

Minutes of Listening Session for the Coalition on Community Safety and Engagement, Town of Yorktown held via Zoom Video Conference on Tuesday, November 24, 2020, 363 Underhill Avenue, Yorktown Heights, New York 10598.

**Representatives from the Town of Yorktown Present:**

Matthew J. Slater, Supervisor  
Thomas P. Diana, Councilman  
Edward A. Lachterman, Councilman  
Vishnu V. Patel, Councilman

Diana L. Quast, Town Clerk

Robert Noble, Chief of Police  
Adam Rodriguez, Town Attorney

**Members of the Coalition on Community Safety and Engagement Present:**

James Poulin  
Paul Cirillo  
John Lanza  
RoseMarie Panio  
Toni Reynolds  
Liz Rivera

**Community Partners Present:**

Daks Armstrong, Yorktown for Justice

**Members of the Public Present:**

Jay Kopstein  
Jacob Stachowicz  
Eric DiBartolo

**Supervisor Matt Slater opened the Listening Session for the Coalition on Community Safety and Engagement:**

Good evening, Yorktown. My name is Matt Slater, Town Supervisor. This is a listening session of Yorktown Coalition on Community Safety and Engagement. It is Tuesday, November 24. I want to thank everyone for joining us tonight. I want to ask everyone if they're able to please join me by rising and reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all. Thank you.

If you can all please join me in a moment of silence as we remember, the men and women serving overseas this Thanksgiving, and as we remember those who are continuing to battle, the COVID virus within our communities across our State and our Nation. and we say a special prayer tonight for our front liners even though it's a holiday they will not be taking this holiday off. Say a special prayer for all.

Thank you. Again, my name is Matt Slater, Town Supervisor. We are joined by a number of dignitaries and elected officials tonight. I just want to go around introduce the members of the Coalition who are joining us. We have Rose Marie Panio of the Coalition, Pete Lanza, Jim Poulin and Liz Rivera. We have Toni Reynolds. And we are now joined by Paul Cirillo. We have with us, of course, our Police Chief Robert Noble of the Yorktown Police Department. We're joined by Daks Armstrong representing the Yorktown for Justice. We are also joined by several dignitaries: Councilman Ed Lachterman, Councilman Vishnu Patel, our Town Clerk Diana Quast, who's done a great job and has been a tremendous partner in making this all come together. And our Town Attorney Adam Rodriguez. I want to begin with just a few remarks if I can and then I'm going to see if anyone from the Coalition wants to speak. Last, we met on Thursday. This is our fifth meeting now and I'm hard pressed to find another community who has been as dedicated to adhering to Executive Order 203, which is what was the catalyst for the formation of this Coalition on Community Safety and Engagement handed down by Governor Andrew Cuomo, following the death of George Floyd. As I just said, I'm hard pressed to find any other community, quite frankly, who's had five meetings to date, other than the Town of Yorktown, possibly the County but that's, I think, a whole different set of circumstances. I really think it shows the commitment by the members of this Coalition and the commitment by this town to adhere to Executive Order 203, which we said we would do from the outset. It also invests valuable time and learning about our police department, but also learning about other members of our community and hearing other members of our community. Last week we met and there was a moment during that meeting where there was a question about written testimony that was submitted to the Coalition. I just want to take a step back and just review what had transpired there. The Coalition has received a handful of written comments and one of the problems - not one of the problems - one of the issues that we've been faced with is how to properly manage anonymous written comments. The Coalition had a conversation about it and the Coalition was advised by Counsel that it was in "it was an all or nothing" proposition. We couldn't only read the comments that were signed; if we were going to read those comments, then we would read all comments, including anonymous comments. So the Coalition, at that point in time, felt that it was better not to read any comments quickly after that meeting had concluded. Friday morning, quite frankly, there were emails from members of the Coalition requesting another listening session because they wanted to protect the integrity of this process. They wanted to be fully transparent with what we're hearing from the community, and I think that they deserve, quite frankly, a round of applause and a big hand from this community for their commitment to that process for their commitment to that transparency, to make sure that all voices are heard, and that the community understands and knows what the Coalition has received. And so tonight, we're going to read or I'm going to read the pieces of correspondence that we have received either through mail, or has been emailed to the ccse@yorktownny.org, or has been emailed directly to me and others of the Town Board. We will read those into the record tonight in an effort to, again, protect the integrity of this process, as well as transparency. I want to see if there are any members of the Coalition who would like to just say a few words before we begin.

**Supervisor Matt Slater:**

No? Okay. Before we begin, this is a listening session but is there any testimony from any of our community partners and participants? Daks from YFJ - does YFJ have anything they want to state tonight?

**Daks Armstrong:**

Not at this time. Thank you.

**Supervisor Matt Slater:**

Okay.

**Jay Kopstein:**

Matthew, if I may.

**Supervisor Matt Slater:**

Yes, Mr. Kopstein.

**Jay Kopstein:**

All right, good evening, and I want to thank members of the Coalition, because they've been listening intently. The letter that I've written will be read by the Supervisor later in the evening; however, what I've heard and unfortunately, not heard, I haven't heard anybody speaking from the other side. As you'll hear later, I have an extensive resume in law enforcement. I traveled the world on official business, as well as the country. I have a common car in a common color. Before I retired from my primary agency I had several different take home cars, most of which were non-descript - meaning they didn't look like police cars. The license plates didn't come back to a police agency. I had been stopped several times. Either it's sobriety checkpoints or programmatic checkpoints, I have been stopped up by the Canadian border by the Border Patrol. I've been stopped because my car fit the description of some nefarious individual that was wanted by a local constabulary. When I was taught, when I went to the police department almost five decades ago, and what I subsequently taught, was a little bit of common sense that we all should do, and I still do, when you get stopped for a violation that was observed by a police officer, whether or not you think you committed a violation, you're still being stopped. Chief Noble mentioned de-escalation several times in his presentations. De-escalation is not a one-way street. What do I mean by that? When I get stopped, and I do from time to time, if it's in the evening, I turn the lights on inside my car. I roll down the window, and my hands are on the steering wheel. So that when that officer walks up, or in some cases, military police officer, I've already started de-escalating. He sees me, he sees the lights are on. He sees or she sees my hands. That already lowers the threshold of anxiety because the police officer doesn't know fully what he or she is walking up upon. Sometimes you may not think you committed a violation. De-escalation is a two way street. Now, Mr. Armstrong mentioned the fact that he always leaves an ID in his car. That's a great idea. I don't know in my 50 years of law enforcement anybody who has been arrested for not having ID. I know people who haven't had ID and haven't had anything became necessary to have their identification verified. Why is that important? Well, my son went to school with the Supervisor. My son knows where the Supervisor lives. And he may even know the date of birth of the Supervisor. So, if he gets stopped and doesn't have identification, are we going to take his word that he's Matt Slater? I don't think Matt Slater would appreciate that. So, if you don't have ID, you have to understand that a police officer has a job to do. We shouldn't make that job more difficult than it already is. That police officer is not looking for a confrontation. Nor is the motorist. So, they said earlier, let's de-escalate early on, at night, turn your inside lights on, roll down your window, put your hands on the steering wheel. During the day, of course, you don't need to turn the lights on and have civil discourse if the officer's behavior is the way it should be. But you disagree that you committed an infraction - that's for the court to decide. That's not a reason for discourse or negative discourse between you and the police officer. As long as that officer's behavior is the way we expect and the way I've seen in my 30 years living in Yorktown, there is no problem. And you will find out later. I've known Bob Noble for a long time. He is a superb Chief of Police. He's well respected in the County. And he's well respected by former Commissioners and Chiefs within the County who have since retired. Now, thank you for listening to me and hopefully you'll read my letter a little bit later on.

**Supervisor Matt Slater:**

Thank you, Mr. Kopstein.

**Supervisor Matt Slater:**

Is there anyone else who would like to speak before we read the letters?

**Eric DiBartolo:**

Yes. Please Matt, if I could.

**Supervisor Matt Slater:**

Mr. DiBartolo.

**Eric DiBartolo:**

Good evening, everyone. This is the first time that I'm coming on. And I have to be honest with you when this all got started, it was a little disturbing to me, not to take anything away from anybody. I don't want to be like I'm at a Town Board meeting say that I lived in Yorktown 59 years, but I have. I was born and raised in Yorktown and been in the emergency service with the fire department for over 40 years. It was really troubling to me when this whole thing got started to even think that there's somebody living within the boundaries of the town of Yorktown that feels that the police department that we have is maybe not correct or not up to what they believe it should be. It's very disturbing because when you're in the trenches with the Police Department in Yorktown and that being said, Chief Noble, I've known for a long time and respect them tremendously along with all the other policemen, but when you're in the trenches with them. And I'll only give you a couple of incidents when I was fire chief and we had a heroin overdose with a person in a vehicle in the bottom of the Taconic State Parkway. And it was handled perfectly and incredibly professional and everybody went home. These are the things that the normal resident doesn't see. When you have a problem with an irate person in the middle of town swinging their arms and going crazy and you have two or three police officers pull up and de-escalate everything. It really hits to the heart when you see people coming out trying to knock the Yorktown Police Department to say that well, everything could always get better, it could do this, you could do that. I really ask you to go look around throughout the United States, I'd spread it that far, not even New York State. Tell me how many departments are accredited. Tell me how many departments go out and do Coffee with the Cops or at the schools. They're constantly there for you. When you pick up that phone at two o'clock in the morning and dial 911 and within three minutes, those same police officers that people want to put a shadow of a doubt on are there to help you any way they can. Shame on anyone that could come forward and have something negative or have something in the littlest inkling to think that there's something not right about the Yorktown Police Department. My hat goes off to all the emergency services in Yorktown. But Chief under your direction with your men, I can only tell you my mom is 91 still living in this town. I've lived in this town 59 years. I'm proud to live here. Hopefully, I'm gonna live here a lot longer. But thank you. And thank you, Yorktown Police Department because we live the way we live because you protect us the way you do. Thank you, Chief.

**Police Chief Robert Noble:**

Thank you very much, Eric, Thank you.

**Supervisor Matt Slater:**

Anyone else who wants to say anything before we move on to written statements? Can you just say your name?

**Jacob Stachowicz:**

Jacob Stachowicz

**Supervisor Matt Slater:**

Okay, Jacob, how are you.

**Jacob Stachowicz:**

Doing all right. My concern, as just someone who's much younger and who is much more within the younger audiences and younger generation, comes from accountability in that, even if we're right now as it stands that the police are doing a good job, what we might feel is fine in our experiences may not be the same for other people's experiences. I've heard this plenty with a lot of my friends across the country, in other countries and so forth. I feel that even though this is a local police station, I do think that accountability should still be available in case something does happen, not saying it will. But just because having those laws in place, having the means for people to not immediately fear a potential police officer due to their past experiences, it would be positive, to allow them to make sure they can stay accountable in case something does happen. It's one of reasons why I would love it if we could be a police officer or a police station who supports ending something like qualified immunity and just making it accountable like any public servant, because that's what police officers are meant to be. They're meant to serve the community and help everybody without prejudice and to simply, not just help on law and order, also make sure that people can be reformed and rehabilitated in case of issue and potentially going into a punitive direction.

**Supervisor Matt Slater:**

Thank you, Jacob. Would anyone else like to speak to the Coalition before we move over to written statements? Okay. I don't know if I introduced him before, but we are joined by Councilman Tom Diana, who I see on the screen. Councilman, thanks for joining us. Okay, so I'm going to read the statements that we've received. Again, we've received these through the mail, we've received these through the CCSE email address, as well as to the Town Clerk, as well as directly emailed to me and other members of the Board. So, we will begin with an anonymous letter which states as follows: "In response to the article in the Yorktown news requesting comment on the Yorktown police, it brings to mind a situation that happened a couple of years ago at the Firemen's Carnival, behind the firehouse. I found a parking spot there in the alleyway between the firehouse and Mitchell's hardware, getting ready to leave there was a police car and a civilian truck idling parallel with each other, blocking the alleyway right in front of my vehicle. Both the policemen and civilian who obviously knew each other were socializing from their vehicles. I waited for about five minutes for them to move and let me out, knowing they saw me get in and start my vehicle. Since they didn't, I tapped my horn to let them know I wanted to get out. Upon hearing it, the policeman got out and approached me. I read on his face the arrogance of how dare I disturb him. I told him I was waiting for him to move so I could get out and I tapped the horn to draw his attention to it. He told me that he could give me a ticket for disturbing the peace, then moved, just his attitude left an indelible impression on me as to how some policemen have this attitude that they are beyond reproach and are here not to serve the community, but to exercise their authority. The experience has left me with a very sour feeling towards him and the police department." Signed, An Annoyed Citizen. I'm sorry, can everyone hear me okay with the mask on? We do have a rule here with a mask in a town facility. So, I just want to make sure.

**RoseMarie Panio:**

I can hear you very well.

**Supervisor Matt Slater:**

Next, I'll read a letter from Dr. Brendan Lyons, School Superintendent from Lakeland School Districts. He writes "Dear Supervisor Slater, I write to you on behalf of the Lakeland Central School District in the spirit of providing feedback on the Yorktown Police Department to the Coalition on Community Safety and Engagement. Having only been Superintendent since July 1, I have had limited but consistently positive interactions with the police department, from school resource officers and patrol officers to Chief Noble. It is apparent that there is a very strong and cooperative relationship between the district and the department. I have been impressed with the department's professionalism and willingness to offer assistance when needed. When asking our building principals about their experience, they consistently report excellent response times and assistance during emergencies. In addition, they speak highly of both their individual school resource officers as well as the overall program using words such as helpful, honest, ethical, clear communication, and approachable to describe Yorktown officers. The district looks forward to a continued positive partnership with the Yorktown Police Department. Do not hesitate to reach out if you have any further questions. Thank you and best of luck with the comprehensive review process." Signed, Brendan Lyons, Superintendent of Schools.

**Supervisor Matt Slater:**

Okay, next we have an anonymous email that was sent to the committee through our email address. It states as follows: "CCSE, I watched the work session two weeks ago. I saw a presentation about all the great things YPD does for our community. I do not think anyone would completely disagree. Most of us believe that we have a community-based well and benevolent police department and I feel grateful for the YPD when it comes to the public's encounters with YPD. I've heard and personally experienced significantly many more positive stories than negative ones. We still need evaluation and evolution. New York State Executive Order 203 is intended to be a pause and reflect moment for all PD'S and the communities they serve. Yorktown does not have the types of calls like the NYPD - that does not exempt us from the push for growth. In fact, supporting the police can mean and should mean supporting the evolution of policing, higher standards for the profession training, and policies that help police officers learn about and address discrimination. Mandated EO 203 and policy change is intended to keep the public and the public servants equally safe and protected. As I watched the work session I noticed the presence of officers on the screen. I thought about how many of these officers are well known by the community, grew up in the community, are integral and powerful parts of the community. I thought of residents that are not lifelong Yorktowners, who did not grow up here, are residents not welcomed in the same way that urban expatriates are, people who may excuse me, people who may have not had great experiences with police in general throughout their lives, people who have had blatantly negative experiences. I thought of my friends who live in Yorktown and have been mistreated by police. Not Yorktown police, but police. How comfortable would these people be to come on a Zoom call with their face and name on display surrounded by officers? This is nothing personal against any YPD officer or against Matt Slater or the Town Board. This is just the nature of the Zoom. It's intimidating, and we do have a problem with intimidation in Yorktown. Recently you heard from our Councilwoman Alice Roker that even she was threatened and that even her extremely even keeled and balanced public support of racial justice was so unacceptable to a resident that someone threatened her. They were emboldened enough to publicly threaten an elected official. I've heard other stories. I know several people who refuse to share their stories here, although you need to hear them. They won't share their stories of how their children have been mistreated, threatened, harassed. Maybe they're not scared of police retaliation; maybe they're scared of other Yorktowners. If you've been intimidated by your neighbors for your opinions or views on social issues like racism in the US, how comfortable would you be to speak them out to the Board, to the

CCSE, to YPD. To put oneself in such a vulnerable position is a big ask and what if you have been intimidated by YPD? Couldn't you imagine the fear that coming forth in this type of arena would breed? I know of two incidents myself that residents will not report due to fear of retaliation by police and the public. I'm concerned about the validity of this process. It seems that the YPD stance is that we don't have the issues raging in big cities with big racial problems that motivated EO 203 that were already there. We already have the department that EO 203 is supposed to give rise to, but we cannot rely on Chief Noble's leadership and the goodness of individual police officers. Policies need to be embedded into the system. This is not disparaging YPD officers. It's the purpose of this exercise. What issues do we have in Yorktown? And how can we address them through policy and growth? Even good PDs can become better, even good ones must. And I believe that civilian review is paramount to becoming better. We have to create an avenue apart from the police department to file complaints about the police department. This practice is widely viewed as a key step in reform. And there are many models in New York to pull from. You might advocate for ourselves to be able to utilize County resources for multiple municipalities' oversight. If no Yorktown resident ever uses it and we have no complaints, that's great. But if someone does want to file a complaint to illuminate a potential issue, they need to feel safe to do that without fear of intimidation preventing the recording. Let's do better. Thank you for your time, A proud Yorktowneer."

**Supervisor Matt Slater:**

Next, we have an email that was submitted to our Town Clerk Diana Quast. Ms. Quast please submitted and read at the 11/19 listening segment meeting. "My name is Joe Solazzo and I grew up in Yorktown and graduated from Georgetown High School and then, at present, raising three young adults here. I'm proud to say that I knew many members of the current department while we were growing up in Yorktown, and have gotten to know several more as they became my neighbors over the years. The fact that many from the department have returned to town or chose to reside here has been, in many ways, an immeasurable benefit to the public. To the people of Yorktown. I can name more than a few former and current officers who volunteer their time to mentor the youth of our town, mostly in the form of coaching athletics or running clubs at Yorktown high school. I think we can all agree that Yorktown PD does an outstanding job of carrying on a tradition of professionalism and integrity. Thank you, Chief Noble. However, Governor Cuomo, his Executive Order 203, is concerning to me as it could possibly discourage, disrupt or even discontinue all the benefits we enjoy from our department, some of which I've stated before. I'm not aware of what is broken that needs to be fixed. If procedural changes are implemented, I feel they would only serve to separate the community from the department. I would remind those that would, in this manner, choose the words oversight, reimagine, and review that other that others would use the words intrusive, distrust, and hassled. As this process goes forward, I would also like all involved to keep in mind that not changing anything could be a possible outcome as well."

**Supervisor Matt Slater:**

Next, we have a letter that the author requested anonymity, which was provided, and states as follows. "Dear Safety and Engagement Coalition, I would prefer that my suggestions or comments be kept confidential unless it's vital that I reveal my identity. I think it might be better if I remained anonymous. And so again, all the names and the email address and all identifying information was redacted before sharing with the Coalition. It's just important that the Coalition is aware of an issue that I feel needs our community's attention. I would like to respectfully request that this Coalition take a serious look at how the Yorktown Heights Police Department handles the issues around what is called a welfare check, which is a function used for times when a person in any capacity requests that the police department look in on another person when they're concerned and

that they might be having certain difficulties medically or emotionally. In most localities when police are asked to do a welfare check on someone, they can go to wherever that person is observe the person to check that they're not posing any kind of danger to themselves or others. Should the police observe the person acting extremely erratic, dangerous, or they are in a state of hysteria or emotional crisis then they, though most certainly do not have the training required to make decisions about a citizen's psychiatric condition, can insist that the person in question get immediate medical intervention. Should that be the judgment of the patrolwoman or man in charge of the case and the person in crisis refuses their offers of assistance. If the situation is judged an emergency, then the police are authorized to transport the person to a local emergency room for evaluation by experts, as in a psychiatric professional. When doing the research on this issue, I was told by several state and local members of the mental health services community that most villages, towns, and cities - as long as the person is not displaying impending, dangerous or life threatening behaviors - the police will report back to whomever requested the welfare check that the person appeared to be healthy and understood that a concern had been raised and that additional follow up by professionals would be advised. The police department would then complete a report on the incident and no further action would be taken. It would then remain up to the person in question and their support system to take the next steps, if necessary, for follow up professionally. In the therapeutic communities I've spoken with, the overall belief is that only in an emergency situation will a citizen be forcibly removed, even handcuffed and transported against their will simply due to someone's request to perform a welfare check. The belief that these mental health care professionals had about the way the recommended police procedures were being followed by the Yorktown Heights Police Department couldn't have been more incorrect. None of the individuals I consulted with about this could fathom that in Yorktown Heights, the only way the police department handles welfare checks, regardless of the circumstances or the condition of the person in question, is to forcibly take him or her to an emergency department, with or without their permission. There's a lot more to this issue than I can brief in this email. But to properly understand this procedure, we need a great deal more information about exactly what is recommended in cases like this, and exactly what the role of the police force ought to be playing. Absolutely anybody can request a welfare check. A friend, neighbor, doctor, literally anyone including the garbage man or one's ex-wife, or husband, anyone can have someone hauled away in handcuffs - they just make a phone call. I believe our community seriously needs to review this process from the ground up. Barbaric is the first word I think of when I hear the facts. Think about it for a few minutes. Please give it some serious consideration. This is a significant civil rights issue that needs to be addressed before more people from our community are victimized and permanently traumatized by those who are supposed to protect and serve. Compassion and empathy are as vital to police procedures as protective equipment is in the current climate of our nation, our world right now. We need to decide how human beings are to be treated, or more specifically, how they're not to be treated. Basic human rights are being eroded each time something like this occurs. I've learned that it's up to each police department to determine how they handle these situations. Therefore, it's up to our community to do the right thing about this. Don't think nothing can be done about this problem. Isn't it nice to know that once in a while we're not powerless over making changes for the greater good. I will give you more information, if I have it. Please let me know what you might need. Thank you for hearing me out. I pray that I've articulated this well enough to give you food for thought. I hope Yorktown Heights has the ability and wisdom to address this terrible injustice, regardless." Again, name redacted.

**Supervisor Matt Slater:**

Next, we're going to read a letter from Dr. Ronald Hatter of the Yorktown Central School District. Now Dr. Hatter provided a four-page letter that includes some bullets, so I'll do my best to go through them and make sure that they're properly articulated. "Dear Yorktown Coalition on

Community Safety and Engagement, at the request of the Town of Yorktown the Yorktown Central School District has been asked to provide a summary of our working relationship with the Yorktown Police Department. The items below include areas in which the district and the Yorktown Police Department have collaborated. This includes the school resource officers. Currently, the Yorktown Central School District contracts for the Town of Yorktown and the Yorktown Police Department for two school resource officers, one at Yorktown High School and one at Mildred E Strang Middle School. To date the district has been providing great consistency with the officers assigned to the schools and they have performed to our highest standard of excellence, worth noting that the district does not conduct formal evaluations of the officers, as they are not employees of the district. And in addition, the school resource officers are not permitted to issue disciplinary actions to students. That responsibility is solely limited to employees of the district. The school resource officers are integral members of the school community. Specifically, the functions are performed in the Mildred E. Strang Middle school they assist with. Again, this is specifically SROs assist with the safety of students and staff during arrival and dismissal. They are consistently visible in the building including during lunch and recess to build community and trust with students. They do periodic perimeter checks to the building. They act as liaisons between the school and the Yorktown Police Department. They support families at times when student safety has been a concern. Co-chairs of the building emergency response team committee, Burke committee. SROs also organize lockdown drills and assist with other safety drills. They co teach lessons with our help teachers on the effects of alcohol and drugs and one's body and mind as well as the legal consequences of alcohol or drug use. They work with the bully prevention counselor on cyber bullying and social media interventions that work with clinical staff on community resources to help families in need. They perform well checks on families, they present to parents during back to school night, and they coach a varsity sports team. At the Yorktown High School, they assist with the safety of students and staff during arrival and dismissal. Similarly, as we heard, they provide periodic perimeter checks to the building. Also, at the high school, they work with clinical staff on community resources to help families in need, they also perform well checks on families, they present to parents during back to school night, they coach varsity sports team, they also act as advisors. They are advisors for a co-curricular club and attend large school events, such as contests, graduations, and rely on the expertise of Yorktown Police Department to assist us in logistical planning for events where large crowds are expected such as Friday night football games, back to school nights, school arrival and dismissal. The start of the school year and other highly attended school district events. We are grateful for the Yorktown Police Department, as their expertise surpasses the district's capacity in these areas. Reporting of suspicious and criminal activity. As a school district we are perpetually on high alert to provide our students and staff with an environment that protects everyone from individuals looking to commit any type of attack on our schools. Violent attacks perpetrated on schools is a very scary thought but it is a potential that we face daily. The Yorktown Police Department is responsive to our calls, and they arrive at our schools within minutes, if not seconds upon our alerting them of a concern. They demonstrate a profound commitment to ensuring our students and staff are safe. Lockdown drills as part of our school's preparation to respond to an active shooter situation or any other emergency situation. Each school performs several safety drills during the course of the school year. In several instances the Yorktown Police Department will send a team of officers to our schools to observe the process and participate in the training. The Yorktown Police Department debriefs each row with our emergency response team and provides us with specific feedback and recommendations. The expertise of the Yorktown Police Department provides in these situations is invaluable. Consultation as the Superintendent of Schools, the relationship that I have forged with Chief Noble is one of mutual respect collaboration and communication. It is reassuring to know that I am able to call Chief Noble or any of his lieutenants to discuss any questions or concerns that I have. Chief Noble has accepted my calls at

all hours of the day, including late in the evening on weekends and holidays. Chief Noble and his department have demonstrated patience, support, and kindness in any in every interaction with me and my administrative team. Drones, as part of a campus safety audit, the district underwent a review of its campus site lighting. Our intention was to ensure that there was adequate lighting for pedestrian traffic during the evening hours throughout our middle school and high school campus. With many events on the high school campus held in the evening, it was important for us to identify areas that were not properly illuminated. The Yorktown Police Department was integral in assisting us through this process because they were able to fly a drone on our campus during the evening and provide us with aerial images of our campus. Together we were able to identify specific locations on our campus where additional lighting was necessary. Additional collaboration, Chief Noble and the Yorktown Police Department provided us the assistance for a car parade for the class of 2020. In the midst of the COVID pandemic, the district was researching ways to make the end of year recognition of our class of 2020 more special while minimizing the health risks in a large-scale gathering. Chief Noble graciously worked with us to coordinate a car parade for our students. And this event was profoundly appreciated by our students, their families, and our district. Another example of our collaboration was the first responders night during a home football game. In 2019, the Yorktown Central School District to honor the first responders of Yorktown, Chief Noble and his department participated and Chief Noble assisted us in contacting the veterans of the armed forces who live in our community. Chief Noble also organized a flyover by the Westchester County aviation unit. It was truly a memorable evening for all. At times, Chief Noble has joined me in visiting our middle school and high school to have lunch with our students. Our students have enjoyed having lunch with the police chief. The questions that our students asked with Chief Noble have impressed me time and time again. We appreciate Chief Noble taking the time out of his busy schedule to connect with our students. Conclusion, the Yorktown Central School District and the Yorktown Police Department have established a strong working relationship. We are pleased with the support we have received from the Yorktown Police Department and we look forward to continuing our relationship as it currently exists.” Sincerely, Dr. Ron Hatter.

**Supervisor Matt Slater:**

Okay, we're going to move on. We heard from him earlier but Mr. Kopstein did also submit written testimony that we will read. This was sent via email. “Yorktown Supervisor Slater, Chief Noble, and other members of the Coalition on Community Safety and Engagement. I moved to Yorktown in 1987; however, my family has had a presence in Yorktown since the early 1950s. My children have attended schools in the Yorktown School District. I have been involved in various aspects of law enforcement for over five decades, retiring as Deputy Chief of a major municipal police department before associating with a County law enforcement agency. I have known Chief Noble for many years. He has always been accessible to the Yorktown community at large and has fostered community relations within the Yorktown Police Department. Yorktown Police Department is advocating for early intervention, referral, and diversion beginning with our children through the school resource officer program. Police officers in the school resource officer program are active within their schools, developing positive relationships with staff and students alike. They are actively involved with problem solving activities within the school system and larger community. The Yorktown Police Department is actively involved in intervention diversion and referral programs. Quote-unquote use of force policies of the police department are posted on the department's website for all to see, these use of force policies are more restrictive than those stated in the New York State Penal Law. The Yorktown Police Department has repeatedly earned accreditation from the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services. The department's personnel of uniform civilians should be commended for their professionalism. What I've realized from listening to the commentators and talking to people from Yorktown is that what is needed is

a civics lesson on how our government functions. Authority. Police officers enforce laws and ordinances. They do not make laws or ordinances. The police department does not make laws or ordinances. The Federal, State, County, and Local Legislators make laws and ordinances. Police officers and the police department do not fine anybody. Police officers can make arrests, issue summonses, citations, and possibly notices of violations. The Federal, State, County, and Local Legislators legislate the minimum and maximum penalties for violations of laws or ordinances. The judges and justices of our courts determine what, if any, penalties sustained violations of the laws and ordinances should be imposed. The police, prosecuting attorneys, and the courts are granted some discretion in their determination as to whether to arrest, prosecute, impose a penalty, intervene, divert, or refer this limited discretion granted by the Federal, State, County, or Local Legislators and are written into law. The power and authority of the police is granted by the Federal, State, County, or Local Legislators. These powers can be further restricted by the department's executive authority but cannot be expanded without legislative authority. Control, the executive control. The police department is vested in the Chief of Police and the Board of Police Commissioners. The Board of Police Commissioners is comprised of members of the Town Board. They are not members of the police department, they are elected by the voters of the Town of Yorktown. Letters of commendation or complaint can be sent either signed or anonymously to the Chief of Police or to any member of the Town Board. With the exception of one individual, I am not aware of the occupational demographics of the members of the Coalition on Community Safety and Engagement or the people who have communicated with the CCSE. What I do know is that professionals that are subject to review are reviewed by peers within the same profession. Can you imagine the uproar if for example, surgeons who use cutting implements when doing procedures are reviewed by licensed or certified carpenters, that also use cutting implements or neurologists who study and treat neurological illnesses, which can be electrical are reviewed by licensed and certified electricians, or interventional cardiologists and heart surgeons who treat cardiovascular problems are reviewed by licensed or certified plumbers. Or lastly, teachers who are responsible for the education of our children being reviewed by licensed and certified instructors who are licensed by New York State agencies other than the New York State Education Department, for example, New York State DCJS. As an aside, one regular commentator to the CCSE who espouses an independent control board, belongs to a union that spent millions of dollars lobbying against an independent peer review of the profession of the commenter and colleagues that would be conducted by the New York State Education Department. Further on the teleconference of November 19, 2020. There were at least two attorneys and one law student commenting, it is only fair to point out that in New York only attorneys evaluate complaints and make recommendations about the conduct of other attorneys, and that complaints against attorneys that are not substantiated are not available for public review. Police actions can be reviewed at many levels. These levels can range from internal supervisory review by the sergeants, lieutenants and the Chief of Police of the Police Department of the Town of Yorktown. The Board of Police Commissioners of the Town of Yorktown also have the powers of review and oversight. Additionally, the District Attorney of the County of Westchester, Attorney General of the State of New York, United States Department of Justice, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and the United States Attorney General also have the ability under certain circumstances to review the actions of the police department. Finally, comments that are made concerning Yorktown for Justice lack one item. What is missing is their definition of justice. Is justice served only when you get what you want or is justice served when it meets the standards set by the overall community as long as those standards are based upon legally enacted law? In my opinion, as long as the police department of the Town of Yorktown continues to maintain its accreditation with the State of New York, and continues to have oversight by the Board of Commissioners from the Town of Yorktown, the department and the town have met their burden under the Executive Order.” Respectfully submitted, Jay Kopstein.

**Supervisor Matt Slater:**

We are up to our last piece of written comment. This is an anonymous piece that was submitted through the CCSE website. "I live in Yorktown, sometime within the past 10 years when my son was a teenager, he had a severe mental health issue one day. He has a mental health diagnosis. On this particular day he was very upset about something and he barricaded himself in his room. His girlfriend was at the house and she told us that he was suicidal and that he had a set of culinary knives with him. We had bought them for him when he was studying culinary. We could not get his door open or break it down so we could see if he was all right. We did not know what else to do at that moment, so we called the Yorktown Police. We explained to the police that there was a suicidal young person in the home, barricaded in his room, and he may have a knife. We were told police would be sent out right away. Somehow my son heard through the door that the police are on their way. He came rushing out of the room in a panic and ran outside into the darkness. When the police arrived shortly afterwards, explained what happened. I spoke to one of the officers directly and told him that there was no need to fear that my son wouldn't hurt anyone else. He had only threatened to hurt himself. All of us started looking for him. There followed several minutes of complete chaos as we all searched the neighborhood for him, calling out to him. At some point he came face to face with the Police officer in our yard, the officer pointed his gun at my son and told my son to show him his hands. Thankfully, my son showed him his hands and the officer holstered his weapon. They then took my son for an evaluation at a hospital. When I think back on that night, I think of how close my son came to being killed when he was asked to show his hands. He was not in his right mind. And he could have responded in a number of different ways that could have resulted in him being shot by the officer. I'm so glad that something persuaded him to cooperate at that moment. I'm very aware that others with mental illnesses in similar situations have not been cooperative, horrible things have resulted. The thing that panicked, my son was hearing that the police were on their way. I know that he would have responded differently had he heard that a social worker was on their way or a mental health crisis team was on their way, but he panicked at the idea of the police coming and ran out of the house in the insanity and chaos of those several minutes when he was running in the darkness and the rest of us, including armed police, were trying to find him in the darkness. Anything could have happened, including someone else being hurt. I hope that you will hear this story and understand the importance of having someone other than a police officer be the lead responder on mental health crisis calls. It could well be that in situations like this, a mental health responder might want the police to accompany them, and I understand that since there was a potential for there being a weapon involved. However, someone with more mental health training than a police officer should be the person in charge in of a situation like this; someone who can defuse the situation. I'm not writing you to say that the police officer who drew his gun did something wrong. I'm not familiar enough with the police protocol to know whether or not that is true. But I do know that my son remains traumatized to this day by the incident, and it was many years ago. Even just asking his permission to tell the story revisited the trauma of having the police aim a gun at him at a time when he was already in an emotional crisis. As a result of this experience, I would not call the police in such a situation ever again. I don't know what I would do, but I would not risk a repeat of that horror. I hope you will consider this and recommend the Town of Yorktown do whatever it can to make sure that people like my son in crisis are helped by someone who has training to deal with that specific kind of crisis. A terrible tragedy was barely averted. To this day, all the trauma has not gone away. Next time the result may be deadly."

**Supervisor Matt Slater:**

That concludes the written correspondence that we have received to date. Does anyone from the Coalition have any comments? None.

**Councilman Ed Lachterman:**

Supervisor, I have a question if that is ok. Just a little clarification.

**Supervisor Matt Slater:**

Yes, Councilman Lachman?

**Councilman Ed Lachterman:**

I was hoping the Chief could jump in. There was one letter about the welfare checks, and I was curious because I know that I have witnessed some welfare checks. I wanted to know what our procedures are in the town. I hadn't seen anything to that respect. So, I just was hoping to get a little clarification because I think that's something that we should all be aware of.

**Police Chief Robert Noble:**

Well, every welfare check is different. You know, it all depends on a set of circumstances. We just had a welfare check the other evening where officers saw a pair of legs lying motionless on the floor; they were able to enter into the residence, and may have saved a woman's life who had fallen and couldn't get up. There are other welfare checks; the ones that are the trickiest are the mental health type calls, where the officer has to make a decision. Okay, do I walk out of the house and leave this person here? If something happens to that person, were we negligent by leaving that person alone? Or do we take the facts and a set of certain circumstances that are presented to us, and have to insist that person probably get checked out by either Northern Westchester Hospital or another facility close by. It's based on facts, a set of circumstances that the officers are presented with, and people are not getting dragged out in handcuffs at welfare checks unless they are very unstable and pose a threat to themselves or somebody else. Thankfully, that happens very few and far between. Most of the welfare checks, thankfully, are uneventful and most if not all turnout very positive, but there are limited circumstances where there is a crisis, and we do the best we can to handle those crises. But again, as I had said in prior presentations, we have not had a complaint of police brutality in the close to the four and a half years that I've been at the helm. So that means we're handling these incidents with either non-escalation or de-escalation and handling most of them quite well.

**Councilman Ed Lachterman:**

Very good. Thank you, Bob, for the clarification.

**Supervisor Matt Slater:**

Okay. With that being said, Daks.

**Daks Armstrong:**

I don't think anyone would argue that the police don't have a difficult job. And they put their lives on the line. And we have very good officers, and we have a very good police department here in Yorktown. But that's actually not the point of the Executive Order for the work we're supposed to be doing here. The point of the Executive Order, and the work we're supposed to be doing, is to acknowledge that racism exists everywhere in our country and the greater world and it seeps into the core fabric of our institutions. We should be taking a very honest and objective look at our institutions, and seeing where we can make improvements. So, I just wanted to put that out there. And I wanted to kind of reveal the elephant in the room that I don't think any of the comments really touched on, which are issues of race. Issues of race exist in our town, like they exist everywhere. And we don't get past them by ignoring it. And saying things like, well, our police department is perfect, so there's nothing to do, nothing to see here. Let's move on Case Closed.

We have a good department, that doesn't mean that we shouldn't take an objective look and see if issues of race affect us like they affect everyone else. Just wanted to put that on record for us to hear and digest and to think about.

**Supervisor Matt Slater:**

Thank you, Daks. The Town Board has actually already been on the record, three, if not four times this year, condemning racism, hatred, bigotry, more times than I ever thought we would, considering the conditions of the country. But we've continuously stood up, unified in a bipartisan effort, condemning all forms of hatred. Now in reviewing the message from Governor Cuomo, just to be clear, it specifically talks about well, it's specifically called the New York State Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative. When you go through the message from Governor Cuomo, it is specifically about the review to review the needs of the community served by its police agency and evaluate the department's current policies and practices - established policies that allow police to effectively and safely perform their duties - involve the entire community in the discussion, develop policy recommendations resulting from this review, again, focused on our community. And our police agency, offer a plan for public comment which we have clearly done, and present the plan to the local legislative body to ratify or adopt it and certify adoption of the plan to the State Budget Director on or before April 1, 2021. Not my words, the Governor's word. So, I hear what you're saying. I do. I think the Town Board hears what you're saying. I don't think that anyone's trying to put it off. I think that the Town Board has been very vocal and united in condemning all forms of hatred. But I think in this case, it's very clear that we need to be focused on the police policies of the Yorktown Police Department and how it is administered in the Town of Yorktown. That's the charge. Any other comments from the coalition members?

**Daks Armstrong:**

So then, Supervisor Slater would you acknowledge that racism is a part of our town here?

**Supervisor Matt Slater:**

The Town Board has said it. I'll say it again. The Town Board has passed resolutions multiple times this year, condemning all forms of hatred, racism, and bigotry.

**Daks Armstrong:**

But wait, with respect, I didn't ask about resolutions. I just simply asked you, do you believe that racism exists in our town?

**Supervisor Matt Slater:**

Clearly, the Town Board resolutions, speak for themselves.

**Daks Armstrong:**

Okay, so you can't speak for you. Okay, I got it. Thank you very much.

**Supervisor Matt Slater:**

That's not what I said, Daks, so let's not put words in my mouth. Okay. We're trying it again, stay focused on what our objective is. If you want to twist it and turn it into something else, that's perfectly understandable. And that's your agenda. The Coalition's agenda.

**Daks Armstrong:**

I'll say it for you, racism exists in our town. It's something that I think that we're fully capable of addressing it.

**Supervisor Matt Slater:**

The points put forward by Governor Cuomo, and the Town Board time and again, time and again, has spoken unanimously in a bipartisan effort against all forms of hatred, racism, bigotry, whether that's here locally, whether that's someplace else in New York State, whether that's in Minnesota, or elsewhere, it's very clear that our stances as a Town Board, stand by that as well. Now, having said that, the Coalition's next meeting is supposed to be scheduled in December, I look back on the on the presentation that we provided at the beginning of this outset, we did not set a date. And so that's why I didn't know it off top my head when RoseMarie asked me. So, the next one is a work group session for us to, again, have a conversation. I think the next work group session should be focused on beginning the drafting of our initial report, our initial recommendations, which, again, if you follow the process, then goes out for public input. Again, this will keep us on the same timeline that has been proposed by the Governor's office. And so, looking at the calendar here, we have December 10 if that works, because you start getting into the holidays. Does that work for the Coalition members?

**James Poulin:**

December 10, works for me.

**Liz Rivera:**

It works for me, I think there's someone that wants to ask a question, Matt.

**Eric DiBartolo:**

There's two people that do.

**Supervisor Matt Slater:**

Okay, we'll get there in a second.

**Liz Rivera:**

Okay.

**Supervisor Matt Slater:**

Thank you. I appreciate it, Liz. So, the Coalition is going to be meeting for our next board meeting to begin discussions on drafting on Thursday, December 10. Diana, does that work on your calendar? I apologize. I should have asked you first because I know you're the keeper of the calendar.

**Town Clerk Diana Quast:**

Yes, it's fine. 7:30 start.

**Supervisor Matt Slater:**

730 start.

**RoseMarie Panio:**

And what would you like for us to come prepared to do at that meeting?

**Supervisor Matt Slater:**

I think we should be ready to begin discussing some of our recommendations and how we're going to draft our report, which would then be published for the community to review, and then we will have a public hearing, in a sense about what those recommendations will be before it gets turned

over to the Town Board. That's the process laid forward by the guidelines of the Governor's initiative. Tom does December 10, work for you?

**Tom Sciangula:**

Yeah, I mean, you say it works for you. It's got to work for me.

**Supervisor Matt Slater:**

Very good. All right. So, I think we heard we had two other comments. Okay, Jacob.

**Jacob Stachowicz:**

I just want to talk a little bit about the story I heard before regarding this attempted suicide and Daks comments earlier. I feel like it's not really about a resolution regarding racism, because basically when it comes to the resolution it is saying racism is bad. I think everybody can understand that racism is bad. What I think should be important is recognizing what racism is, in all forms, not just the most blatant, but also the smallest ones, the ones that people very easily cannot notice, the ones that you would have to not only recognize, but also be informed by due to how structural racism has been in this nation for decades, for centuries. I think that having a resolution to say racism is bad is not the way to go. I think it's better to recognize that racism does exist, basically says, vocally it's not ignored and also to specify, basically improve the definition of what racism can look like. To help expand on that, you could allow people to be informed as a member from locally in Yorktown. There's been a lot of push in Yorktown schooling in classes to push for like racial acknowledgement in the country, at the local level and so forth, that would be immensely useful because the biggest weakness, the biggest way to combat racism, to combat bigotry, to combat hatred, is education to inform people to acknowledge issues, to say that there is a problem, and have the step to solve it. So, I do think that it's better because no matter if it is bipartisan, or if it's partisan, whatever, it's going to exist. And it's better off to try to group together to figure out what the solutions are, that are binding, that can have scientific backgrounds to them. And by improving education, especially education, is probably the biggest factor of all that will likely make so much better strides in the solution in the future for our generation, next generation. And even past generations. We can have these classes potentially be expanded to maybe the elderly, or people who might not be in school, something like these town meetings we have here, we can also experience with just education about our community. I know that my mother helps immensely, pushes a lot of this with the race amity and race community groups, having those type of groups expanded more would be such a great addition because it allows people to be taught what they might not even realize is racism or oppressive to other groups. And that's, I think, what's really, really important here. So, I do understand that even if you say that racism is bad, or make an acknowledgement or whatever, saying what to do, and then making actions that actually improve it are two different, two major different things.

**Supervisor Matt Slater:**

Thank you, Jacob, but I can tell you that the school districts, I know the Yorktown Central School District has already created a committee to enhance its curriculum geared towards exactly to what you were talking about, which is great. Again, the Town Board has been quite clear in its complete opposition to all forms of hatred, racism, and bigotry. I think that if anyone wants to tell themselves that there's not racism and every community in this country they're kidding themselves, that includes ours, and the Town Board has been very clear that we were opposed to any form of hatred in not just our community, but every community. And I understand what you're saying, Jacob. Education - I think the school districts are making great strides in their efforts there. We obviously do not govern the schools, the town does not govern schools, those are separate bodies. But they are addressing that. Eric, you wanted to say something?

**Eric DiBartolo:**

Yeah, just Mr. Armstrong, it just seems that you're just set in one way. I mean, the Supervisor has come out numerous times about how they feel in town, what they're doing, and you just don't, you just seem to be against it. I mean, your actions even now watching you on the screen, you're pushing back, like you're upset. And I don't understand. I mean, I think everybody's trying to do the best they can. And I don't know, you're not hearing what you want to hear or whatever. But just to see your actions. It's, just interesting, you know, I just, it just bothers me, because you're from a great group, and you're trying to do the right thing, but to see your actions, it's kind of speaking loud and clear. And, and I don't think it's good. I think there's plenty of ways that we could work this out, and it could become better. But the Supervisor stated many times, and I agree with him that everybody's feeling the pull in the same direction. So, I just wanted to bring that forward. That's just how I felt.

**Daks Armstrong:**

Eric, thank you for your comments. With respect, I just have one question. Do you believe that racism exists?

**Eric DiBartolo:**

In the Town of Yorktown?

**Daks Armstrong:**

Do you believe that racism exists in the world?

**Eric DiBartolo:**

In the world? Yes.

**Daks Armstrong:**

Do you believe that racism exists in Yorktown?

**Eric DiBartolo:**

No.

**Daks Armstrong:**

Oh, there you go. But you know what? At least you gave a direct answer, and I appreciate that. And all I'm looking for is a yes or no for us to start the conversation.

**Eric DiBartolo:**

But Mr. Armstrong that conversation...

**Daks Armstrong:**

Because, hold on, hold on. If you can't even talk about the issue, first, you can't begin to solve it. So, my frustration is just us starting from a baseline, right, and that was my frustration.

**Eric DiBartolo:**

Understood, but you know what? You're a very intelligent person. You got a lot going on, you could tell and I think the way you go about it is a little different, matter of fact, you could get my number from people in town, I'd be more than happy to sit and talk to you. Like I said, I've been in town a long time, but you just seem to be upset and I don't think it's a good way to go because I think a lot more could come from it. And you're talking about somebody that everybody knows

me for a long time in town, I got a real short fuse. But I think talking it out and working it out, where you're coming from, a lot more could be done. And you could see you are getting upset. And I don't think it's beneficial for your cause, for anybody's cause. And I respect you greatly, but I just I wanted to share that.

**Supervisor Matt Slater:**

Thank you, Eric. Appreciate it.

**Daks Armstrong:**

Thank you for your time.

**Supervisor Matt Slater:**

Thank you. And I don't know if Mr. Armstrong heard me state earlier, but again, the Town Board is opposed to racism. And we have acknowledged racism. And I think that if you don't acknowledge racism across the country, across the world, even in our own community, you're kidding yourself.

**Daks Armstrong:**

But we're at the point where we can't admit that racism exists in our town.

**Supervisor Matt Slater:**

Daks, what did I just say? I just said it did, it's about the third time that I've said it tonight, I'm sorry you're not hearing what you want me to say that racism exists across the country, including our community. And if you don't acknowledge that, you're kidding yourself, that's what I've said now, four times. So, I don't know how else I can say it. And the Town Board has unanimously, in a bipartisan manner, condemned all forms of hatred and racism across the board multiple times. So, I just don't know what else you're looking for. We are here to focus on the directive of EO203. And I understand that you may disagree with that. But that's what we're charged to do. We were charged with looking at our police department, and that's what the Coalition has been spending an awful lot of time doing. And so, with that being said, our next meeting is on Thursday, December 10, where we will be discussing the next steps in this overall process, following the timeline that was put out as part of the guide. The next step would be drafting of the report and recommendations. So, if the Coalition could be prepared to have some ideas and be prepared to engage in a conversation about that report and what the proposed recommendations the Coalition would like to see included in that report. That would be I think, the appropriate time for us to have that conversation. Are there any other comments from any member of the Coalition? Okay, that being said, I want to wish everyone a very Happy Thanksgiving. And we will talk to everyone on December 10. Thanks so much. Have a great night.