

Village of Cobleskill Police Citizens Advisory Board (CAB)
Annual Report
2021 - 2022

According to the CAB Bylaws, the purpose of the CAB is to provide the Police Dept and the Police Chief with the community's perspective with respect to crime, safety, neighborhood issues, and how the Police Department can better integrate with the community it serves and improve its services.

CAB membership consists of the Cobleskill Mayor, the Chief of Police, and five citizens of the Village of Cobleskill. Citizens who are interested in serving on CAB submit an application to the Cobleskill Village Board of Trustees. From the pool of applications, 5 volunteers are selected by the trustees. The 2021 - 2022 members are Mayor Rebecca Stanton-Terk, Police Chiefs Jeffrey Brown and Justin Manchester, Wendy Cook, Patricia Mesibov, John O'Donnell, John Sapovits, and John Stiles. John O'Donnell was elected Chair and Wendy Cook Vice Chair.

Chairman John O'Donnell requested that Recording Clerk, Dorothy Gerdes, (or other paid village employee) be present at all meetings to record the minutes and email them to all CAB members.

Six CAB meetings were held in 2021-2022: Sept 16, 2021; Dec 9, 2021; April 13, 2022; July 20, 2022; Oct 19, 2022; and Nov 16, 2022. Minutes from all meetings are available to the public on the Police Department website at

<https://www4.schohariecounty-ny.gov/village-governments/village-of-cobleskill-home-page/cobleskill-village-police-department/>.

2021-2022 ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

CAB reviewed and made change recommendations to the bylaws which were approved by the Village Board of Trustees. The major change addresses the need for staggered terms of members. The bylaws can be found on the village website at:

<https://www4.schohariecounty-ny.gov/PdfFiles/VCOB/police/CABbylawsRev.pdf>.

Following the recommendation in the Reform and Reinvention Collaborative Plan for the Cobleskill Police Dept., CAB members reviewed the Use of Force policies in the Village's EO203 Plan. Policies that were changed are as follows:

USE of FORCE

Policy 300.2.1 Duty To Intercede And Report:

Any officer present and observing another law enforcement officer or a member using force that is clearly beyond that which is objectively reasonable under the circumstances should, when in a position to do so, intercede to prevent the use of unreasonable force.

The word "should" was changed to "shall."

Any officer who observes another law enforcement officer or a member use force that is potentially beyond that which is objectively reasonable under the circumstances should report these observations to a supervisor as soon as feasible.

The word "should" was changed to "shall."

Policy 300.3 Use Of Force:

CAB added the following paragraph to the beginning of this section.

"Officers regularly respond to tense or emotionally charged incidents. It is the mission of this department to bring such situations to the most peaceful resolution possible. Research and experience show us that officers are most likely to accomplish this goal if officers are able to assist with the

de-escalation of individuals and/or situations. De-escalation is always preferable to use of force and de-escalation techniques should be employed whenever possible and practicable to help achieve compliance or help resolve a situation.”

300.3.5 Carotid Control Monitoring:

a. At all times during the application of the carotid control hold, the response of the individual should be monitored.

The word “should” was changed to “shall.”

300.7 Supervisor Responsibilities

(c) 2. The fact that a recorded interview was conducted should be documented in a property or other report.

The word “should” was changed to “shall.”

(c) 3. The recording of the interview should be distinctly marked for retention until all potential for civil litigation has expired.

The word “should” was changed to “shall.”

(d) 1. These photographs should be retained until all potential for civil litigation has expired.

The word “should” was changed to “shall.”

(f) 1. Supervisors should require that officers who engage in the use of force submit the appropriate report.

The word “should” was changed to “shall.”

300.7.2 Additional Shift Supervisors responsibilities: The Shift Supervisor should ensure that the Chief of Police is provided with enough information to meet the use of force reporting requirements for DCJS (Executive Law 837-T; 9NYCRR 6058.3). The word “should” was changed to “shall.”

300.9 Training: “Subject to available resources, officers “should” receive periodic training on. . . “

was changed to:

Subject to available resources and with the expectation of fulfillment, officers “shall” receive periodic trainings on . . . “

Chief Brown’s 25-page report, “Campaign Zero’s ‘8 Can’t Wait’ Recommendations, the NAACP’s Effective Law Enforcement Campaign Goals, and Cobleskill PD’s Relevant Policies,” was made available to CAB members and discussed during a meeting. It is a useful tool for goal-setting and positive changes in police policies.

Community concerns which were brought to the attention of the CAB and addressed in 2021-2022 include:

- SUNY students feeling harassed downtown
- Excessive speed and vehicle noise on village streets
- Mental Health concerns
- Police/community relations
- Violations of zoning laws especially in the area of property upkeep
- Homelessness
- Drug-selling/activity in parks and public areas
- Bullying in schools

On the topic of SUNY students being harassed and feeling uncomfortable in the Village of Cobleskill, Mr. Derwin Bennett, SUNY Cobleskill Chief Diversity Officer and Executive Director of Educational Support Services, was invited to share his concerns at the first CAB meeting. Mr Bennett shared that several students felt harassed and followed by some locals when downtown or in stores. After a detailed discussion, Chief Brown

reported that the CPD is eager to engage with the community and encourages victims and/or witnesses to report harassing behaviors. Seven months later, at the April 13, 2022 mtg, Mr. Bennett returned to inform CAB members that the students were reporting that they no longer felt uncomfortable coming into the village. Also present at the meeting were College President, Dr. Marion Terenzio and Vice President for Student Development, Dr. Anne Hopkins Gross. They stressed the importance of CAB in the community and ways the college and the community can work together to reinvigorate the relationship between the Village of Cobleskill and the college now that many of the pandemic restrictions have ended.

On the topic of excessive speed and vehicle noise: different devices for excess speed deterrence have been ordered and will be installed. The devices will inform drivers when they are driving too fast, encourage slowing down when speed limit is exceeded, and identify streets where speeding is a problem. Chief Brown was asked about vehicle noise enforcement. Drivers are stopped and cited for inadequate mufflers according to the law. New York State enacted the "Sleep Act" April 1, 2022 which will require adequate vehicle noise mufflers for vehicles to pass NYS inspections.

On the topic of Mental Health needs in the community: it is clear that Mental Health issues in the village exceed the resources available. The village police officers undergo training in dealing with subjects with mental health issues. Although there may be situations that could be handled more judiciously with support from a mental health professional, the expanded local community does not currently have sufficient resources to employ that professional.

Village police officers may professionally experience situations that challenge their own mental health. The department does have counseling available for officers if needed.

On the topic of police/community relations: Cobleskill Police Department (CPD) will again offer "Coffee with a Cop." Also, CPD established a

ride-along program to promote a better understanding of police work to village residents. Two CAB members and one community member reported that the ride-along tours were informative and interesting. In addition, The CPD, University Police Dept, and SUNY Administration will be working together to strengthen community/police/college relationships.

On the topic of zoning violations: incidents of cars parking on front lawns and garbage bags and cans and unkept, unsightly property are referred to the Village Codes Enforcement Officer (ZEO). Village residents can and should report violations via email to pecceo@midtel.net or phone 518-234-4661.

This report submitted on behalf of CAB by John O'Donnell Chair 12/14/22