

Comments from the public at the Tarrytown Forum on Police held on June 24, 2020.

Attendees for June 24, 2020 – 7:30 p.m. public forum

5-minute time limit

Staff and Elected Officials: Drew, Tom, Becky, Bobby, Doug, Karen, Paul, John, Josh, Carol, Kathy, Rich

There were 83 persons in attendance by approximately 8 p.m. The list is as follows:

Phone numbers: X0357; X9209; X3227; X0767

Persons in attendance: County Executive George Latimer, Alice Koraca, Allie Meizlish, AM, Amanda, Amanda F-C, Amanda Pollina, Amy Warden, Ana Lopez, Andrew, Angela Martello, Ann Neilsen, Anne Richards, Anneliese, Barbara, Bob Kimmel, Broadcast Feed, Carla Pellicci, Cecelia Hargrave, Channorris, Charles Scheiner and Jill Sternberg, Chris, Christina Kharem and Liam Kharem, Dana, David Kim, David Roberts, Deborah Flood, Detective, Dianne Fahy, Doug, Felicia Atanasio, Fergus O, Fiat Torstrup, Gabby, Galaxy, Giselle, Harry, Heather Haggerty, IY, Jack McLaughlin, Jacqueline Volkell, Jazz, Jennifer, Jipad, Joe Cesarano, John Brady, Judith Mezey, Katharine Swibold, Kathy A. Kaufman, Katie Scully, Kelsey Padgett, Kerry Salvatierra, Ketchwehr, Kimberly Saez-Montez, Lee, Lissette Mendez Boyer, Lori Semeraro, Lorraine Zollo, Lynn Goodman, Maylien Herm, miasti, Michael Klein, Michael Witkowski, Michelle Defilippis, Mike Wisniewski, Nancy Breen, Patrol, Rachael Ricker, Rob Wingate, Samantha Sperber and Sitara Herur, Sara Levine, Sarah, Steven Brady, Stew Schectman, Valerie Giliberti, Vanessa S (She/her), Yelice, Zachary Rozenblat, Daniel Schwacter

1. Alice Koraca – could not speak
2. Anneliese Galgano – live on High Street in the south end of Tarrytown. Have been a resident, have been born and raised in Tarrytown. Any allegations of racial discrimination in recent years? Chief – One person claimed they were pulled over because of their race. How has morale affected morale of the current police officers? Chief – Morale has been at an all time low. Have been working with the Mayor and Board to try and address that. We have been commented on, and have gone from heroes and zeroes in a matter of moments. We had a horrible tragedy, and the officers in the department are trying to understand why. AG – thank you for making us feel safe.
3. Jill Sternberg – couple and sharing Zoom. Recently moved to Tarrytown last November. Thank you for being proactive and doing this right after the Governor’s Call. Work in restorative justice. Try to create an environment that is healing for all involved. How often have the police fired or drawn their guns? Wonder about the high ratio of police to population. Have to ask about transparency. Mayor has said this is an ongoing process. Want to know if the Village will share policies and practices. Will you share training materials? Beyond implicit

bias, what are you doing to understand bias? I understand the demoralization the police are experiencing. But the police have been the enforcers of the racist policies of our government. What does community policing mean to you, and how can that be expanded in Tarrytown? Chief – as far as firing of guns, it's very few and far between, other than euthanize an animal. We do have officers who are on a multi-jurisdictional SWAT team. I am for breaking things down and sharing policies, but don't want to make certain procedures public so that we don't put officers in danger. Jill - How are you going to make changes to systemic racism that has been the basis for our society and white privilege? Chief explanation

4. Nancy Breen – live in Tarrytown, 1302 Crescent Drive, Tarrytown. Have been here for about 5 years and moved here from New England. Thank you to the police department as have had a number of falls and needs. Issues that affect all of us. She would like to see more women as officers, and have more training.

5. Michael Klein – recently moved to Tarrytown in January – Chief mentions 34 officers; budget; how interact with black lives matter endeavors. Have officers interact with the crowd and be there. Kenzi – that is our constitutional right.

6. Diane Torstrup – live on Martling. Involved with Pre-Trial Westchester, and participate in Westchester for Change. Shouldn't you have someone who can translate this into Spanish? How are you going to address community dissatisfaction? How are community people going to be involved in relevant decision-making process. Chief – would support other meetings like this, perhaps smaller meetings. Drew – this is the beginning, the first step. There is an outline that we can anticipate. We will have large meetings and small meetings. There would be a report that would be made public. Drew – we actually decided to do this the day before the Governor announced this process. Paul - in terms of our translation services, should have this here. Karen – saw a question from Ana Lopez. I want to say – how do we define social justice? When we get together as a community, and budgets, it might review discussions with regard to day care. Social justice is a piece of the picture.

7. Miasti – John Stiloski – my question is for Chief Barbelet. I've been involved in the community, and a lifelong resident. There has never been any problem. All of the officers who have been hired, there has never been a problem. The quality and education level of our police officers is more advanced than many other places. The thing that worries me here is stuff happens. You can't turn around and say we're a security force. When you have people starting to complain about different things, you're going to end up with people (police) getting hurt because they don't know what to do. Stuff happens. It could be crime, stuff happens. Good officers that do work and are productive are going to run into people who don't like what they do. This can't be where we take money from the Police Department and figure out how else we're going to spend it. People are out there doing bad things.

8. Rob Wingate – have lived in Tarrytown off and on since the 1980's. Appreciate all of the work that the Barbelet family has done for the Village. Would be appreciative of future discussions. Law enforcement training for senior services. Opportunities for other support. Opioid substance abuse disorders. Appreciate that part of the mandate is to be talking with non-profits, in areas where there might be resources available to the police department. Looking at quality of services and how it might reduce the workload on the police department. Figure out where line is drawn and how things could be assisted with other resources. Paul Rinaldi – Trustee, psychology and substance abuse professionals. DARE program for example. In terms of social service issues, etc. homelessness, substance abuse, mental health services. Paul – how do we foster relationships? Karen – the final decision maker on a police officer in the schools is made by the school board. John – there was a time when the Schools did not even want an officer walking through the schools. Now, the police send an officer on a walk-through every day so they see a presence and become familiar with it.

9. Ana Lopez – used to live at 85 Washington Street. Have worked in the community as an organizer for many years. I would like people to know we are not looking to attack the police department. We want to be able to reach out and seek help with problems. What does social justice mean? Want to talk about white privilege. What does that mean? Want as a basic process that everyone understands. Want a new norm, so that fear does not overwhelm the community. Police does not have to do with race or gender, it has to do with power. I always hear, regardless of town or city, that we hire people from the town or community. We do have a lot of good things to say about Tarrytown.

10. Liam Kharem, live on ____ street. Have been involved and getting involved on these issues for the past couple of year. I understand the importance of training. Without the racial theory or sociology theory, the police are not going to pair the issues together easily. Require police to read certain books to absorb theory and fully grasp our racial history better. There have been some officers in the past few weeks... there has been a plan for a protest, planned for this Friday. It's soon. Our SRO has a blue lives matter flag in his office, which is problematic. Those are my basic questions. I appreciate the questions that have been put forth. I think there should be an active dismantling of racism in the department. John – you're the type of person we'd look for to having in the department and understand better what's necessary in moving forward. The protest is not a village event.

11. Sitara Herur and Samantha Sperber – I have fallen down the hill and hurt my ankle and have not felt comfortable calling the police. I have been yelled at and felt unsafe and did not call the police. As a black person, I feel that my life is considered less valuable than the life of a police officer. Walking my dog and having a police officer drive around the block twice. In the process of community input, how will you ensure that this issue is considered from the perspective of a minority person like me. I don't feel comfortable calling the police and want to know who else I can call. I don't feel there is adequate transparency. Regardless of what reform takes place, I would not feel comfortable calling the Tarrytown police. There was a black man

shot at a Wendy's drive-through. How will there be assurance of enough minority and black voices involved in this process?

12. Maylien Herm and Eric Borcharding – want to say the past 2 speakers brought up 2 points I agree with. Getting a more diverse feedback. Getting the input from people. Talking about book clubs; there are other ways to do it. We've had a lot of success with teachers talking about institutional racism. Thank you. I've been given feedback from the get-go. I'm just starting to hear about the morale in the department. You guys chose a stressful job. I want to speak about the morale of people of color. People who did not choose a career, but are black and based on their color they have faced this morale issue for their entire lives. We've been faced with violations of people's right to live because of the color of their skin. I trust this institution and feel I can invite my friends over. There is a blue-lives matter mentality, and warrior mentality. Thank you. John – like to hear differing perspectives. Talked about morale – it's a 2-way street. The police have to accept their short-comings, and they have to do better. We take de-escalation training.

13. Amy Warden – live on Macarthur Lane – as a supervisor of teachers and the head of a school, we have moved to a much more active racism training and understanding the history of racism. The Police force is a part of, whether you like it or not, is a matter of systemic racism in the justice system. These are not systems you've put into place. The quicker you can put in place that understanding, the easier it will be. The most I brought to my school was accountability. Would you be willing to bring forward accountability on an annual basis? Blue Lives Matter – how can the Town hold themselves accountable for hanging Blue Lives Matter flags at a firehouse? Anti-bias and policing. Education survives. Unfortunately the police took the brunt of it. Blue lives matter flags will come back down.

14. Sarah Stern – live on the corner of Chestnut and Valley, Sleepy Hollow. Thank everyone for their service and for attending tonight. Have had good interactions, whether it's concerns about anti-semitism at the JCC, or discrimination against immigrants. I know you're up to this task. I want to talk about impact over intention. I'm a teacher, and would ask that everyone collect data, and determine actual impacts of actions are over their intentions, but actions supported by data. Not just telling stories of good officers with good intentions, but in terms of education, how will you give them that education? Around a Juneteenth celebration, I witnessed a police officer was asking a 3-year old "why are you afraid of me? Why are you afraid of me?" And they did not understand the history of law enforcement in the United States, that law enforcement in this country was created to protect white people from people of color, from "BIPOC". The officers need this history and education. How do we get this history to them? I know that being part of an institution, and I'm not responsible for all of the feelings about the institution, it's my burden to change that experience. I'd like us to switch from calling non-white people minorities. Our school system and community has a majority of black, brown, indigenous and people of color. How are we going to hear their voices. Also, officers in the school, it's a little disingenuous. It's different when it's searched by a police officer, rather than

a teacher or a principal. What kind of education do you have to teach officers about students' rights. I'm glad you're having this conversation, and I'm happy and proud to be a part of this community.

15. Lori Semeraro, live on Martling Avenue. Have had a number of interactions with the police, and have not witnessed any interactions that appeared to be biased. Concerned about the protest on Friday. Don't want an anti-protest to cause this to become violent. Chief – have had private meetings about this issue. The answer to the question – rest assured that I'm including officers who may have feelings and concerns about this protest. The rally – I happen to share a lot of your feelings.

16. Christina Kharem – Live on Elizabeth Street, since 1987. Clinical Social Worker, came here from the Bronx, and have a private practice. Have worked with the Tarrytown Police with youth at risk and PINS. Should not

17. Zachary Rozenblat – most of the conversation has been by white people. Hope the police department does engage with leaders from Black Lives Matter, and get them on calls like these. Want to engage those voices in our community. Systemic/embedded distrust in organizations that have never worked for them, and have put them in danger. It might help for those voices to understand.

18. Ketchwehr – Melanie; we live on White Plains Road in Tarrytown. We appreciate having the time to speak. Want to back up that we need to make this an ongoing process. We can say there is no racism, but there is underlying racism. Paul – that's a really hopeful attitude to take. I think our community is functioning quite well, but it gives us the opportunity to look at this in partnership with our community. Discussion of traffic – we

19. Phone caller 2297 – Philip Burnette – does the Chief support body cameras? Will the Chief eventually promote one of these black officers to sergeant or detective? Yes on first. On promoting a black officer to supervisor, there is a Civil Service process we have to follow. Speaking frankly, have to be able to reach the officer, and a black officer is not always in the top 3 candidates on a civil service list.

20. Krista Barron – Live on Grove Street in Tarrytown. What about LGBTQ populations

21. Manuel Aluma – lived in community for 21 years. Psychologist. I am personally worried about Friday evening. Just a comment on the Police Chief – think you're doing a terrific job. The whole idea about Blue Lives Matter is an affront to the impression we're trying to unravel here. The police officers are going to be present at this event, and they have to put themselves aside, so they take this that they don't matter. It's a shame to put them in the middle of this. I find the entire matter a shame. It's a very important time in our society. Seeking to establish in an underhanded way to maintain oppression. What might it be like for some police officers if the Blue Lives Matter rally persons become unruly. How are the police officers going

to deal with this as a political effort to undermine and dismantle the Black Lives Matter movement? They are being used as political pawns, which I find disgraceful. When they see me there I will be as an impartial person on Friday.

22. Laurie Feinstein – I live in the Town of Greenburgh in the Edgemont area. I serve on the Human Rights Committee for the TOG. Looking at needs. What can we do to coordinate reforms, and meet the needs of communities, in all of the communities in Greenburgh. There are so many, and it's a pretty small area. Very impressed that Tarrytown is taking a proactive role. Can Tarrytown reach out to the Greenburgh Police and have a coordinated effort amongst all of the Villages and the Town. John – why stop in Tarrytown or Greenburgh, why not do this on a County-wide basis. George Latimer was on. We can do this in a majority of Towns in Westchester. If we reach out, and do training, we can move out farther and benefit everyone in Westchester.

23. Michael Witkowski – lifetime resident, born and bred here. It would have been better if we could have gotten more people together and met face to face. It would be nice if the other new women on the call could sit down and have a cup of coffee. Would like to see more “coffee with a police officer”.

24. Ana Lopez (2nd) – want to say something. On a daily basis we are being traumatized. It is very difficult for me. We are terrified of the police. This is what we are seeing daily. the police have to... we need to become very cautious. When you take off your uniform, we cannot take off our color when we go home. You need to listen to the community.

25. Lissette Mendez boyer – live on Grove Street – don't have a comment. Want to get in touch with Ana Lopez. She sounds amazing. Give her my e-mail.

26. Krista (2nd) – wondering about the philosophy and guiding principles and how we execute what the mission is. Chief – the mission and how we execute is be neutral and serve all persons, regardless of race.

27. Felicia Atanasio – don't want the positive comments about the Tarrytown police to make Sitara feel that comments are diminishing her comments about racism.

28. Malien Herm and Eric Borcharding (2nd) – Maylien; live on Grove Street. Identify as a woman of color. My skin is brown, and during my entire life I've wondered how people perceive me because of the color of my skin. It is different to be black in America and black in Tarrytown. Hope we become a town that's willing to dismantle systemic racism, work on overcoming anti black attitudes. It has to be bigger than that. I believe it is on all of us, especially white men, many of whom are on this call tonight. I urge you all to do more work and learn and teach others. I'd like to ask you all to do, is share what you're willing to commit to learning yourself to dismantle systematic racism.

29. Laurie Feinstein (2nd) – wanted to speak to some of the trauma. An obvious question, why would a medic call require a gun? Why would running a stop sign require a gun? A deadly weapon. They have a gun, they could kill me. The case of Kenneth Chamberlain, in which his medic alert went off. We talk about the training, but need to change the system. Why do officers need to carry a gun for all of these instances. John – don't want to have to carry a gun. There are more guns in the United States than there are people. We are a 24-hour/7-day a week service. Paul – we ask the Police to do too much. No one person can be an expert on all of the different roles they have to deal with.

30. Samantha Sperber and Sitara Herur (2nd) – Sitara, “I am the one black person on this call.” I have had encounters with the Tarrytown Police, and have had the police circle around the block while I'm walking the dog. They drive around the block, and they slow down when they go by me. The system makes them as much a part of it. With regard to the back the blue rally, saying that the police will be there and be neutral, they will be there and will be biased. How do you intend to enforce against the bias. John Barbelet – thank you for your concerns, and I apologize that you felt uncomfortable. I am going to be there personally to see what's going on. I do understand what you're saying. We have to be there. If people are possibly going to shut down a road, we don't get to pick and choose, we protect everyone.

31. 914-xxx-4122 – Robin Warner, live on Mechanic's Avenue. Have been here all my life. Give thanks to the Tarrytown Police Department. My family has always praised the Police Dept. A couple of callers who have called, are a little twisted. All cops are not bad.

32. Vanessa Spiegel (she/her), live on Union Avenue – there are a lot of people who are centering their white experiences. For Sitara and Ana, the people of color need to feel comfortable. Not just certain people who feel uncomfortable. The Chief has said a lot of good things about looking internally. One of the things I'd like to bring up, this rally on Friday does not have to be a scary place, in terms of trying to see if we can bring the two sides together.

Drew – this will be a continuing process. Thank everyone. Reaching out to all members of the community. The process we will follow will be to reach out to all parts of this community. If people are feeling uncomfortable. This is the first step. We have a lot of work ahead of us.

The meeting ended at approximately 11:45 p.m.