

**Village of Athens, NY**

**New York State Police Reform and  
Reinvention Collaborative**

**Implementation Plan**

Proposed:

10 March 2021

Adopted Via Resolution:

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## **Executive Summary**

This is the Village of Athen's response to Gov. Andrew Cuomo's Executive Order 203 regarding police procedures. The Plan below reflects a formal, collaborative process that meets or exceeds the tenets of the Executive Order. This Plan will be submitted to the Athens Village Board for adoption via resolution prior to April 1, 2021. The Village of Athens welcomes Executive Order 203 mandating that the Police Chief and I lead a thorough review of police operations and policies in consultation with the community we serve. The work of our Police Force is highly dependent on trust and relationships between the police and Village residents. The recommendations put forth in this document are aimed at strengthening the relationship between the police and all members of the community it serves. It is intended that regular review/revision of the policing policies and training will ensure that the relationship between police and community remains strong.



Stephan Bradicich  
Village Mayor  
Athens, NY

# Village of Athens, NY

## New York State Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative Implementation Plan

### Executive Order 203

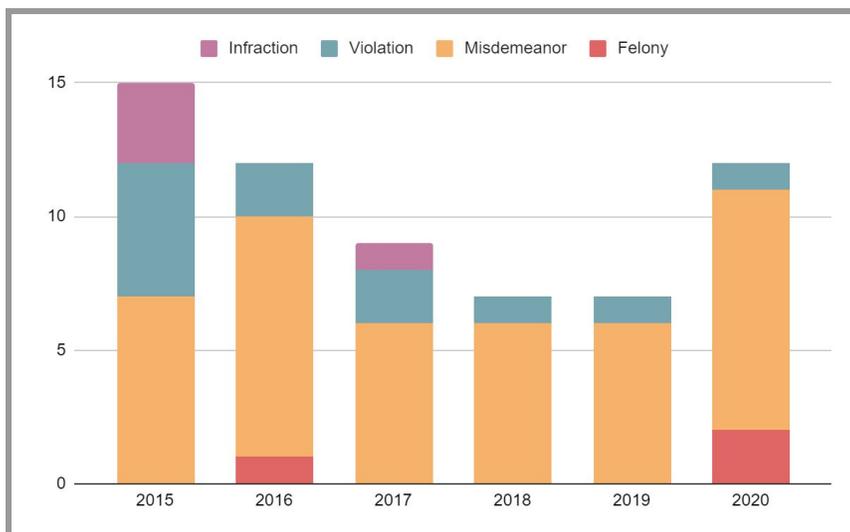
[Executive Order 203](#) requires that the Police Chief and Mayor engage stakeholders in a review of policing strategies, policies, procedures, and practices, and develop a plan to improve such strategies, policies, procedures, and practices for the purpose of addressing the particular needs of the community that the police agency serves. The plan shall promote community engagement to foster trust, fairness, and legitimacy, and address any racial bias and disproportionate policing of communities of color. E.O. 203 requires the Police Chief and Mayor incorporate public input into a draft reform plan, present this plan to the public for comments, revise accordingly, and then present the plan to the Village Board for review and adoption prior to April 1, 2021. See link above for full text of E.O. 203.

### Police background information

#### Current force

The Athens Police Department consists of 15 Police Officers. All current officers are male; 14 are white, 1 is black. There have been female and other black officers employed by the Athens Police in the past. The Department strives to employ a diverse group of officers. All Officers have been hired in accordance with NYS Civil Service law under competitive hiring rules as administered by Greene County Civil Service Commission.

#### Arrest & incident data



This data represents those arrests made by the Athens Police Department while on duty but are indicative of only a small part of the routine duties carried out by the department. Athens Police are also instrumental in assisting State and County Officers when those resources are called in to make arrests or to investigate incidents in the Village. Additionally, significant numbers of home visits, vehicle lock-outs or responses to local disturbances are a crucial part of the day-to-day responsibilities of the Department.

### **Current pertinent information on Athens policing**

To aid in discussion of issues pertaining to police management, it is useful to consider the present status of Athens police programs and activities relevant to police reform and accountability.

**Choke Holds:** Choke holds and carotid holds are not permitted under Athens Police Department policy.

**Duty to Intervene:** Under current Police Department policy, Officers have a duty to intervene when excessive force is being used and must report this to a supervisor.

**Use of Force Documentation:** All uses of force are documented, reviewed by Sergeant, Lieutenant, and Chief, and the NYS Department of Criminal Justice Services is notified.

**Body Cameras:** Athens Police Department does not currently utilize any official Department-owned cameras. Current policies allow individual Officers to utilize personal cameras on duty. The Officer is responsible for release and retention of any video or audio recording in accordance with Department Policy.

**Mental Health/Crisis Intervention:** Police are frequently called to manage people in mental distress, and partnerships with other agencies are key to success. The Police Department uses Columbia Memorial Hospital for obtaining mental health treatment for those in crisis and works with Greene County Mental Health Department and other community resources to collaborate to make the necessary resources available to those in need.

**Complaints:** Civilian complaint forms are available at Police Station and on the Village's website. If people are uncomfortable addressing their concerns within the complaint process, they are encouraged to bring their concern to another police agency for referral to the Village, such as the NYS Police or the County District Attorney.

**Use of Social Media:** The Athens Police Department does not currently utilize any specific social media outlets. The Department has provided information to be posted on the Village of Athens Facebook page relating to citizen advisories and some department news.

### **Current training information**

The Athens Police currently trains its Police Officers in Use of Force, Firearms and Workplace Violence on an annual basis. Training records are maintained by the

Department as well as submitted to the State. Choke holds and carotid holds are specifically banned in current policy and training.

### **Police Budget**

The Athens Police Department operates on a current fiscal year budget of \$126,080.76. This allows for a Police Officer working a minimum of 8 hours, generally, from 4PM to 12PM daily. A School Resource Officer is funded on a daily basis when the Athens Elementary School is in session. Additional shifts are staffed as the budget allows or for special events (Street Festival, parades, etc.). \$26,000 of the current Police budget is used to maintain the Police Department's 3 vehicles, 2 bicycles, computer system, office supplies, uniforms and other specialized equipment.

### **Establishment of the Athens Police Advisory Committee**

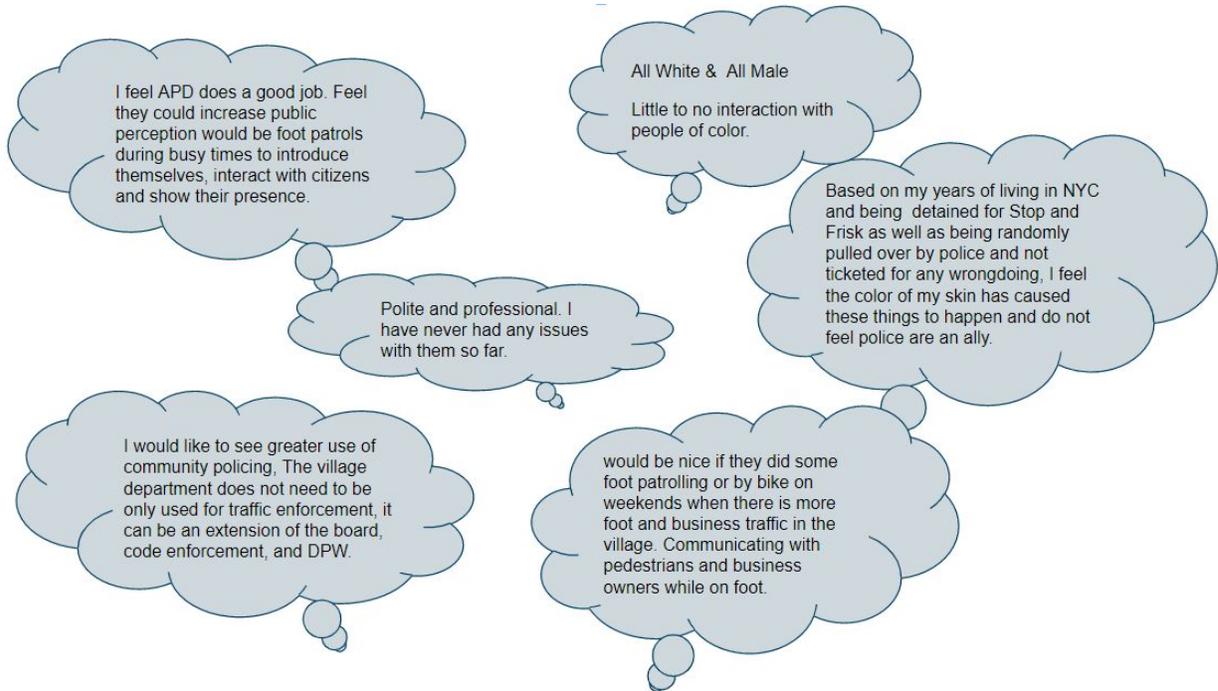
In response to Executive Order 203, the Village Mayor curated a diverse representation of members of the community for the Athens Police Advisory Committee. They all have different perspectives and different backgrounds, but a commitment to working together in future-proofing Athens policing to ensure fairness and inclusion.

The committee is comprised of:

- Stephan Bradicich: Mayor of the Village of Athens
- Roger Masse: Athens Chief of Police
- Gail Lasher: Board of Trustees, Athens
- Guy Griggs: Village resident
- Nancy Poylo: Village resident
- Charles Edwards: Village resident
- Jim Martino: Athens Elementary School Principal
- Marcus McGregor: Village resident
- Ellen Roth: Village resident
- Joe Puorro: Local small business owner
- Leo Palmateer: Village resident
- Ed Tercasio: Athens Police Sergeant

### **Initial thoughts of Committee**

The committee started by capturing the initial impressions of the Athens Police based on the personal experiences of the committee members:



Based on these initial thoughts the Committee agreed that there were no serious concerns with the Athens Police. The belief of the Committee was that we were “90% there” and wanted to close the remaining 10%. The Committee saw the need for an emphasis on community- based policing and wanted to ensure that the work done by the team would be sustainable for the future.

The Committee enlisted the services of former NYC Police Officer and Trainer Heather Brook Perkins (Perkins Instructional Consulting LLC) who provided insight on bias in policing and procedural justice which was extremely helpful in guiding the team towards final recommendations.

## **Committee recommendations**

### **Policy review**

As per the requirements of Executive Order #203, the Committee has begun reviewing the policies currently in place with the Athens Police Department. Due to the high number of policies, the Committee has established initial priorities for review. Initial high priority policies will be reviewed over the course of the current year with additional reviews to follow by the Police Advisory Committee.

Article 5, “Mission, Goals, and Objectives”; as well as Article 52, “Use of Force” are the two highest priority articles to address non-bias.

Projected completion date: Amendments will be made to articles 5 & 52 and presented to the Village Board by April 1st. The Committee will review a total of 10 articles by Dec 31st 2021, and then to review all articles throughout 2022 in an effort to ensure all policies are written through a lens of diversity and inclusion.

### **Community Policing**

The Athens Police Department will engage and interact with the community to solve community problems and will ensure that all pertinent Department policies support the strategy of community policing. Community policing is a process of better sharing of information and values by the police and the community through partnerships of mutual trust, respect, disclosure and shared values reinforced through regular interaction and feedback. A community policing approach calls upon police to assist in solving community-based problems, and as appropriate, become community advocates.

Elements of the proposed Community Policing Policy include:

- a) Increased community engagement through more walking/ biking patrols, building relationships with local businesses, and required officer participation in engagement events.
- b) Increased use of social media to improve Department transparency and two-way communications with residents.
- c) Problem solving directly with businesses or residents to highlight where areas of concern exist, developing a strategy to address concerns, and following-up to ensure action has been taken to mitigate these concerns.

Projected completion date: Draft policy written and submitted to Village Board & public review by May 28, 2021

### **Enhancing training requirements**

The Committee determined that enhanced implicit bias and de-escalation training would benefit the Department. The Athens Police Department currently maintains an in-house training staff of 3 NYS Certified Police Instructors and will collaborate with other Police agencies and the Zone 15 and Zone 5 training academies to enhance the more demanding training needs of the future. Proposed training enhancements include:

Implement mandatory online and classroom training for all Officers on de-escalation and implicit bias, in addition to current yearly training on Use of Force and Firearms and workplace violence as prescribed by NYS DCJS.

Projected completion date: October 2021

Work closely with Greene County Sheriffs and neighboring Municipal Police Departments to participate in County-wide training courses on Procedural Justice, Crisis Intervention and Officer Wellness.

Projected completion date: December 31, 2021

Continue on-the-job training with all Officers on the culture of the Athens Police Department - aiding and assisting residents in our community.

Projected completion date: Ongoing

Set up online training to reinforce understanding of all in-person training. Schedule to be determined by the Supervisor. Records of training will be kept online and reviewed quarterly by Village Board liaison.

Projected completion date: Schedule to be set up by June 2021. This is already partially implemented and available for Police Officers

### **Establishing a Civilian Oversight Committee**

The Committee proposes the establishment of an Athens Police Advisory Committee for the Village of Athens that will provide routine civilian review of the policies and procedures of the police force. Members of the Police Advisory Committee will be appointed to 2-year terms by the Mayor and will consist of a diverse group of individuals who have their primary residence within the Village of Athens. They will meet bi-annually with The Mayor and Chief of Police to review incidences, articles, community policing, hiring, and training - to support implementation through the lens of diversity, equality, and inclusion, while providing transparency to the community they serve.

In order to provide continuity, the expectation is that this proposed Committee will consist of many of the same members of the Committee that is submitting this plan.

Projected completion date: Proposed law written and submitted to Village Board by October 31, 2021

### **Police hiring and Civil Service Test demographics**

The Athens Police Department hires from the pool of candidates provided by the Greene County Civil Service Testing. Data provided from the 2017 & 2019 Civil Service demographics indicate a lack of diversity in the available pool:

Municipality	Male	Female	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian/Pacific Islander	American Indian/Aleutian	Unknown
Greene Co. Exam 69851 (2017)	65	12	68	1	6	2	0	3
Greene Co. Exam 62624 (2019)	51	19	61	1	5	3	0	8

**Recommendations:**

- State and County officials update current civil service laws to allow older candidates to compete in competitive civil services exams. Current laws restrict the candidate pool to less than 30 years of age or 36 years of age with 6 years of military service. This reduces the pool of candidates available.
- The State of New York should capitalize on the efforts to drive inclusion on State and Local Police Forces to establish an advertising/ public service campaign aimed at increasing the diversity of Civil Service Candidates.