD has coordinated services for emotionally disturbed persons with the Westchester County Mobile Crisis Team. The team would be accompanied by police officers while performing welfare checks based on requests from family members and mental health professionals. If an individual needed emergency treatment, it would be so ordered at the direction of a psychiatrist under the guidelines of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders and under the authority of NYS Mental Hygiene Law.

6. Should Law Enforcement Have a Presence in Schools?

Both the DARE and School Resource Officer programs were dissolved in 2009 due to budget constraints. Since that time, local patrol officers have built relationships with school administrators in the various schools in their sectors. Oftentimes school security or administrators will call for assistance or mediation with a student that is exhibiting concerning behavior. Patrol Officers will often mediate and resolve issues without any further assistance required.

Patrol officers are sometimes called to make arrests when students are found in possession of weapons, drugs, or otherwise break the law on school grounds. In these cases, the student is brought to the Community Affairs Division for arrest processing. It is in this area that the Yonkers Police Department has made tremendous strides in its efforts to break the “school to prison pipeline.” In late 2019, the Yonkers Police Department integrated the Youth Division with the Community Affairs Unit and brought a new civilian youth advisor into the division. This allowed for reinvention of how youth arrests are handled. Beginning in 2020 all youth arrested for misdemeanors are interviewed by Community Affairs staff for eligibility in the Youth Court Diversion Program. If a youth meets the parameters and volunteers to be in the program, they are diverted from the Family Court System into the YPD Youth Court program, thereby keeping them out of the juvenile justice system. Arrested youth are then tried by a group of their peers and sentenced to serve time working in various programs run by the members of the Community Affairs Division. The benefit of this program is not only that of keeping youth out of the court system, but also engaging them in completing community service and positive interaction with police officers and community groups. These interactions build mentorships and job skills that serve to build character and perhaps change their perception of law enforcement officers.

In addition to the above, many of the YPD’s community outreach programs are designed to specifically engage youth and young adults in the local school district (i.e. Cops & Kids, Youth Police Initiative, Yonkers Police Cadets, etc.). These engagements place Yonkers Police officers and local youth in a non-enforcement environment, leading to positive communication opportunities for all parties. Both officers and kids get the opportunity to exchange ideas and information freely and learn from each other by sharing perspectives. For an in-depth look at these outreach programs, please see the 2020 Community Outreach Program book.
SECTION II.

STAFFING, BUDGETING, AND EQUIPPING YOUR POLICE DEPARTMENT

1. What are the staffing needs of the Police Department the community wants? Should components of the Police Department be civilianized?

The Yonkers Police Department currently uses civilians for job functions that do not call for an arrest or potential use of force.

2. Police Department engagement in crowd control

This past June, the City of Yonkers Police Department responded to three large protests within the same week in response to nationwide incidents of police brutality. The involved command staff worked diligently to evaluate police response following each event and quickly implemented improvements for the next.

Some of the key provisions of YPD’s response are presented here:

**Utilization of a Mobile Field Force**

Prior to the first event on May 31, a plan was formulated to create a mobile field force of six officers and one supervisor utilizing four vehicles. This was conducted in lieu of an on-foot or stationary field force. Several considerations were taken into account in the planning stages to arrive at this particular plan.

It was noticed that most demonstrations started as a stationary protest and then became a march. Often the targets of these marches were police and government facilities. However, police departments in those cities that deployed a traditional field force, predominately on foot, often became the target of the protests and resulted in hostile confrontation. Utilizing a vehicle-based, mobile force instead served to provide safe escort to peaceful marchers while protecting officers from thrown objects by anyone seeking to instigate violent confrontation. The mobility of YPD’s field force provided movable pieces to command so that potential targets and routes could be quickly covered.

Disorder control equipment was issued at turn out and kept in each individual vehicle. A method of deploying said equipment was established with the command ‘mobilize,’ which provided a systematic transition, by squad, to a more assertive posture without inciting the crowd.

**Adequate Resources Without a ‘Show of Force’**

It was also critical to have enough resources on hand to respond to any condition, without showing a large police presence. Instead, the command staff deployed personnel in small groups (squads) to strategic locations – just enough to show a reasonable presence and to provide security. A larger field force was pre-deployed to a formal staging area, as well as forward staging areas closer to the event and out of sight. This included officer down rescue teams, EMS, arrest teams and immediate action squads. YPD deployed, at times, over 100 officers, most of whom were never seen by a participant.
In August, NYPD Deputy Chief John Hart stated to the Police Executive Research Forum, that after several nights of stationary officers being targeted in Union Square Park, “... we decided to monitor protests, but not make the cops the show. We want to make sure we have a good fix on the protest and where it's going, but avoid that line of confrontation when we can. That takes away the visual and de-escalates the violence.” These concepts were utilized by YPD from the very first event.

Utilizing Specialized Units

Another key component of the response to protests in Yonkers was the work done by the Community Affairs Division, Public Information Office and Special Investigations Unit in achieving effective communication with organizers and participants in an effort to keep the crowds peaceful. While doing so, these officers also gathered intelligence that the command staff could use for planning.

Proper Utilization of Outside Resources

Finally, the utilization and coordination of available resources was crucial to the command staff in deploying the field force. Additional manpower from mutual aid agencies, support structure and staff from the Office of Emergency Management and communications support from the Westchester County Department of Emergency Services were all important pieces in this mission.

3. Training & Equipment

In 2017, approximately 7 members of the Training Division attended a FEMA sponsored course called Field Force Operations which is the newer version of Disorder Control. A training course has since been developed for YPD officers, however the department has yet to implement it.

The Yonkers Police Department is equipped with shields, riot batons and duffle bags containing chest, shoulder, elbow and shin pads (these belonged to individual officers that were part of the old Emergency Response Team). YPD also owns specialty emergency response vehicles that are used for rescue operation and assistance, as well as surveillance equipment, including drones, used for investigative purposes.

Equipment and vehicles described above are funded almost entirely through Federal Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI) funding.