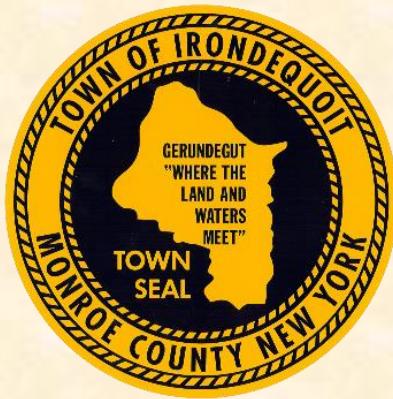


Town of Irondequoit POLICE REFORM & REINVENTION PLAN



Adopted pursuant to
Governor's Executive Order 203

March, 2021



"Dedicated to Service"



March 30th, 2021

Dear Irondequoit Community Members,

The Irondequoit Police Department is an agency that has defined itself as being dedicated to service. This dedication is evident in how we police our community and through the adoption of community policing as a philosophy, not simply as a talking point. We have worked tirelessly to provide a professional and legitimate level of policing to our residents, businesses, and community at large. That said, we humbly recognize the constant need for improvement, especially in the fragile moment our society finds itself, where the foundation of trust between law enforcement and the community it serves is under threat.

Executive Order #203 was signed by Governor Cuomo in June of 2020, charging all municipalities in New York State with police agencies to look both within and to engage with their communities to assess the current state of law enforcement and create a blueprint for progress. Immediately thereafter, the Irondequoit Police Department, with the support of the Town Board, began engaging our community and our neighboring communities, for feedback on the level of police service provided by the agency. We identified stakeholders in our community through neighborhood forums, meetings with our faith-based community leaders, education professionals, online surveys, and social media outreach to determine the effectiveness of the Irondequoit Police Department and the services it renders. What is without dispute is the Department must continue to work hard at improving our relationships. It must continue to adapt to the needs of our community, the wants of our community, and the expectations of our community. This will build trust, legitimacy, and confidence with our constituents.

The Irondequoit Police Department and the Irondequoit Town Board are focused on rebuilding and strengthening the trust and confidence of the community through the goals and strategies that are outlined in this Police Reform and Reinvention Plan. IPD and the Town Board commits to reviewing and analyzing our policies, procedures, and training efforts, and to be transparent in doing so. It is our goal that the community we serve and the Officers that serve the community will have a shared vision of policing in Irondequoit, and a level of mutual respect will be attained through the efforts of all.

The Town of Irondequoit is committed to providing the level of policing that is expected from our community, and the Irondequoit Police Department will live up to that promise with professionalism, empathy, and dedication. We will continue to reflect on these values as we move forward with our philosophy of community policing. We are committed to this transparency with our residents, who deserve nothing less.

Sincerely,

Members of the Irondequoit Town Board &
Irondequoit Chief of Police, Alan Laird

INTRODUCTION

In May of 2015 the “Six Pillars of 21st Century Policing” were presented to President Obama, which in turn served as the foundation for Executive Order 203: New York State’s Police Reform and Reinvention Initiative, issued by Governor Cuomo in June, 2020. Executive Order 203 requires municipalities that have their own police agencies to self-evaluate their services, but also garner input from the community on the level of service that is provided. Starting in the Summer of 2020, The Town of Irondequoit, including the Irondequoit Police Department (hereafter, “also known as the IPD”), did both and identified several focus areas that demonstrate a commitment towards betterment and to provide the most professional police service to the Irondequoit community. Many of these areas overlapped the 21st Century Policing model as well, and are identified in this report as objectives to meet the charge levied by Executive Order 203.

This report, submitted pursuant to Executive Order 203, works off a foundation that has already been put in place by the Irondequoit Police Department to live up to its mission to protect and serve the community of Irondequoit. To date, this has included:

- ✓ Being the first town in Monroe County in 2018 to hold a forum on police-community relations that assessed the Irondequoit Police Department’s adoption of the Six Pillars of 21st Century Policing, which identified strategies for growth in that context. IPD issued a **Report to the Community** after compiling community feedback from a broad spectrum of stakeholders
- ✓ Deployment of Body Worn Cameras in 2019
- ✓ Adoption of a **Use-of-Force continuum** in the Department’s general orders
- ✓ Active participation in the newly formed **Irondequoit Commission Advancing Racial Equity (ICARE)**. As per the Town Board’s charge, the Chief of Police is an active member on the commission.
- ✓ Training opportunities for officers, including: implicit bias training and crisis intervention training (CIT). In 2020, IPD officers received a total of 3,439 hours of training, an average of 73 hours per officer. Over 40 unique training opportunities were offered covering a broad spectrum of issues, including: Implicit Bias Training, Crisis Intervention Training (CIT), Principled Policing, Field Training and Briefings on Changes to State Laws.

The following report is organized with the Six Pillars for 21st Century Policing as a compass. It is not structured in a direct overlay with those six pillars, but there is connective tissue throughout.

I) COMMUNITY TRUST, TRANSPARENCY, and ENGAGEMENT

Local and national events have sparked conversations around the trust and transparency of police agencies. The Irondequoit Police Department and Town Board recognizes the concerns from those we serve and are committed to being

transparent and building a greater trust with the Irondequoit community at large. The Irondequoit Police Department has been an Accredited Agency since 1991, meaning it meets or exceeds New York State's requirements for policy, procedures, and training. IPD has successfully been reaccredited every five years since. In 2021, it will be seeking another successful accreditation. Accreditation is a key element of ensuring the legitimacy of a police agency, but also must be complemented with other areas of concentration to maintain community trust, through transparency and engagement.

A) Communication Paths. The Irondequoit Police will make information available on numerous outlets for its constituents. It will make available information on mental health services, hiring opportunities, victim's assistance programs, and our policies and procedures. The information will be provided on the Towns website www.irondequoit.org. The IPD will continue to successfully utilize social media outlets to notify the community of events that are occurring, and engage the community in a meaningful way that demonstrates transparency and builds trust and common purpose. Furthermore, IPD will ensure that questions and inquiries received via social media are responded to promptly. The same is said for media inquiries.

B) Citizen Interactions. The Irondequoit Police will develop a survey to be provided randomly to the citizens that interact with the Department based upon a call for service. IPD will strive to have this survey answered by 500 residents a year. This survey will allow for the citizens to provide feedback in a timely manner to Command Staff. Additionally, beginning in 2022, every two years, the Town will fund a survey to be conducted through random sampling to ensure a representative cross-section of Irondequoit's voices are heard. The IPD must make a commitment to sustaining longstanding partnerships with the grassroot community groups identified above, such as the United Christian Leadership Ministry in the City of Rochester, as well as formulating stronger relationships with community groups like the 14621 Community Association, Irondequoit Eliminating Racism and Seeking Equity (ERASE), Action for a Better Community (ABC), NAACP, MPACT, Ibero American Action League, the Urban League of Rochester and other known organizations that support minority communities. Also, IPD must utilize the growing network of neighborhood associations in Irondequoit as a resource to connect with the community.

The Chief of Police will host events throughout the year that will allow the residents to provide feedback and ask general questions in an open and inviting climate. IPD will track the number of community events held annually and include such data in its annual report to the Town Board and community, at large.

C) Accountability. The Department and Town Board must continue to work to ensure that any resident or stakeholder who wishes to express concerns about a particular experience with the IPD is encouraged to do so. Consistent with current practice, IPD must continue to welcome such feedback and to ensure that there is an effective and transparent process for reviewing such citizen-generated complaints. The Town Board must also, if necessary, utilize its authority to review complaints regarding experiences with the Irondequoit Police Department, provided under State law.

D) Citizen Police Academy. The Irondequoit Police Department will host civilian police academies that will provide an opportunity for the community to learn more about law enforcement and participate in portions of the training the Officers receive. In addition to having the opportunity to see, firsthand, the training provided, the community will have the opportunity to evaluate this training and have open and frank conversations about their experiences. This will work to provide a foundation for future conversations surrounding law enforcement incidents that provide community stakeholders with a broader perspective on law enforcement.

E) Participation in Community Initiatives such as ICARE and Drug-Free Irondequoit Together. The Chief of Police will continue to be an active member in the Irondequoit Commission Advancing Racial Equity (ICARE), which was formed in 2020 to drive Irondequoit Town government and the Irondequoit community to be more diverse, equitable and inclusive. The IPD will continue to be an active and critical member in the Drug-Free Irondequoit (D-FI) Together coalition, which is a grassroots organization formed in 2016 committed to preventing addiction in Irondequoit, with particular focus on our community's youth. Furthermore, while the Chief is a valued partner in these initiatives, in order to develop a broader rapport, other IPD command staff members should be encouraged to participate in such initiatives as well.

F) Transparency. The Department will continue to comply with the administration of recent amendments to Section 50-A of the NYS Civil Service Law, particularly as it relates to requests for information that had long previously been considered confidential under State Law. As it has done in the past, the Department will maintain a commitment to being responsive to such requests, generally submitted through the State's Freedom of Information Law. If there are cases where the Attorney to the Town does believe that certain information shall not

be released pursuant to State Law, the IPD/Town shall commit to providing thorough explanations to the requesting party.

The IPD Annual Plan provides a variety of information relative to the performance of the Department. At present, the report does include information regarding community events and the number of citizen attendees. The report should also include the number of officers who attended such events.

The Town Board and IPD must remain committed to reviewing the efficacy of the Body Worn Camera program, put into place in 2019, to determine if it is meeting the goals established and that there is overall compliance with the policies governing their use.

G) Oversight. The Town Board must also play a role in providing oversight. Working with the IPD, at the end of every fiscal year, the Town Board should furnish a report that includes data specific to the Department's efforts to bolster diversity, equity and inclusion. This report should include data that is currently provided to the NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) that reports crime and arrest statistics by age, race and residency. While this information is available to the public pursuant to the Freedom of Information Law, the Town Board should recognize the impact of the proactive reporting of such information. Furthermore, the Town Board's report should also include information relative to the number of Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) serving the Department, both as sworn officers and the civilian staff.

II) HIRING AND DIVERSIFICATION OF THE IPD

The Town of Irondequoit serves a community that continues to grow more diverse. In 2000, non-white residents represented only 7.5% of Irondequoit population. The number is expected to approach 20% in the 2020 census. This is to be welcomed and celebrated. Such diversity is found among Irondequoit's residents, it business owners, as well as the many stakeholders from neighboring communities who spend time in Irondequoit. To better serve the community, the Irondequoit Police Department must reflect the community that it protects. At present, this is not the case- a problem that this report recognizes must be remedied. As the body responsible for hiring and promoting officers, the Town Board accepts responsibility for this lack of diversity and commits to working with the IPD to change this reality.

A) Recruitment. The Irondequoit Police Department and Town Board are committed to recruiting quality candidates for Officer. It will work with the civil service commission to better advertise the exams for police officers. As previously mentioned in communication tactics, IPD will

utilize all available opportunities to publicize these positions. The IPD will forge and maintain efforts with our local schools and different work force agencies and workforce sectors to engage with members who are interested in a career in law enforcement and utilize appropriate platforms to publicize these positions.

B) Building Partnerships. The IPD must continue to recognize the value of building collaborative partnerships with stakeholder groups that will, among other positive things, bolster the Department's recruitment efforts and build trust. IPD should continue to value partnerships not only with Irondequoit-based organizations, but those that serve the City of Rochester, particularly in the 14621 and 14609 zip codes. IPD must also promote opportunities in the Department through media outlets that acutely target BIPOC communities, such as : The Minority Reporter, LaVoz Bilingual newspaper, Poder 97.1 FM, etc.

C) School-based partnerships. A partnership that has been established with the local high schools will be expanded to include high schools from bordering districts, with specific focus on schools within the City of Rochester. This will be a two-fold approach. It will not only focus on those interested in becoming Police Officers, but also to provide opportunities for the civilian staff personnel that are essential to IPD. The Department must continue to build on the already-existing affiliation agreement with the Criminal Justice program at Monroe Community College (MCC), recognizing the valuable pipeline this program provides for potential recruitment. Opportunities to expand the MCC partnership to other area colleges should also be assessed, particularly those with higher BIPOC enrollment, such as SUNY Brockport.

D) Changes in civil service. The Irondequoit Police will continue to work with other police agencies from across the state of New York, our community voices, and elected officials to make the civil service process more equitable for all candidates. At the very least, this should include expansion of the home rule civil service list to include all portions of a zip code that are a part of the Town of Irondequoit. This would allow for greater recruitment in the 14609 and 14621 zip codes, including portions found in the City of Rochester that are more diverse. Changes should also be made to provide municipalities more flexibility on the "Rule of Three," which traditionally has allowed employers to hire from the top three scoring individuals who take a civil service test.

E) Test preparation. The Irondequoit Police will work with our school districts to provide opportunities for students who wish to prepare for the civil service examination. Members of the IPD will provide their

success stories and tools they used to prepare for and score on the test to make themselves reachable on the civil service examination list. IPD will commit to providing support for not just the written examination, but also for the physical agility portion of the examination process.

F) Civil service lists. The Irondequoit Police Department will explore both the general civil service list, as well as the home rule list, to find the best candidates for positions within the agency. There is a recognized benefit to having officers and employees of the police department that have a long-term connection to the Town. As such, the general civil service list should still be utilized given it will be drawn from a pool of prospective candidates that have a strong connection to the Town of Irondequoit, particularly those recruits who have grown up in Irondequoit, but moved to nearby communities.

III) TRAINING AND EVALUATION

At present, officers with the Irondequoit Police Department go through extensive training during the academy phase of their employment. Furthermore, they are provided with exceptional and up-to-date professional development training opportunities throughout their career as IPD officers. Better-trained Officers will become better Officers; and better Officers will be better public servants to their community. Training opportunities must also reflect the Department's commitment to helping ensure anti-racism continues to be held in principal and practice throughout the Irondequoit community, something that can be demonstrated through continuing to incorporate unconscious bias training into the overall training portfolio offered to Officers and staff. Training objectives listed below are a key pillar to IPD's success as an agency.

A) Annual training. Members of the Irondequoit Police Department will continue to participate in the required annual training set forth by New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) in the areas of Use of Force, Penal Law Article 35, and firearms training. At present, this mandated training listed above amounts to approximately 16 hours for each officer. IPD will increase training opportunities in the areas of implicit bias, cultural awareness, mental health, and effectively working with marginalized communities, make this training available to all sworn officers and set minimum requirements for such additional training.

B) Guardian Mindset. Through personal community engagement, public forums, and input during community surveys, it was overwhelming cited that citizens want a guardian mindset for the Officers. The IPD has identified this as a priority for the agency. Command Officers have already attended DCJS-provided training in the area of "Principled

Policing" and they will be tasked with preparing the program specifically-tailored for the members of the IPD. While it is important for the members of the IPD to maintain a "warrior mode" in their toolbox for those potential life threatening critical incidents, IPD must continue to build into its core values the need for the guardian mindset in its interaction with all community members, especially BIPOC, youth, special needs individuals and those in police custody. The guardian mindset should enhance the effectiveness of the aforementioned training opportunities relative to implicit bias, cultural awareness, etc.,.

- C) Use of Force & De-Escalation Strategies.** The IPD already has a Use of Force Continuum as part of its General Orders. It will continue to work with the MCC Public Safety Training Facility to provide use of force, de-escalation and mental health training opportunities that emphasize cultural awareness. Furthermore, IPD will implement training to teach officer to intervene as bystanders when they perceive their peers are doing something wrong. Examples of this include the Active Bystandership for Law Enforcement (ABLE) Project created by the Georgetown University Law School, which aims to create a police culture where officers intervene, when necessary, to: prevent misconduct, avoid mistakes and promote officer health and wellness.
- D) Outside agency opportunities.** The Irondequoit Police Department will look to vendors from across the area to provide training in areas that are not police specific. As the scope of law enforcement changes so does the need for our training opportunities. Training opportunities from faith-based communities, advocacy groups, and culturally specific groups will be explored.
- E) Evaluation process.** The performance appraisal and evaluation of the members of the Irondequoit Police Department will be reviewed and redeveloped. The process will include a self-evaluation, more in-depth employee development, and analysis of performance-based incidents. The evaluation process must place emphasis on department personnel's understanding of implicit bias and competency in crisis intervention. The Town Board should conduct an annual review of all complaints filed against officers as part of the overall evaluation process to help determine the efficacy of training.
- F) Senior Officer Program.** Those Officers who show a desire to coach and mentor younger Officers will be identified by Department leadership as candidates for Senior Officers. If these Officers wish to participate, they will be utilized as coaches and mentors for younger Officers to instill the adopted values of the Irondequoit Police Department for that younger Officers' professional development. This will also prepare the

designated Senior Officers for their role as a Supervisor should they desire to and attain leadership roles within the Irondequoit Police Department. This would be a collaborative effort between the Irondequoit Police Department and the Nightstick Club PBA, if so desired.

IV) COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

For decades the Irondequoit Police have had a strong community engagement program. These programs have focused on building trust with all those who IPD serves. IPD is committed to maintaining those relationships but to also look at ways to expand our relationships with those communities that border ours. Neighboring community members are often traveling into Irondequoit for their daily activities such as shopping, professional appointments, and banking. It is just as important to IPD as public servants to be aware of these communities and cognizant of its responsibility to serve everyone equally, professionally, with empathy, and with dedication. From past surveys and community events, IPD learned that its community desires the opportunity to meet with our members outside of the normal course of police related calls for service. The community needs and wants personal relationships with Officers, and IPD should strive to attain that goal with the following objectives:

- A. Policy group discussions.** The Irondequoit Police Department will host events to discuss our policies and procedures with the public. These discussions will explain why certain steps are taken due to laws, collective bargaining agreements, and due process for all involved. An opportunity for the members of the group to provide feedback will be allotted as well.
- B. Annual Community Forum.** To build off the success of previous community forums that have focused on the Six Pillars of 21st Century Policy, IPD should make a commitment to hosting an annual community meeting. This forum would provide an update on the Department's implementation of its Six Pillars plan, developed in 2019. This will continue to generate community input and buy-in to this important plan. This forum should also provide residents the opportunity to review the Department's budget to ensure it is aligned with the priorities of the community.
- C. Increased participation in outside agency community events.** The IPD will collaborate with groups outside of law enforcement to participate in their community events, open houses, and job fairs. Members from all different ranks and job responsibilities of the Irondequoit Police will be asked to participate in these events to provide a full spectrum of availability of our members.

D. Adopt a school. The adopt a school program will be expanded to include after school events such as sports and clubs. The Officers assigned to the schools will walk the schools or attend events after school hours to build personnel relationships with the youth of the Town of Irondequoit. IPD should seek opportunities to extend elements of the AAS Program into schools on the northside of the City of Rochester. It will be more challenging to have a formalized program, but IPD should look to partner with the Rochester Police Department Community Affairs Bureau to establish relationships in City schools.

E. More visible patrol options. The Irondequoit Police Department will research and determine the best options for patrol divisions within the Town. This will be done to ensure that each area of the town is receiving the utmost, high visible service from the IPD.

F. Irondequoit Community Center & Irondequoit Recreation. Space that has been dedicated at the new Irondequoit Community Center to the IPD will be utilized for a variety of services offered by the agency. These services will include, but not be limited to: the ability to take reports, community outreach, and planned community meetings. The Department must furthermore utilize the consistently growing network of residents – young and old – served by Irondequoit Recreation to forge new connections with the community. This can range from IPD involvement in youth recreation programming to a more defined relationship with the Senior center.

G. Adaptability. The COVID-19 Pandemic has presented challenges to the IPD's commitment to community engagement, much of which has historically relied on in-person connection. IPD has looked to adapt to a more virtual aspect of community engagement. For instance, the "Adopt a Grandparent" program with St. Ann's Community provided the opportunity for IPD officers to connect with older residents during the heart of the pandemic. Furthermore, IPD has been a frequent participant in socially-distanced community events, most notably the many "drive by" celebrations that residents have conducted for birthdays and other life milestones. In 2020, the annual National Night Out event, normally attended by hundreds of residents, was conducted virtually through a series of video presentations. Even post COVID, IPD must continue to embrace technology as a means to further enhance its traditional community engagement tactics.

V) CRISIS INTERVENTION/OFFICER WELLNESS

The Irondequoit Police Department has joined every law enforcement agency in Monroe County to advocate for changes in the mental health support system.

These changes must include a multi-faceted approach. There needs to be collaboration between the law enforcement community, the mental health community, and government programs at all levels to help with this initiative.

Numerous comments have been made to the IPD through surveys, emails, public social media statements, and community forums that this area is paramount in importance to the people who are served by the Department. There is an exceptional relationship between the Irondequoit Police Department and the Monroe County Forensic Intervention Team, and IPD must remain committed to maintaining the partnership.

A) Crisis Intervention Training (CIT). Currently, approximately twenty (20%) percent of the members of the Irondequoit Police Department are trained in crisis intervention. The Department has committed to having all of our members received this valuable training by the end of 2022. This will start with those Officers assigned to road patrol divisions and will ultimately include all members. Ultimately, each officer will receive 40 hours of training for CIT certification and will then be required to receive 8 hours of annual training thereafter. This training will cover a variety of topics relative to mental health and emotional emergencies.

B) Officer Wellness. The Irondequoit Police will review and revamp its current Employee Assistance general order. This will include a complete overhaul of the policy and creation of an officer wellness program. We will work with outside resources to provide the critical services to our employees. The role of law enforcement requires our members to be exposed to very stressful and sometimes very difficult calls for service that can affect them in very profound ways. The IPD is dedicated to providing support for its Officers and support staff and will make the necessary investment in resources to provide for their well-being.

For sworn members, IPD will continue regular check-ins with its employees, not just after a critical incident and provide continuous reminders of the support services that are available. IPD will identify opportunities for our supervisors (both civilian and sworn) to attend training in wellness training opportunities. It will remain a priority to provide our civilian (non-sworn officer) leaders the information and training necessary to assist their employees both professionally and to provide support during any personal crisis that may arise. Training opportunities under the Wellness umbrella will include, but not be limited to: CIT, crisis negotiation, anti-racism, implicit bias, cultural awareness and physical fitness.

C) Critical Incident review. Command staff members will be required to provide not only a tactical debrief of any critical incident, but a mental well-being check in on the Officers involved in these incidents. Command staff members will be provided with the resources to give this support to Officers should they determine it is needed, or if the Officer asks for it. This includes using the Town's Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and Monroe County Peer Support Groups.

D) Training. Training opportunities will be researched for all staff members to attend in officer wellness. These trainings will be vetted to be specific to those that are law enforcement specific. The aforementioned ABLE Project is an opportunity to ensure officer wellness is not just a focus and concern, but that evidence-based and peer-driven strategies are embedded into the overall Department training program.

CONCLUSION

When the report from the Presidents task force on 21st Century Policing was issued, it was adopted promptly by the Irondequoit Police Department. While IPD has taken great strides over the years to maintain the Department's professional service and seek to better represent all members of the Irondequoit Community in an equitable manner, it must continue to self-evaluate its performance, and also welcome feedback from external stakeholders. The objectives set forth in this plan are a start towards this improvement and the Irondequoit Police Department is committed to continue this self-assessment and to listen to the Irondequoit community to better serve and protect everyone. This report represents a foundation for progress. As objectives are met, IPD will revisit the goals and strategies outlined above, and continue to improve as an agency. The Town Board has committed to an annual review of this plan, both with regards to compliance and to whether further amendments are warranted.