



Village of Harriman

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**SPECIAL MEETING of the
VILLAGE of HARRIMAN
BOARD of TRUSTEES
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2021**

6:30pm – Executive Session

7:00pm – Special Meeting

AGENDA

- 1. ROLL CALL – PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**
- 2. POLICE REFORM**
- 3. PUBLIC COMMENT**

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6:30PM – Executive Session
7:00pm – Special Meeting

The following was given by Mayor Medina:

Open Meeting 6:30 PM

PRESENT: Mayor Lou Medina, Trustee Bruce Chichester, Trustee Sandy Daly, Trustee Carol Schneider

MOTION was made by Trustee Schneider to enter Executive Session to discuss personnel issue.
SECOND by Trustee Daly
ALL IN FAVOR

MOTION was made by Trustee Chichester to adjourn Executive Session at 6:45 PM
SECOND was made by Trustee Schneider
ALL IN FAVOR

MOTION was made by Trustee Daly to hire John Froeber as MEO in the DPW with an hourly rate of \$28.00 effective, 02/04/21, with a 6-month probation: and contingent on a clear result from his Drug Test Screening already taken.
SECOND was made by Trustee Schneider
ALL IN FAVOR

Mayor stated Father Mike from St. Anastasia Church advised that he might be a little late. We can wait a little, but then we will get started. Public Meeting started at 7:10pm.

Mayor stated thank you for coming out tonight for the Village of Harriman Police Reform Collaborative Forum. I am Lou Medina, Mayor of the Village of Harriman. Before we begin, I want to remind everyone of our COVID-19 guidelines for “in-person” meetings.

Everyone attending the meeting must wear a face mask until they are seated. If you need to get up and move around, you must put your face mask on. Seats are placed 6’ apart and should not be moved unless to sit closer to a family member. Please maintain social distance and hand sanitizer is available as you enter the building and are at stations to your left.

If everyone could please stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor continued as you may already know, Governor Cuomo issued Executive Order 203 which required any municipality with a Police Department to review the policies and practices of that Department to ensure that we were fairly, equitably, and with justice, policing in all of our community and all of our residents. Under the Executive Order, the Chief Officer of the municipality, in the Village of Harriman’s case, the Mayor, was charged with putting a Panel together of stakeholders made up of:

Membership and leadership of the local police force, members of the community, interested non-profit and faith-based community groups and Local elected officials

Now, I would like the Panel to introduce themselves and say a little about yourself

Mr. Mitchell stated I am a Harriman resident for 20 years and also a Ramapo Police Officer for the same amount of time.

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Chief Dan Henderson stated I am the Chief of Police and I have been in law enforcement for 34 years. I served in the Military for 3 years. I have been Chief of Police in Harriman for eight years after serving 23 years in other agencies.

Sargent John Levison stated I have been with the Harriman Police Department for almost seven years. I live in Pine Bush and I have been a Police Officer for over 23 years.

Trustee Sandy Daly stated I live in Harriman for twenty years and I have been on the Board for the last four years.

Trustee Bruce Chichester stated I am a Trustee and former Mayor. I have lived in the Village for forty years.

Trustee Carol Schneider stated I am a Trustee.

Mayor continued also in attendance tonight is Village Clerk, Jane Leake. Consistent with the Governors Orders, after these Panel discussions have been completed, the Chief of Police and I have been charged with putting together a Plan for any modifications we feel come out of these discussions to the Village's policies and practices. We will be doing that in the days following this meeting and that will have to be presented in a Public Hearing to the Public for public comment. We hope to schedule that sometime in late February or early March. Once that is done, we take all of that input and modify the Plan, if necessary. The Plan is then presented to the Village Board for their approval and submission to the Governor as per the Executive Order. We look forward to tonight's Panel discussion and this process. I hope that it will help our community understand policing in Harriman and to have confidence knowing that it is preformed fairly, equitably and with justice. I will hand it off to the Chief who will describe the Principals and Practices of the Village of Harriman's Police Department.

Chief Henderson stated I would like to start by reading "The Department's Mission and Values" we have this posted in our Department in the Hallway when you walk in and posted for all the patrolmen to observe on a daily basis.

The principle mission of the Harriman Police Department is to serve and protect the community for which we serve. To protect life and property; prevent crime; enforce all laws; and maintain order for all citizens. This goal will be accomplished through the cooperative effort of the Police Department and the community. To this end, the success of this mission requires a commitment of the Administration, every employee of this department and the citizens of our Village, (sort of like what we are doing here today) all working together to maintain the trust, respect, integrity and excellence expected of the Harriman Police Department and its members.

To accomplish this mission, the following values must be the basis for all our actions:

Respect:

The Harriman Police Department recognizes that its members are its greatest asset. Our actions shall reflect this belief. Our members will respect all citizens and recognize their ethnic and cultural diversity and perform all duties with honesty, zeal, courage, discretion, fidelity and sound judgment. We will respect each other as professionals and fellow human beings.

Integrity:

We believe in the principles embodied in the constitution. We recognize the authority of Federal, State and Local Laws. Honesty and truth must be the standard of interactions with the community and with our members.

Excellence:

We will strive for personal and professional excellence, dedication to duty and the delivery of quality of service to the public. We are part of a team dedicated to the safety and protection of our community. Our actions will reflect professional, intelligent, sincere, efficient and courteous service. In fulfilling our mission, we will need the support of all Citizens, Elected Representatives, Government Officials, and the Criminal Justice System in order to provide the quality of service these values commit us to providing.

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Chief Henderson continued this is something I updated and completed when I got here, and it was also a part of the accreditation process that we completed in 2012 and we were recertified in 2017. The accreditation process is Policies and Procedures that guide Police Departments and its members on how to do their duty everyday and it is a high standard that we have to meet to accomplish accreditation. Harriman Police Department has twelve members, 7 full-timer's and 5 part-timer's. We control approximately a square mile, approximately 3,000 residents', we have about 3,000 blotters a year of 200 cases with 100 arrests and a budget at this point of 1 million dollars, which includes personnel, equipment, cars, training, etc.... We have an extensive hiring process by doing interviews, background investigations, FTO's (Field Training Officers System). We use Field Training Officers to train all of our Officer's in using those values, goals and objectives that we look for in every member of the Harriman Police Department. We are always striving to make sure we get the best Officer's here. We teach them the values that need to be taught to make sure they interact with the community and that on an everyday basis there is no bias or racism within our Police Department, which we do during our training. It is part of the accreditation. We go through yearly training that is mandatory and now they are also including Principal Policing which includes what I just told you and what is in our Mission Statement on how we treat the community and how we respect everybody in our community as Police Officers. Also use of force is part of that training every year that we have to go to, which basically is less lethal options, hands off approach, talking, dealing with the people of the public, dealing with all of the public in the same way (interacting). Our scheduling is around the clock, we are 24/7, although we don't always have two patrols on per shift. We at least have one patrol here and we are also assisted by Woodbury and Monroe at any giving time as we assist them. We are very tight nit with our Police Departments around here. We work together to try to make sure we have a good balance and make sure that when we go to any calls, whether they are domestics or any thing that is dangerous we always have backup. It is a small Police Department, but we make it work. We do a lot of community engagement within the Police Department. We have a Community Day each year with the help of the Village Hall. They put on a Community Day and we represent by fingerprinting kids, interacting with the community and answering questions. We have a Booth set up there. We are there every year. We have something called Operation Reassurance that we have at the Police Department. That is something myself and the old Mayor implemented, and it is where elderly people can call in and be checked on, on a daily basis. We have Bicycle Patrols. We have car seat technicians. Anything we can train in and interact with the community we try to do. Even with a smaller Police Department we try to get involved in this at all times. We also follow the school buses around on a daily basis. We make sure the buses are safe and there are no cars passing them. We make sure the kids are safe. I have to say in the eight years I've been here we haven't had a complaint, none of any kind of significance. Do we get I didn't want to get that traffic ticket complaint, yes. But most of the people in the Village meet us on a basis where it is not just traffic stops. It is domestics where we are taking care of their children. It is mental health issues, where we are collaborating with mental health and we are collaborating with crisis intervention teams. They respond with us to calls. We do collaborate with them and the people see us on a daily basis. We show a lot of concern for our public. By reading the Mission Statement you know what we stand for. You know how I expect my Officer's to be and act and in the eight years I have been here we haven't had an issue, any issue., and I plan to keep it that way as long as I am Chief of Police and as long as I have good people under me, which I do. We are here for the public.

Mayor Medina asked can you talk more about the accreditation process and what that actually means?

Chief Henderson replied what the accreditation process is; it is a set of Policy and Procedures that should basically live by in a Police Department. So, your guided by these Policy and Procedures. It is a standard that is met by, I am not sure what the percentage of Police Departments were back in the day, 10% or might be 25, 35, 40% right now. It is a process that you go through with the State. They send accreditation of assessors down and they look over the policies. They make sure you keep them updated. We have our guys come in quarterly throughout the year to update any policies we need and anything I need updated. We develop new policies throughout the year. These are guidance. These are what we do to guide and if anybody has a question they can go to our Policy and Procedure Manual which not only contains Policies and Procedures, but Rules and Regulations. Again, if anybody has any questions, they can refer to it. Each one is issued a disk (thumb drive) with all the Policies and Procedures and Rules and Regulations on it so even if they are in the car and they have any questions or concerns to themselves, obviously with 100 Policies we all can't memorize them all. I went through them all eight years ago and I have updated some and recreated some and developed new ones, but I can't recite every single one, so

when we do come into a situation where we need to review it, we review it on a daily basis. Our new guys will come in and I will have them sit down and read the Policy and Procedure Manual as part of their training.

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Mayor Medina asked you also give out reports monthly to the Village Board that shows some of the statistics and numbers?

Chief Henderson replied yes, we do. I create a monthly report every month with public intersections. Not just arrests nor just criminal complaints. On everything we do. Public Interaction, Domestic, how many traffic stops we had, but also how many interactions we had with the public. Everything is contained on that sheet, anything of importance. We also do premise checks, which is part of our daily activity, even though it is not on the monthly report. We check businesses, residences on daily basis and if someone calls up and they want their residence checked we put it on the list and we check it.

Mayor asked is there anything more you can say about the training?

Chief Henderson stated we have been involved recently. I have sent all my guys to Principal Policing, which is what I have discussed with you earlier. I send them to any training that comes up that the don't have and I think is important to the Officers. There is mandatory training every year, including use of force. We do CPR training. Different training throughout the year I have sent people to. I have sent instructions to train, CPS Training, you name it I send it. We constantly keep a log; we have it at the station. I myself go to training every year and to keep up with accreditation we have to have a certain amount of Supervisory Training also.

Trustee Schneider asked in the pandemic situation, mental health is really taking an uptick. How do you know when you are responding to a call that you are responding to a mental health situation and what kind of a response team would you get so the police are policing the mental health really and someone who is qualified in mental health to help with the situation?

Chief Henderson replied they have mobile mental health. There are those resources at all times. So, we don't always necessarily know when we go to a situation that it is a mental health situation. As a matter of fact, we had one recently that was a domestic that we were going to which may have turned into a mental health. The guy has since passed away, but he had very serious mental health issues and several times we had worked with mental health and the ambulance to transport him to guarded health system to the Mount Health Facility. We were able to quell it, but it got a little violent, not on our end, on his end, but we worked with mental health to contain that and get him up there to get him safe, secure and have somebody to talk to. Do we know every time when we are going into a mental health situation? We do not, unless it is specifically told to us on the call. Sometimes we do have to determine for ourselves whether it is a mental health or whether it is a criminal situation. But we do work with mobile mental health on a regular basis. We have their telephone numbers. We call dispatch and they have their numbers. They have all the contacts. Any kind of crisis intervention they will come and talk. There was one time I sat there for about 2-3 hours while we were just talking with a subject, with mental health. It quelled him and calmed him down and we were able to leave the scene without any issues.

Trustee Chichester responded I know you have gone to a lot of the National Conventions and Police Chief Conventions and I know you interact with a lot of other Departments. Would you be able to talk a little bit about something you brought back from that, that have kept the Department up to standards that maybe you haven't thought of before you haven't been to some of these events?

Chief Henderson replied over the eight years there have been several things. A matter of fact I use to discuss with the Mayor when I would come back with ideas and stuff. A lot of times there are ideas of good equipment that will help the guys and the community and resources. Grant opportunities that I will discuss. There are a lot of vendors there that are able to discuss. Public Interaction, we do talk about the cases that do go on throughout the Country. Whether it is a George Floyd case, Ferguson Missouri case and any of those cases. They may have a presentation on it. We will discuss how we can do things better. A lot of that is integrated through our training throughout the year. Principal Policing and such. Some of the stuff I bring back and I talk to my guys about it on an individual basis. It all depends on where we go, but we do bring back stuff and we do discuss it.

Trustee Chichester responded I think that is important.

Mr. Kelly – Oxford Lane asked do you respond to a lot of emergencies, like ambulance calls? Are you obligated to? if someone has a heart attack or stroke or something? Do you respond to those to give support?

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Chief Henderson replied 100%. Even through COVID if it was a serious medical condition like a heart attack my guys are required to act to try to save their life. That is a risk we have to take. Minor medical issues we will respond during COVID and we will stay outside if it is something that can be handled by the ambulance. We respond to every single medical call and we will assist when needed, absolutely.

Trustee Schneider asked how does the Police Department handle sexual assaults in the community?

Chief Henderson replied we would handle them as a criminal case. As far as dealing with the victim?

Trustee Schneider responded as far as dealing with the victim?

Chief Henderson replied they have SAR Teams that will come out that will deal with the sexual assault response teams. They are through the County; they are funded, and we will work closely with them so they will respond out if we have a situation like that. We will also again, deal with the Mobile Mental Health if it is needed. We will bring them in. This is on top of course treating it like a criminal investigation which we will of course do at all costs. We do have professionals in the County that will come in. We are not specifically trained as SAR peoples or a part of that team. We are more the criminal end, but we will bring them in to respond and to deal with the victims.

Mr. Welle – Church Street – I want to add in regard to what the Chief said about the hiring process. The State goes out of their way to make it a very difficult process because Police Officer's are in a competitive position the Village has to go by a list and not always the higher scorer on the list is your best candidate. But the Village is bound by picking from the top three on the list, which at times creates more issues and for any one not knowing how it works it is a very difficult way of hiring people when you know that maybe the fourth or fifth highest score is a great candidate and somebody in the top three isn't necessarily. They just scored well.

Mayor Medina responded that is actually a civil service hiring standard. So it applies to all positions. But it has the worst impact against the Police Department, so it is not practical to apply it in the same way there.

Mr. Welle replied yes.

Chief Henderson stated sometimes you have to go out and do a recruiting process to try and find good individuals because at the end of the day you can do a background investigation and you can do a stringent background investigation and until that person works you don't always know what you have. I would like to say that 99% of Police Officers are good Police Officer's, but there is always that 1% and you try to avoid them or weed them out. But I can guarantee that if we get one, they will be weeded out. That is a guarantee. Also, going back to what you said Bruce, on training, I also do goals and objectives every year. They are goals and methods on how to obtain those goals and what the end results are. I bring a lot of this stuff back from that training. Specifically, each year, I put them in these goals and objectives, and we move forward with them. One of the goals was getting a fingerprint photo imaging, which is an Officer safety situation for us because we were transporting them to Woodbury to get finger printing and processing done. Sergeant Levison, was instrumental in gaining that funding and being able to contain that, which we were trying to do for several, several years. A lot of that knowledge and the equipment we looked at all comes from those conferences also.

Trustee Schneider asked how does the Police Department in a world of today, where you have the George Floyd situation that set off like a fire going through the Country at times. How do you guys go about protecting yourselves when you respond to a call so no fault allocations could be made? Is there any way?

Chief Henderson replied I would like to say what has happened in Minnesota doesn't always happen in New York. I don't want to really compare apples to oranges. Again, 99% of Police are good and 1% may

do something that is bad, right and they are going to pay the price for it. Which they should and I hope with our training here in Harriman and I have a very high standard, my stringent standards are very high. They know that. The guys know how to interact with the public. We just try to treat everybody with respect. There is nothing sometimes that we could do, to be perfectly honest, when you get into an

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altercation, other than use what you know in your training as far as your use of force training. Try to talk them down, use your steps, do not ever cross the line when the line doesn't need to be crossed. I mean, make sure you take care of that person like you would take care of a family member at all costs. Sometimes you are not able to do that and I am not talking about the George Floyd incident. There are other incidents where weapons are pulled. The use of force has to escalate, that is part of our job. But hopefully our training will preclude anything of that happening. Hopefully, we never have a George Floyd incident and hopefully no other Departments around here has a George Floyd incident. We don't ever want to see that.

Trustee Schneider stated I live in Lexington Hill, so I have seen a lot of different situations that you guys have responded to and all of your Officer's have been very respectful. From rescuing racoons to rescuing old ladies on steps having asthma attacks to what seemed like domestic violence and I have seen it all and I have seen them all very, very respectful.

Chief Henderson replied thank you. Now that we are done, I do always have an open door. So, anybody who wants to come to the Police Department and wants to speak with me. I am always there. I am there very early. My door is open to the public as well as Village Members all the time.

Mayor Medina replied good to know. Thank you Chief. Who continued stating our next steps are:

The Chief and I will work on a draft document that will be sent to all Panel members, on or before Feb 16th. We ask that you respond back with your comments to the draft by March 2nd. We will update with all comments to finalize a Draft on or before March 8th that will be posted on the Village website. Will then hold a Public Hearing on March 9th for public comment.

Mr. Mitchell – Oxford Lane stated as a Police Officer and obviously a black person in America I get to see it from both ends and I have to say credit goes to our Police Department and our Community as a whole for working together because this is a phenomenal community and I think that everyone who lives in the community and the Police who Police it deserves a lot of credit for this community being what it is.

Trustee Daly replied I agree and thank you.

Mayor Medina responded that was a good way to end the night, thank you very much.

MOTION was made by Trustee Daly to end Special Board Meeting at 7:40pm.
SECOND was made by Trustee Schneider
ALL IN FAVOR

Respectfully submitted by: _____
Jane Leake, Village Clerk