

Trumansburg Police Department

NEW YORK STATE POLICE REFORM AND
REINVENTION COLLABORATION PLAN



March 2021

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Dear Village residents and greater Trumansburg Community,

OUR ENTIRE DEPARTMENT WISHES TO EXPRESS OUR DEEPEST SYMPATHIES TO THE FAMILY OF GEORGE FLOYD, THE RESIDENTS OF MINNEAPOLIS, AND ANYONE WHO IS MADE TO FEEL AFRAID BY THIS TRAGIC EVENT. WHAT HAPPENED TO MR. FLOYD WAS INEXCUSABLE. THE CONDUCT OF THE OFFICER WAS CRIMINAL, BUT THAT BEHAVIOR, AND THAT OF THE OTHER OFFICERS WHO FAILED TO INTERVENE, IS A SYMPTOM OF A BAD CULTURE WITHIN THAT DEPARTMENT. THE ACTIONS OF THOSE OFFICERS ARE A DIRECT REFLECTION OF DEPARTMENT LEADERSHIP AND WHAT THEY ALLOW WITHIN THEIR RANKS.

FROM THE DAY I BECAME CHIEF OF POLICE, I HAVE FOCUSED ON BUILDING A DEPARTMENT CULTURE THAT PRIORITIZES COMMUNITY POLICING WHERE EVERY CITIZEN, REGARDLESS OF YOUR RACE, GENDER, AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION, IS TREATED WITH THE UTMOST RESPECT AND CARE. THE RESIDENTS OF TRUMANSBURG CAN BE ASSURED THAT THEIR POLICE DEPARTMENT IS DEDICATED TO THEIR PERSONAL SAFETY AND WELL BEING. I AM PROUD THAT OUR OFFICERS MAINTAIN THAT STANDARD BUT THOSE WHO DON'T WILL NOT BE PART OF MY STAFF. I WILL NOT DEPLOY OFFICERS INTO THIS COMMUNITY WITHOUT KNOWING THEY CAN BE TRUSTED TO DO THEIR JOB IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE LAW, WHILE MAINTAINING THE APPROPRIATE DEMEANOR YOU DESERVE.

THE DEATH OF GEORGE FLOYD AND THE RESULTING VIOLENCE AND DESTRUCTION ARE DEEPLY DISTURBING. AS A SON OF A REVERED CIVIL RIGHTS LEADER, I BELIEVE THE PATH TO CHANGE IS THROUGH ORGANIZATION AND STRONG LEADERSHIP. DON'T BE AN AGENT OF DESTRUCTION. BECOME AN ORGANIZER. BECOME A LEADER IN YOUR COMMUNITY. DON'T FIGHT EACH OTHER ON SOCIAL MEDIA, SIT DOWN FACE TO FACE. LISTEN TO ONE ANOTHER. YOU WON'T SOLVE THESE PROBLEMS FROM BEHIND A KEYBOARD ANY MORE THAN YOU'LL SOLVE THEM BY BURNING DOWN A BUILDING. CHANGE REQUIRES GENUINE EFFORT AND WE ALL HAVE TO BE WILLING TO DO THE WORK.

2020 HAS CONTINUED TO TEST OUR METTLE AND I'M NOT ONLY PROUD OF MY DEPARTMENT, BUT I'M PROUD OF HOW THIS ENTIRE COMMUNITY HAS BANDED TOGETHER DURING AN UNPRECEDENTED TIME. I ASK THAT YOU CONTINUE TO DO JUST THAT. TRUMANSBURG IS A SPECIAL PLACE BECAUSE THE RESIDENTS HAVE PUT WORK IN TO CREATING AND MAINTAINING A UNIQUE CHARACTER THAT MAKES THE VILLAGE DESIRABLE.

YOUR POLICE DEPARTMENT WILL CONTINUE TO SERVE AND PROTECT. WE'RE PUTTING THE WORK IN DAY IN AND DAY OUT, PROVING OUR DEDICATION TO THIS COMMUNITY. IF YOU OR ANYONE YOU KNOW HAS QUESTIONS ABOUT THE TRAINING OF OUR OFFICERS, THE CULTURE OF OUR DEPARTMENT, OR MY PHILOSOPHIES AS CHIEF, PLEASE KNOW I AM ALWAYS WILLING TO TAKE YOUR CALLS AND EMAILS.

- Chief Joe Nelson

INTRODUCTION

In June of 2020, NY Governor Andrew Cuomo issued Executive Order 203, which directed municipalities with Police Departments to engage stakeholders within the community served by that Police Department in a dialogue aimed at reviewing and, where needed, improving the strategies, policies and procedures of that Department.



COMMUNITY MEETING HOSTS AND PROPOSAL AUTHORS



Rordan Hart

Mayor, Village of Trumansburg
Local business owner



Chief Joe Nelson

Chief of Police, Trumansburg PD
Retired New York State Trooper



Keith Hannon

Village Trustee
Trumansburg Police Commissioner

Department Mission Statement

"We, the members of the Trumansburg Police Department, are dedicated to the protection of life and property, to working with our citizens to reduce crime, disorder, and the fear of crime.

Through community-based and problem-oriented policing we will provide personalized police services with respect for human dignity, regardless of race, ethnic background, national origin, immigration status, gender, gender identity/expression, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, disability, or political affiliation, as well as ensure the civil liberties afforded every person by the U.S. Constitution will be applied equally and consistently according to the highest standards of professionalism, integrity, and accountability."

**T
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Trumansburg Police Chief B. Joseph Nelson

DEPARTMENT PROFILE

- **Municipality:** *Village of Trumansburg*
- **Law Enforcement Agency:**
Trumansburg Police Department
- **Village of Trumansburg Mayor:** *Rordan Hart*
- **Trumansburg Police Chief:** *Joe Nelson*

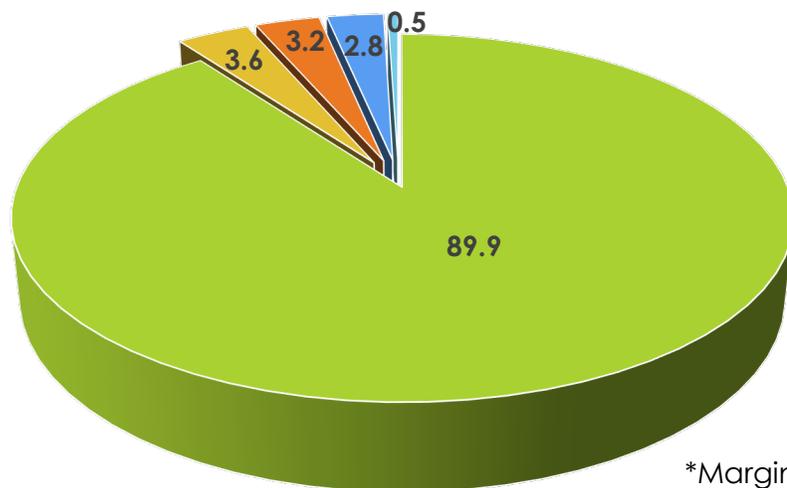


MUNICIPALITY DEMOGRAPHICS

The Village of Trumansburg is a rural Village of just over one square mile in area, located approximately 10 miles north of Ithaca and two miles west of Cayuga Lake. There are approximately 1800 residents within the Village boarder.

The breakdown of that population, based data from Census.gov, is as follows:

■ White
 ■ Bi-racial
 ■ Hispanic/Latino
 ■ Black/African American
 ■ Asian



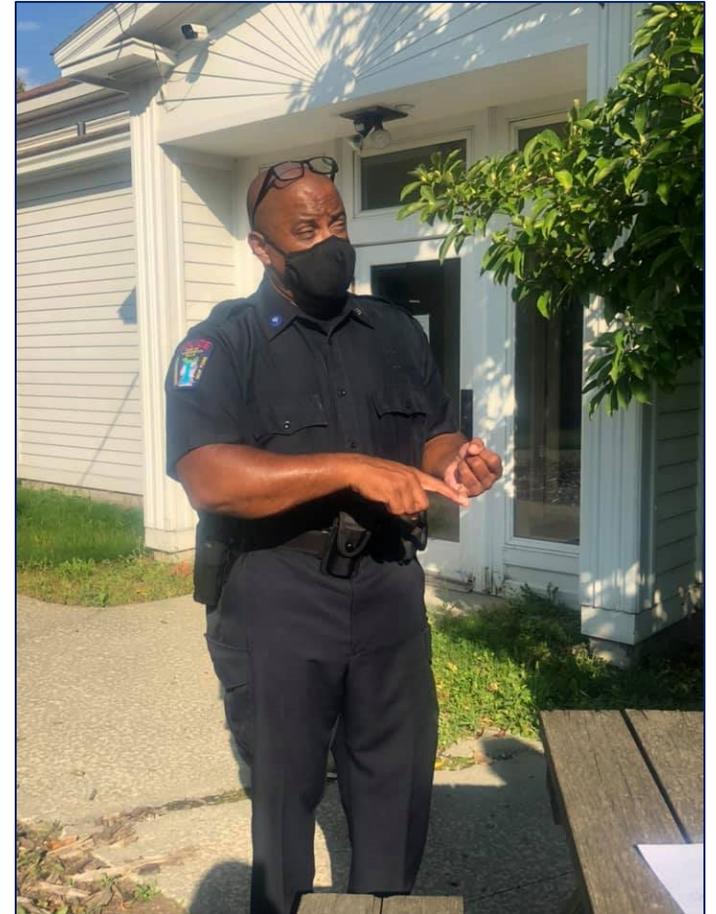
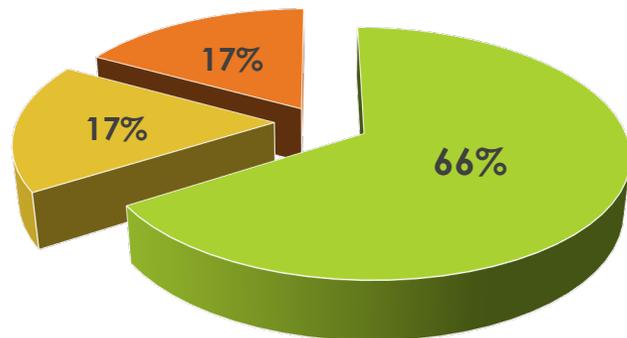
*Margin of error between 2.6%-3.7% in all categories

AGENCY DEMOGRAPHICS: TRUMANSBURG POLICE DEPARTMENT

The Village of Trumansburg Police Department consists of between 10 – 14 employees at any given time, with only one full time officer at present. The full-time officer and Chief reside locally.

The current roster of TPD employees is as follows:

■ White male (8) ■ White female (2) ■ Black male (2)



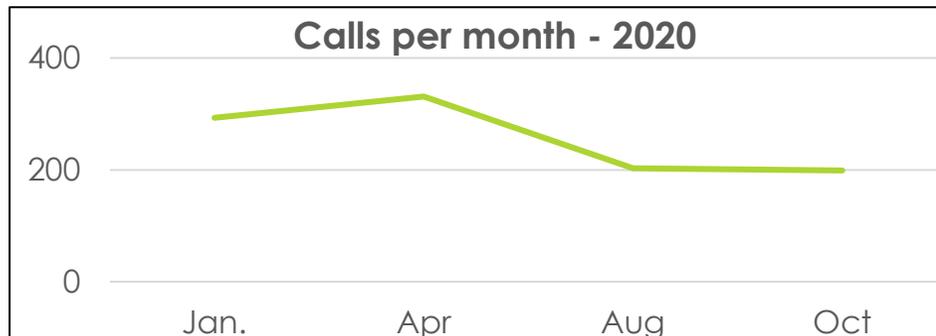
Trumansburg Police Call Report 2020

Categorized Criminal Investigations

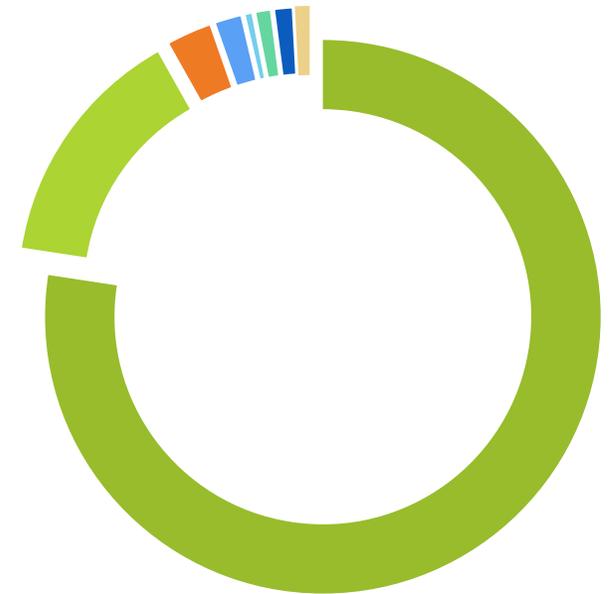


- Domestic disputes
- Harassment
- Thefts/burglary
- Warrant
- DWI

2,676
Total calls



Categorized Non-Criminal Investigations



- Property check
- Suspicious Incident
- Police alarms
- Parking problem/complaint
- Vehicle/Traffic
- Welfare check
- animal problem
- Accidents

Process Summary

The Village of Trumansburg and the Trumansburg Police Department are dedicated to a community policing philosophy that prioritizes respect and care for all residents. As such, TPD took Governor Cuomo's charge to employ the feedback of those we serve to reflect upon our current practices and develop a plan that will ensure we are the force for good that we strive to be.

The following outlines the steps that led to our proposal:

1. Review of Governor Cuomo's Executive Order and expectations.
2. Review of current department policies and procedures.
3. Public invitation to meet and provide input and feedback to guide to help guide the department's proposal.
4. Conducted meetings with residents and representatives of the Trumansburg Central School District, local businesses/Chamber of Commerce, local government officials, and non-profit organizations.
5. Consolidated questions, feedback, and concerns.
6. Reviewed a draft proposal by way of a public hearing.
7. Made edits to the proposal based on feedback from the public hearing.
8. Submitted proposal to the State.



COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

Resident Meeting 1

This meeting was held in-person at the Trumansburg Fire Station.

Five local residents attended this meeting.

Key topics of interest:

1. *Concern over state of policing in America.*
2. *Budget/need for department.*
3. *Response to mental health calls.*
4. *Recording of demographic data during traffic stops.*
5. *Use/type of force policies*

Resident Meeting 2

This meeting was held over Zoom.

Nine local residents attended this meeting.

Key topics of interest:

1. *Necessity of current PD budget*
2. *Interactions with the elderly*
3. *Hierarchy of local policing*
4. *Data collection/databases*
5. *Officer trainings*
6. *Demographics of officers*

Community Stakeholders Meeting

This meeting was also held over Zoom.

Six people attended, including: School district Superintendent, school board member, President of Trumansburg Chamber of Commerce, local Rotary chapter, local business manager, and a Town Supervisor.

Key topics of interest:

1. *Available trainings for officers*
2. *Department's engagement w/ schools*
3. *Data collection and reporting*

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES REVIEWED IN PREPARING THIS PROPOSAL

ACLU

REFORMING POLICE



CAMPAIGN ZERO

BROOKINGS

HUMAN
RIGHTS
WATCH

#8CANTWAIT

KEY ISSUES OF THE COMMUNITY

Chokeholds and strangleholds

The Trumansburg Police Department recognizes the concern with these specific types of engagement. These holds are not included in New York State police training and in June of 2020, New York State passed a bill (A6144B, S6670B) that makes the use of such force by police a class C felony, punishable by up to 15 years in prison. This law will be strictly enforced by the Chief of police and officers are expected to not only abide by this policy, but report any and all violations for which they are a witness.

Traffic stop demographics

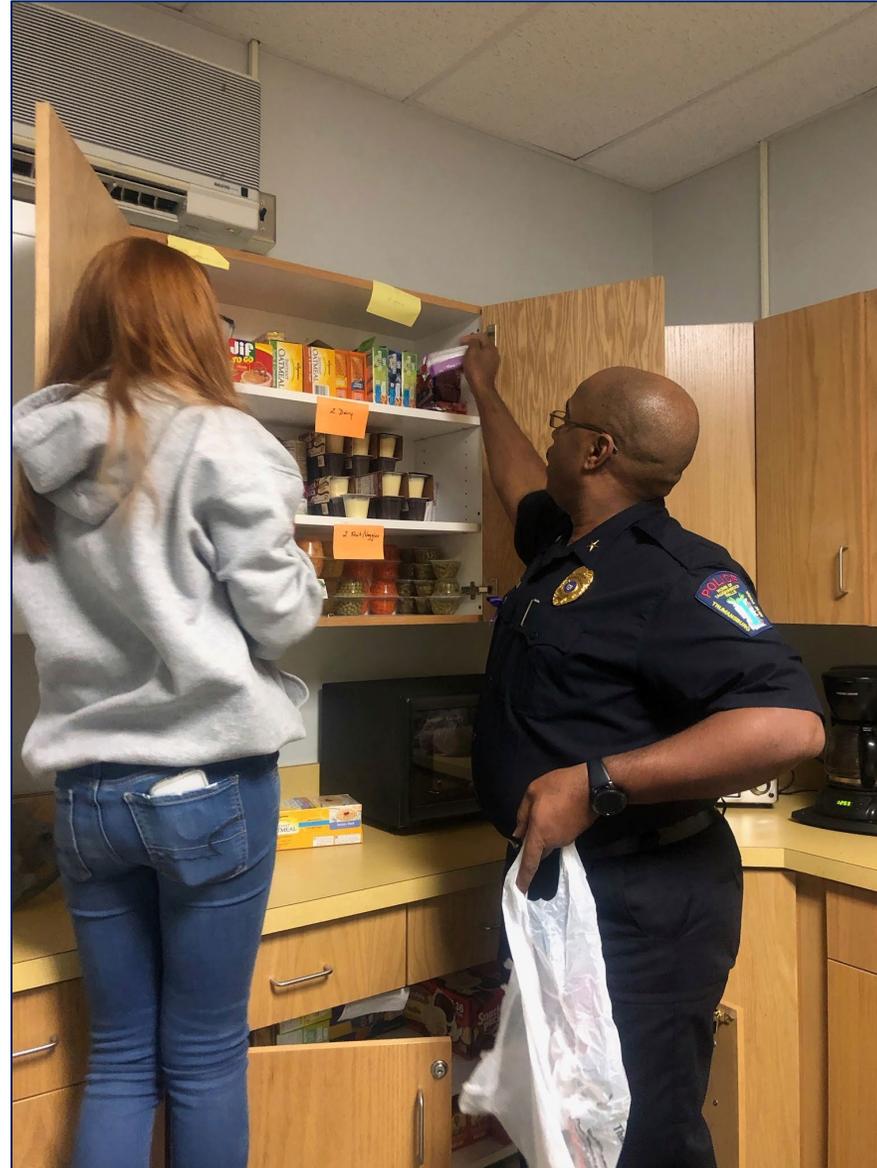
Currently, TPD does not collect demographic data of those involved in a traffic stop. The process for collecting and reporting this information is not streamlined and will require additional staff time. However, our residents have made it clear they feel this information is crucial to being proactive in ensuring no bias exists or does exist, as part of our traffic enforcement. The department will investigate how to best bring capture this information and make it suitable for public disclosure.

De-escalation and mental health response

At present, all Trumansburg officers are trained in de-escalation techniques. It is the duty of Department leadership to ensure they are used at every opportunity. The Village recognizes resident's inquiries into mental health professionals playing a role in response to local calls that feature a mental health crisis. At this time, the budget, human resources, and Tompkins County's emergency call structure, does not make such implementation feasible at this time. However, as part of our on-going community dialogue, we wish to continue this conversation and identify opportunities to partner with County resources when/if they should become available.

DEPARTMENT GOALS

1. Hire second full-time officer.
2. Maintain up-to-date policies and procedures, especially those that relate to use of force and de-escalation.
3. Encourage ongoing community dialogue and use of Chief's open-door policy.
4. Work towards Department accreditation.
5. Develop process for capturing demographic data for traffic stops.
6. Refine process for monthly public disclosure of call/traffic data.
7. Meditation/wellness room for officers.
8. Create new public safety committee that will offer feedback and discussion that ensures the department considers proactive measures to local policing and emergency response.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Many Village of Trumansburg residents and community stakeholders have justified concerns about the national state of policing. Village leadership has heard these concerns and understands the importance of looking within to identify areas in which our own police department (TPD) can improve.

The Village recognizes that these concerns go beyond the events of 2020 and for many members of our community, represent a long held distrust of law enforcement. For that reason, TPD has greatly increased efforts to engage with residents and be a positive presence around the community. Department leadership is devoted to the belief that it is hard to build trust and rapport if your only interaction with the Department is when it is responding to a potential violation.

From the moment Chief Nelson was first approached about the position he now holds, it was clear that his approach to law enforcement was what we all hope to see in a local police department. However, we also recognize that, while residents have expressed positive feedback under Chief Nelson's tenure, there have been moments in the past where negative interactions with the Trumansburg Police Department have taken place. Similarly, we have heard the public's desire to have the current level of expectations codified in Department policy so that they meet the criteria of the community, regardless of who is leading the Department.

While this review process, as mandated by Governor Cuomo's Executive Order, is an important first step in ensuring our Department meets the expectations of our residents, we know it would be short-sighted to believe that the work ends with the submission of this proposal. Building and maintaining trust is a long-term endeavor to which the Village and our Police Department are committed.

In recent months, other municipalities in the country have made headlines by announcing significant "reimagining" of how they will approach public safety and enforce the laws their elected officials adopt. The Village appreciates the hard work that many have put into this effort, but we also feel it is important to recognize that every City/Town/Village is different. Size, budget, and historic/current feedback from residents and local stakeholders are just several of many factors that should be weighed when deciding on what constitutes an appropriate level of reform.

The Village of Trumansburg has been, and remains, committed to the provision of essential services to our residents, including law enforcement. We feel the results of our community listening sessions have provided us with clear direction on how to make improvements to our policies, procedures, and reporting, all while continuing to offer the high level of service provided under Chief Nelson's direction. We feel these improvements can be made within our current structure and that these changes will further improve transparency that not only builds and maintains the community's trust, but makes the Trumansburg Police Department a genuine source of pride for the community.

APPENDIX A: LISTENING SESSION Q&A

Question: Should they have better salaries and do part-time police officers work every week?

Answer: The size and budget of the Village do not allow us to compensate officers as well as larger municipalities. However, TPD has been able to employ quality, community-focused, officers by recruiting both officers who are just beginning their careers and those nearing retirement. Part-time officers are not necessarily scheduled each week as it varies based on Department need and the hours they most commit to their full-time department.

Q: Do we need to build the department more?

A: The current staffing levels are adequate, however, turnaround time for investigations and community engagement would see significant improvement if the department can re-hire a second full-time officer.

Q: How many times are we meeting?

A: The residential listening sessions will have two different groups, one in-person and one remote. Additional discussion and feedback will come via email until the public hearing on the proposal. Following the submission of the proposal, a community committee will form to continue the work on ensuring we maintain a proactive approach to local public safety.

APPENDIX A: LISTENING SESSION Q&A

Q: What will come out of this process?

A: Residents will develop a better understanding of how their local department operates, and the department learns more about resident's concerns and creates a plan to ensure that any of those concerns that exist are eliminated, and procedures are put in place in support of a proactive approach that will stop them from happening.

Q: How do we get part-time to full-time? Or want to stay?

A: Historically, pay and benefits are the biggest reason why part-time officers leave for another agency. However, department culture and a focus on community policing are increasingly an attraction of their own for some officers, which may fit in well with our Department's vision.

APPENDIX A: LISTENING SESSION Q&A

Q: Can someone be hired for mental health or training on how to deal with certain events?

A: At present, the call structure for emergency response and the budget necessary to employ these individuals makes this challenging. If the County is able to support such an effort, the Village would certainly engage in the discussion.

Q: What is the budget? What is the need for officers? Is there a Village court?

A: The current budget for the department is \$499,230 or approximately 17% of the Village budget, not including water and sewer. Averaging over 200 calls/month, it would be difficult to expect agencies such as the Tompkins County Sheriff and New York State Police, to provide a timely and thorough response to these calls. We would also lose the ability to have our officers deeply connected to the community in which they serve. There is no Village court, but there is a Town of Ulysses court.

Q: Going forward what do we need for change?

A: Ensure that the expectations defined by our current Department leadership are built into Department policy to ensure they exist in perpetuity.

APPENDIX A: LISTENING SESSION Q&A

Q: What's going on with schools?

A: An officer is stationed near the campus during the beginning of the school day as research has shown if a school is to have an incident, it usually happens at the very beginning of the school day. In addition, officers support traffic flow needs and accept invites to speak to students on a range of topics from bullying, bike safety, and leadership.

Q: Where is the police department when a cop is being wrong?

A: The Trumansburg Police Department takes any allegations of misconduct on the part of its officers very seriously and will investigate any such allegations to the fullest extent.

Q: Is there demographic data for traffic stops?

A: Currently this information is not captured as the process requires additional staff time that is not available. However, the Department is willing to revisit this based on community interest.

Q: It could be helpful for community to see calls; can this information be public?

A: Call type and volume is reported at monthly Village Board meetings.

APPENDIX A: LISTENING SESSION Q&A

Q: How are police officers dispatched to a call? Who decides what response is needed?

A: When an individual calls 911, Tompkins County dispatch determines whether that call should be responded to by a fire department, EMS, law enforcement, or some combination of the three, and then the closest agency able to meet the need is dispatched. The decision on who to dispatch is based on policies developed by the County, and local agencies are not part of the dispatch decision-making process.

Q: What does our department do with respect to interacting with the elderly?

A: Police Chief Joe Nelson makes it a habit of visiting with residents of Juniper Manor.

Q: Who regulates/oversees our police department?

A: The New York State Department of Criminal Justice Services.

Q: What can we expect out of this process on an ongoing basis?

A: Updated and/or new policies formed out of community feedback and committee that continues the dialogue that will enhance the Department beyond this Executive Order.

APPENDIX A: LISTENING SESSION Q&A

Q: Do we submit data to the FBI National Use of Force Database?

A: Not currently, but the Department does have to report all use of force to the State.

Q: How does our department's ratio of FTE per capita compare to other nearby municipalities?

A: Of the four Village police departments in Tompkins County, the Village of Trumansburg has the fewest full-time officers.

Q: Does our department promote wellness programs for our officers?

A: Chief Nelson has been looking to create a meditation/yoga space for officers. Spacing issues within the building make this difficult, but finding a way to make it happen is a priority item for the Chief.

Q: What training do our officers receive in dealing with people with mental health issues?

A: Training for responding to mental health calls or calls for individuals in crisis begins in the police academy, and is also part of de-escalation training as well as assisting veterans and military personnel dealing with PTSS.