



Columbia County Board of Supervisors

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CHAIRMAN'S PRESS RELEASE

Columbia County Announces Police Reform Panel

Columbia County Board of Supervisors Chairman Matt Murell announced today the formation of the county's Police Reform Panel. The panel has been selected to conform to New York State's Executive Order No. 203.

Among its goals, the order mandates that local government perform a comprehensive review of current police force deployment strategies, policies, procedures and practices. In addition, that it develops an improvement plan addressing the particular needs of the communities served while promoting community engagement to foster trust, fairness and legitimacy. Further, that it address any racial bias and disproportionate policing of communities of color.

Thirty one Columbia County residents, representing all parts of the county, have been chosen out of more than 60 applicants to make up the Community Input Panel.

A list of panelists can also be found on the Police Reform Panel website at <https://sites.google.com/columbiacountyny.com/police-reform-panel>.

The panelists, working with a professional facilitator, will meet in groups of ten (10) Tuesday, October 20; Thursday, November 5; and Friday, November 13, 2020. All meetings with each group of panelists will be conducted live at 6 p.m. via Google Meets. Simultaneously, all meetings will be live-streamed on YouTube for the public.

A website has been developed and will be regularly updated with a calendar and timeline of progress, links to meetings and meeting minutes. Also available on the website is a PowerPoint presentation by the Columbia County Sheriff's Office regarding programs and policies.

Once the Community Input Panel has completed its findings, the Law Enforcement/Elected Officials Panel will meet to review results from the previous meetings and formulate a plan of action, which will then go to a Plan Review Committee. This committee will draft the plan and hold a public hearing for community input.

The Columbia County Sheriff's Office initially achieved Law Enforcement Accreditation -- through standards promulgated by the NYS Law Enforcement Accreditation Program -- in 2007 and has maintained that certification since that date, said Chairman Murell. The department was reassessed in 2017 and found to exceed the standards set forth in the Accreditation program. In addition to the Law Enforcement Division, the Corrections, Civil and Security Services Divisions are also accredited by outside entities.

“Working jointly with the Columbia County Sheriff’s Office, we have been collecting data and information about policies and programs adopted already by the Sheriff’s Office. You will find this information on the Sheriff’s Office page on the Columbia County Police Reform website,” said Chairman Murell, who added that police agencies from the Towns of Greenport and Stockport and the Village of Philmont would be joining the panel.

Chairman Murell believes that with this collaborative effort of local law enforcement agencies, the panel and the residents of Columbia County, the police-community relationship will be strengthened and work to foster increased trust and fairness among county government, law enforcement and county residents.

Any questions may be directed to PRPanel@columbiacountyny.com