



Cobleskill Police Department

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Chief of Police Jeffery Brown

Citizens Advisory Board Organizational Meeting

September 16, 2021, 6 pm

Mayor Rebecca Stanton-Terk called the meeting to order at 5:55 pm, noting that all board members had arrived. Present were CAB members Wendy Cook, Patricia Mesibov, John O'Donnell, John Sapovits, John Stiles, Police Chief Jeffery Brown, the Mayor, and several community members. The Mayor and the CAB members welcomed Derwin Bennett, SUNY Cobleskill Chief Diversity Officer and Executive Director of Educational Support Services, as a special invited guest.

The CAB members introduced themselves with brief histories of their connections to the village community.

The Mayor read the first three articles of the CAB Bylaws, which had been developed by the Village Board of Trustees and distributed to the CAB members and the Police Chief. The articles stated the purpose of the CAB, the mission statement, and the vision statement. The advisory role of the CAB was discussed.

The Chief was asked how complaints are received, what kind of complaints are common, and how complaints are handled.

The "Service Evaluation Form" is used to collect information about any experience a citizen perceives as negative. An investigation is conducted by the Lieutenant and findings are reviewed by the Chief. If a policy violation is found, a process of progressive discipline, guided by New York State Civil Service Law, is employed to counsel and train the officer. The Chief directed members to Section 75 of the Civil Service Law for further information. The Department has been using body cameras since 2014 for criminal evidence but also as a tool to confirm or exonerate an officer's behavior. The most common complaint has been that an officer was rude.

The Chief explained the variety of calls the Department receives. There are many Vehicle and Traffic Law and noise complaints. Officers respond to EMS and Fire Department calls and offer assistance with substance overdose, first aid, cardiac events, and mental health referrals. Any seemingly disturbed person that is a threat to themselves or others is taken into custody and driven to a health facility. Many callers call the Police Department for help when they don't know who to call, and the Department refers them to the proper agency. The Department coordinates with the University Police Department, the State Police, and the County Sheriff in many matters.

The Chief was asked about Diversity Training. Officers have been trained in Principled Policing, Implicit Bias Training, and annual workplace harassment training. Several have been trained in Forensic Interview Skills to learn best practice to interview a child. Officers are trained in Mental Health/First Aid.

The Mayor invited Derwin Bennett to speak. Derwin related that there are students who say they don't feel safe among some of the locals in the village, or in some stores. They have said they've been harassed or followed. The Department is eager to engage with the community and would encourage anyone to report harassing behavior; though one instance may not be criminal, reports are integral to building a case should the behavior escalate.

The CAB would prefer that a paid village employee be present to take all meeting minutes. Dorothy Gerdes was asked to serve in the role. The Mayor will propose the position to the Village Board of Trustees.

John Stiles moved to nominate John O'Donnell as CAB Chairman. Patricia Mesibov seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Wendy Cook volunteered to serve as Vice Chairman. Motion seconded by John O'Donnell. Motion carried unanimously.

Discussion of the Bylaws led to several suggestions to amend language in the mission statement and the process of choosing new members to the CAB. The Mayor reviewed the process undertaken by the Board of Trustees to develop the Bylaws and to attract and accept members to the CAB. It was also noted that a process to rotate terms so that the terms don't expire in the same year should be created. The Mayor will bring the CAB members suggestions to amend the language in the Bylaws, to review the member selection process, and to revise the term rotation.

Patricia Mesibov moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:10 pm. Seconded by Wendy Cook. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Dorothy Gerdes
Secretary to the Chief of Police