

Summary of December 3rd Meeting of the Saranac Lake Police Review Committee

The meeting was held via zoom from 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm. Present were: John Sweeney, Chief James Joyce, Melinda Little, Ernest Hough, Betsy Fuller, Sarah Clarkin, Asst. DA David Hayes, Angela Brice, Suzanne Lavigne, Chris Morris.

Members of the group reported back on their efforts to convene community members from groups unlikely to participate in the larger public forums that have been held and planned. So far, one such group has met and at least two more are expected to take place in the next week or so.

Some of the comments that came out of the first group included:

- Predominately white community in Saranac Lake, how do we really understand systemic racism?
- Some people are afraid of the police in general. No previous incident just the fear of “have I done something wrong” when encountering police.
- Would be good to see police focus on community (to protect and serve) rather than intimidation tactics.
- Ongoing training to include some kind of psychological courses.
- Feels as if there’s a “bro code” among the SLPD. There’s a “harshness” attached to some officers (maybe they’re military)
- We are all human beings at the end of the day, respect gets respect.
- Civilian ride along – walk a mile in my shoes approach.
- When questioning people maybe take a softer approach with asking the questions (again the fear factor of being pulled over when haven’t done anything wrong.)
- Introduce self at the appropriate encounters to personalize interactions.
- Accountability – to hold all professionals accountable.

Overall, the meeting was a success with good open dialog and a follow up meeting will be arranged with the Chief of Police. The Chief is currently reviewing staffing to begin to assign Police Department Officers as liaisons to groups as requested and upon availability.

Committee reviewed Master Document and needed policies for SLPD which James will provide to the committee:

- Pretext Stops definition and policy
- High Speed Pursuits, James updated committee that he is currently reviewing this and will provide shortly, mirroring the current policy which supports Public Safety via Foot pursuit
- No Knock Warrant, which is already not used, David provided simple language to format policy on this
- Develop standards (Check List – Decision Tree) for SWAT depending on situation
- Use of Taser and Pepper spray
- De-escalation to be incorporated into policies as appropriate

Suzanne reviewed current training items that are being discussed:

- Opportunity with Adirondack Health
- Continued Training via the Police Academy

Chris, discussion about getting information out including the Press Release for the Dec 17th Meeting- All documentation to be on the Village Website and social media, outreach to St. Joe, Adirondack Health and Mayor's FB Page