



# Executive Order No. 203: New York State Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative Plan

Village of Homer Police Department

D.H. McCabe, Village of Homer  
Mayor

3/8/21

R.H. Pitman, Village of Homer  
Chief of Police



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# Executive Order 203: New York State Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative

## Background

On May 25, 2020, following the police-involved death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota, numerous protests occurred throughout the nation and in communities across New York State in response to police-involved deaths and racially biased law enforcement to demand change, action, and accountability.

As the result of the protests, they compelled Governor Andrew Cuomo to conclude that urgent and immediate action was needed to eliminate racial inequities in policing, to modify and modernize policing strategies, policies, procedures, and practices, and to develop practices to better address the particular needs of communities of color to promote public safety, improve community engagement, and foster trust.

On June 12, 2020, the governor signed Executive Order No. 203.: New York State Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative.

## Executive Order 203

The director of the Division of the Budget, in consultation with the Division of Criminal Justice Services, shall promulgate guidance to be sent to all local governments directing that:

Each local government entity which has a police agency operating with police officers as defined under 1.20 of the criminal procedure law must perform a comprehensive review of current police force deployments, strategies, policies, procedures, and practices, and develop a plan to improve such deployments, strategies, policies, procedures, and practices, for the purposes of addressing the particular needs of the communities served by such police agency and promote community engagement to foster trust, fairness, and legitimacy, and to address any racial bias and disproportionate policing of communities of color.

Each chief executive of such local government shall convene the head of the local police agency, and stakeholders in the community to develop such plan, which shall consider evidence-based policing strategies, including but not limited to, use of force policies, procedural justice; any studies addressing systemic racial bias or racial justice in policing; implicit bias awareness training; de-escalation training and practices; law enforcement assisted diversion programs; restorative justice practices; community-based outreach and conflict resolution; problem-oriented policing; hot spots policing; focused deterrence; crime prevention through environmental design; violence prevention and reduction interventions; model policies and guidelines promulgated by the New York State Municipal Police Training Council; and standards promulgated by the New York State Law Enforcement Accreditation Program.

The political subdivision, in coordination with its police agency, must consult with stakeholders, including but not limited to membership and leadership of the local police force; members of the community, with emphasis in areas with high numbers of police and community interactions; interested non-profit and faith-based community groups; the local office of the district attorney; the local public defender; and local elected officials, and create a plan to adopt and implement the recommendations resulting from its review and consultation, including any modifications, modernizations, and innovations

to its policing deployments, strategies, policies, procedures, and practices, tailored to the specific needs of the community and general promotion of improved police agency and community relationships based on trust, fairness, accountability, and transparency, and which seek to reduce any racial disparities in policing.

Such plan shall be offered for public comment to all citizens in the locality, and after consideration of such comments, shall be presented to the local legislative body in such political subdivision, which shall ratify or adopt such plan by local law or resolution, as appropriate, no later than April 1, 2021.

## Executive Considerations

Evidence-based policing strategies, including but not limited to:

- Use of force policies
- Procedural justice
- Any studies addressing systemic racial bias or racial justice in policing
- Implicit bias awareness training
- De-escalation training and practices
- Law enforcement assisted diversion programs
- Restorative justice practices
- Community-based outreach and conflict resolution
- Problem-oriented policing
- Hot spots policing
- Focused deterrence
- Crime prevention through environmental design
- Violence prevention and reduction interventions
- Model policies and guidelines

# The Village of Homer

## Village History

In 1791 Joseph and Rhoda Todd Beebe and her brother, Amos Todd, were the first settlers of European descent to arrive in what would become the Township of Homer and the County of Cortland. They journeyed up the Tioughnioga River to take possession of Lot No. 42 in New York State's Military Tract. This Tract of 1.75 million acres of wilderness was parceled out into lots as payment for soldiers who fought successfully in the Continental Army for independence from Britain.

In 1794 the Town of Homer was organized as large township from Onondaga County. At the time it included what is now Cortlandville, Solan, Cincinnatus, Virgil, Harford, Lapeer, Taylor and the southern portions of Truxton and Cuyler. The village became incorporated in 1835 and began passing municipal ordinances for the approaching 1,625 residents.

## The Village

The Village of Homer government consists of the village board of trustees. It is comprised of a mayor and four trustees. The current Mayor is Darren "Hal" McCabe and the trustees are Patrick Clune (Deputy Mayor), Kevin Slack, Ed Finkbeiner and Timothy Daley. The village board of trustees meet the

second and fourth Tuesday of the month at 6:00 p.m. in the Town Hall located at 31 North Main St. in Homer. The Village of Homer is located in Cortland County. It is primarily located within the Town of Homer but there is a small section of it that extends into the Town of Cortlandville.

The main routes through the village are Interstate 81; US Route 11 (North and Main Street); NYS Route 281 (North and South West Street); NYS Route 41 (Clinton Street) and NYS Route 90 (Cayuga Street). Thousands of vehicles travel these routes through the village each day.

There are approximately eighty businesses within the village. The businesses vary from retail to manufacturing. They also include various dining establishments. The main village business district is located along North and South Main Street near the intersection of James Street. However, businesses have been increasing in other area in the village particularly along North and South West Street.

Center for the Arts is located on South Main Street near the business district. It is known for hosting music concerts, film screenings, community theater programs and showcase artwork. Several hundred people attend events at the center throughout the year but mainly during the summer months.

Homer Central School District is located entirely within the village. The school district serves students from the village, and from the Towns of Homer, Preble, Scott, Truxton and segments from the Towns of Summer Hill, Summerville, Spafford and Sempronius. There are four separate schools (Elementary, Intermediate, Jr High and High School) in three buildings. The student population, kindergarten through 12th, is 1,892. The school employees 425 people, making it the largest employer in the village.

There are three churches located in the village, the Homer Congregational Church, the First United Methodist Church and St Margaret’s Roman Catholic Church. The Congregational Church and the Methodist Church both located next to the beautiful village green, which is main focal point of the village where community events such as Holiday in Homer and summer concerts are held.

### Village Demographics

Based on information contained in United States Census Bureau’s American Community Survey for 2019. The Village has a total population of 3,123 persons.

Population by Sex		
Males	1487	47.6%
Females	1636	52.4%

Population by Age		
Under 18 years of age	578	18.5%
Over 18 years of age	2545	81.5%

Population by Race		
White	3044	97.5%
Black or African American	3	0.1%
American Indian and Alaska Native	0	0.0%
Asian	76	2.4%
Native Hawaiian & Other pacific Islander	0	0.0%
Other Race	0	0.0%

Population by Hispanic or Latino		
Hispanic or Latino	29	0.9%
Non-Hispanic or Latino	3094	99.1%

# The Police Department

## Mission Statement

The members of the Homer Police Department are dedicated professionals who are committed to working with the community to make the Village of Homer a safe and desirable place to live, work or visit. Our mission is to partner with the community to solve problems, improve public safety and reduce crime in a manner that is fair, impartial, transparent, and consistent all with respect for human dignity according to the highest standards of professionalism, integrity and accountability.

## History

The Village of Homer Police Department’s history dates back to 1864, when Simon F. Miller was appointed as the Village Constable. At the time his main function was to not only maintain the peace but to collect taxes. “Constable” was the name given to village officers until 1884 when they became the Protective Police. After the formation of the Protective Police several police officers patrolled the village streets.

There were several notable village police officers and chiefs such as Chief Arthur Holland (1910) and Chief Harwood (1929). The most notable village police officer was George Venum. He came to the village from the New York State Police and was known as “George the Cop”. In 1932 George Venum was appointed as Chief of Police, a position that he held until 1956 when Tom Davis was appointed as Chief.

Tom Davis served as Chief until 1985 when he was replaced by David Sampson, who was a sergeant with the Cortland County Sheriff’s Department. During Chief Sampson’s tenure the department grew. He hired Dan Mack, Dave VanOrden, Bob Pitman, and other such as John Evans, who was a part-time officer with the village police department from 1983 until 1996.

Chief Sampson retired in 1999 and he was replaced by Dan Mack, who rose to the rank to sergeant. Chief Mack served the residents of village as chief until he retired in 2014 when Mark Helms, who was a captain with the Cortland County Sheriff’s Office. Chief Helms served the village from 2014 and was elected in 2016 as the Sheriff of Cortland County. Chief Helms was replaced by Bob Pitman, who had worked for police agencies including the village, the City of Cortland Police and the Onondaga County Sheriff’s Office.

Like the village itself, the police department has a strong history dating back well over one hundred years. The department has grown to what it is today.

## Operating Budget

	2020-2021	2021-2022
Personnel	\$511,006	\$528,336
Equipment & Other Expenses	\$106,168	\$94,257
Total	\$617,174	\$620,593

## Personnel

### *Hiring Process*

The hiring for Village of Homer Police Officers is governed by New York State Civil Service and is overseen by Cortland County Personnel / Civil Service. Police officer candidates need to take the New York State Civil Service police / deputy sheriff's test, typically held annually, and placed on a civil service list after passing an agility test. Vacancy dependent, candidates are canvassed from a current civil service list but must be within the top three candidates on the list.

Candidates are interviewed and if selected will continue in the process to a background investigation (check), which includes fingerprints. If the candidates successfully complete the background check, they obtain a physical followed by a psychological.

Once the candidate completed the process, they need to be approved by Cortland County Personnel as well as the village board before they can be hired. If a candidate is approved, they are sworn in (oath of office) by the mayor, village clerk or the assistant village clerk. The candidates are then placed on an eighteen-month probationary period before they become permanent.

### *Trainings, Appraisals, and Awards*

#### **Basic Police Training**

New York State General Municipal Law section 209-q requires all persons seeking permanent appointment as a municipal police officers, after July 1, 1960, to complete an approved Basic Course for Police Officer as conditions of continued employment. Each officer has one year from the date of original appointment as a police officer to complete such training.

Officers with the Homer Police Department attend a basic course for police officers in accordance with the general municipal law. They have attended basic courses in training zones 6, 7 and 12.

The course officers have attended in the past consisted of incorporated training (phase I and phase II) but the department has recently hired candidates that have completed a pre-employment academy or phase I academy and provided phase II training with departmental instructors. Hiring candidates who have successfully completed a pre-employment academy is a cost-savings to the village.

#### **Field Training Program**

The Homer Police Department, in keeping with the strictest levels of performance requirements, always strives to maintain the highest standards of professionalism. To this end, the attainment of highly trained police officers shall remain a fundamental goal of the department.

In developing the field training program, the Homer Police Department has considered its responsibilities for proper field training. Legal issues involving negligent appointment and retention of officers, as well as liability for improper training, have mandated that the department make every effort to train and retain only those individuals able to successfully perform as a police officer. Additionally, the department's responsibility to the current police officers and citizens of Homer, requires that only those recruit officers who can successfully perform in the field become tenured police officers.

The Homer Police Department's field training program is designed to improve the field performance level of all officers, to include the field training officer. The program accomplishes this goal in two ways. First, as part of the overall Homer Police Department's training process, the field training program places maximum emphasis on police academy instruction through field experience. The program is designed to demonstrate to the recruit officer how to apply academic knowledge in a real-life field situation.

The Homer Police Department takes great pride in the officers assigned to the field training officers program. Their abilities, capabilities, accomplishments, and overall enthusiasm for the job is what drives these specific officers. They truly represent some of the best law enforcement officers that the agency has to offer, and that is why they serve as the frontline to shaping the future of the Homer Police Department one recruit at a time.

Field training officers are selected based on their experience, motivation, initiative, and overall ability to be able to instruct other officers. Field training officers must successfully pass a certified field training officer course prior to training any recruits. The Homer Police Department bestows extreme trust in field training officers on training recruits. Their ability to train the recruits is an assist in the department's future.

The field training program has been developed and implemented to meet this responsibility. The field training program is a 8-12-week program and commences after the recruit has successfully completed the basic course for police officers. It incorporates departmental policies, NYS DCJS on-line training as well as scenarios and demonstrations by the field training officer. The current program is between 320 to 480 hours, which exceeds NYS DCJS standard of 160 hours.

### **Additional Training / Certifications**

Additional certifications officers receive after the field training program consists of radar / lidar operator; breath test operator or data master operator; evidence technician; field training officer; hate crimes investigation; general topics instructor; firearms instructor; defensive tactics instructor and other NYS DCJS approved courses.

### **Inservice Training**

Officers receive annual in-service training which consists of use of force; firearms; Taser and active shooter. They have also received in-service training in first aid; CPR; Narcan; tourniquet application; excited delirium, positional asphyxia / in custody death awareness; de-escalation; duty to intercede and drug exposure awareness. The in-service is conducted by NYS certified instructors.

### **Annual PESH Training**

Officers also receive annual public employee safety and health training annually. The training is on-line, or web based and it is provided by the village's insurance provider (McNeil Company). The training consists of workplace violence prevention / awareness; sexual harassment and blood born pathogens.

### **Yearly Appraisals**

The Homer Police Department has a system of performance appraisals to assist in career development and training of each officer. The appraisals are conducted annually, typically in January for the previous year. The appraisals are based only on performance observed or identified during the period of the appraisals.

### **Yearly Awards and Commendations**

The basic responsibility of good supervision is the recognition and reporting of outstanding actions or exceptional performance by departmental personnel. All personnel, regardless of rank, are urged to report outstanding or heroic actions of which they have knowledge. All awards and commendations are for individual acts and not based on stats (number of arrests or number of tickets issued).

## Retention and Staff

### Retention

Retention has historically been an issue with the Village of Homer Police Department. Some of the main reasons have been salary and career development. The salary of officers is considerably lower than that of neighboring agencies or agencies equivalent in size. Since the department is a small agency career advancement is limited.

### Current Staff

Current staff at the Homer Police Departments consists of a full-time chief of police, a part-time sergeant, three full time officers (one current full-time vacancy), six to eight part-time officers, five school resource officers, a records clerk / assistant to the chief, three crossing guards and three substitute crossing guards.

Although Homer Police Department employees' full-time officers, we rely a lot on part-time officers to cover shifts and assist with varies events throughout the year. The use of part-time officers reduces the cost of overtime and allows full-time officers time off. All part-time officers are certified police officers who have fulfilled the required training according to the general municipal law.

### Demographics

In total, including full-time, part-time, and SRO officers, the Department employs twenty police officers.

Officers by Sex		
Males	18	90%
Females	2	10%

Officers by Race		
White	19	95.0%
Black or African American	1	5.0%
American Indian and Alaska Native	0	0.0%
Asian	0	0.0%
Native Hawaiian & Other pacific Islander	0	0.0%
Other Race	0	0.0%

Officers by Hispanic or Latino		
Hispanic or Latino	1	5.0%
Non-Hispanic or Latino	19	95.0%

## Equipment

### Vehicles

Each patrol vehicle is equipped with a radar unit and dashcam along with stop sticks, flares, first aid kit, ballistic helmet, and ballistic vest. The Department operates both marked patrol vehicles and unmarked vehicles:

- (3) Ford Explorers: used for patrols, marked
- (1) Ford Taurus: assigned to the SRO program but used during special events (such as parades), marked
- (1) Ford Fusion: Chief's vehicle, training vehicle, unmarked

## **Police Bikes**

The police department currently owns three marked police mountain style bikes.

## **Weapons**

- Glock model 17, 9mm pistols (issued to each officer)
- Colt .223 caliber patrol rifle
- Remington 870, 12 gauge pump action shotguns

## **Less Than Lethal Weapons**

- Conducted energy device (Taser)
- Pepper spray
- Expandable baton

## **Miscellaneous Equipment**

- Duty belt
- Gun holster
- Handcuffs
- Handcuff case
- Portable Radio
- NARCAN
- Tourniquet
- Flashlight
- Crime scene equipment (camera, latent print kits, etc.)

## **The Homer Police Department DOES NOT have:**

- Grenade launchers
- Bayonets
- Armored vehicles
- Rubber bullets
- Tear gas

## **Deployment and Strategies**

### **Patrol**

The main function of the Village of Homer Police Department is patrol. The purpose of patrol is to deter crime or prevent any potential problems or issues along with community engagement or relations. There is one officer on duty each shift, seven days a week, three hundred and sixty-five days a year. Officers are not directly supervised during each shift.

Officers with the Homer Police Department typically patrol the village in marked police vehicles but during the spring, summer and fall, patrol on police mountain style bikes. Officers also occasionally patrol the main street business area on foot.

During an average shift officer's respond for calls for service to include animal complaints, escorts, domestic disputes or incidents, neighborhood disputes, criminal activity or reported crimes such as larcenies or burglaries and parking enforcement as needed.

Officers also conduct traffic enforcement (occasionally based on resident's complaints) along with DWI patrol or enforcement. The main reason for these types of enforcement is to reduce accidents, prevent injuries and save lives.

### **Investigations**

As needed, officers conduct investigations into crimes and other incidents. They do this by interviews or inquiring, searching and or collecting evidence. The department does not have an investigator or detective.

### **School Resource Officers**

School resource officers provide security and safety to the students and staff of all the schools. There is also an evening school resource officer that provides security and safety during sporting events, activities such as plays and concerts. School resource officers refrain completely from functioning as a school disciplinarian. They try to formulate education crime prevention and education programs for students and staff.

### **Annual Events**

Throughout the year there are several annual community events in the village. The events consist of Winterfest, Homer Elks Race, Homer Little League Parade, Memorial Day Parade, Homer Fire Department Field Day and Parade, Holiday in Homer, Route 90 Sales, Magic on Main, 9/11 Ceremony, Homer High School Home Coming Parade and other races. Village of Homer Police Officers participate in the annual events by providing security as well as traffic safety.

### **Participate in Fundraising**

Village of Homer Officers participate in annual fundraising events such as the Special Olympics Torch Run and Cops on Top. Officers have also participated in the annual Homer Elks chicken wing eating contest to raise money for charities.

### **Community Engagements**

Starting in December of 2016, the administration from the Village of Homer Police Department were the first agency in the area to initiate "Coffee with the Chief". Residents and other people attended this community engagement to meet the chief and have an open conversation. Since then, officers also have participated in the annual "Coffee with a Cop" in October where they engaged members of the community in a positive way.

### **Civilian Training and Safety Programs**

Officers have engaged the public with safety or training programs such as Texas University's Civilian Active Shooter Training, crime prevention training (at home and while away), business crime prevention, bike rodeo, car seat installation. Officers have lectured at times during the high school forensic class presenting actual cases. Officers have also trained the Homer Fire Department in crime scene recognition and preservation.

### **Miscellaneous Services**

In the spring and fall of each year, officers with the Homer Police Department have participated in the Cortland Area Communities that Care's Drug Take Back Event. They provide security while residents turn in unused medications for destruction. There is also a drug take back kiosk located inside the police

department and a used hypodermic needle kiosk outside the police department for residents and non-residents to dispose of unused medications and hypodermic needles or sharps.

As a service, officers conduct vacant house checks for residents who go away on vacation so they can have a piece of mind that someone is checking on their residence while they are away.

### Other Public Services

In 2016 and 2019, Village of Homer Officers participated in the Department of Defense Medical Professional’s (US Military) no-cost medical and veterinary services at the Homer Intermediate School by providing security. These services were available to anyone within a thirty-mile radius of the Village of Homer. This service was known as an “Innovative Readiness Training” and several hundred people came to it for services.

In June of 2020 there was a protest in the village where several people were in attendance. Officers provided security for the protesters and there were no issues during it.

### Communication

Officers communicate with residents through social media (Facebook) as well as utilize local media outlets such the Homer News, Cortland Standard, WXHC Radio, Cortland Voice. Officers also communicate with residents each month by the police monthly report that is submitted to the village board and is available on-line.

### Partnerships

The Village of Homer Police Department has partnered with area committees or organization such as the Cortland County Chemical Dependency Subcommittee, Cortland Area Communities that Care, Liberty Resources / Mobile Crisis, Southern Tier Aids Program, Cortland County Drug Task Force, Emotionally Disturbed Persons Team and the Justice League.

Many of the committees or organizations that the Village of Homer Police Department is partnered with, assist people in need such as the Liberty Resources / Mobile Crisis. This organization can aid a person in crisis either by phone or in person as a means of way to reduce emergency room visits. The Village of Homer Police Department has a memorandum of understanding with Liberty Resources / Mobile Crisis.

### Statistics

Total Complains			
	2020	2019	2018
Complaints	6158	6153	4187

Leading Type of Complaints			
	2020	2019	2018
Administrative	35	81	101
Assists	4687	553	421
Special Details	121	257	125
Domestics	72	43	43
Parking Complaints	185	185	171
Property Damage MCA’s	73	125	107
Property Checks	3058	2270	1038
Suspicious	79	89	91

Vehicle Complaints	71	80	88
Welfare Checks	103	81	68

Total Arrests			
	2020	2019	2018
Arrests	32	52	67

Leading Type of Arrests			
	2020	2019	2018
Aggravated Unlicensed Operation	12	17	29
Unlawful Possession of Marijuana	4	9	7
Criminal Mischief	1	4	3
Unregistered/Uninspected MV	5	7	8
Driving While Intoxicated	3	9	8
Petit Larceny	0	1	6
Assault	1	0	3
Bench Warrant	1	2	3
Criminal Contempt (Violation of OP)	0	3	0
Forcible Touching	2	0	0
Harassment	3	0	0

Arrests by Race			
	2020	2019	2018
White	30	48	60
Black	2	3	5
Hispanic	0	0	1
Other/Unknown	0	1	1

Arrests by Sex			
	2020	2019	2018
Male	28	39	49
Female	4	14	18

Traffic Stops			
	2020	2019	2018
Number of Stops	562	835	745
Number of Tickets	188	452	254
Ticket to Stop Percentage	33%	54%	34%

Use of Force Incidents			
	2020	2019	2018
Incidents	4	1	0

Excessive Use of Force Complaints			
	2020	2019	2018
Complaints	0	0	0

## Policies and Procedures

The Village of Homer Police Department and the Village of Homer has over 200 policies in place. The police department has obtained model policies from the NYS Chiefs Association and the International Association of Chiefs of Police. The policies include Social Media and Police Bike Patrol.

The police department has also obtained or adopted model policies from NYS include Use of Force and Hate Crimes Investigation. The Use of Force Policy is Listed on the Village of Homer's Website and it prohibits such use of force such as the "chokehold" unless deadly physical force is authorized.

Since 2016 the police department has developed new policies such as Appropriate Treatment of Detained Transgender Individuals, Unbiased Policing, Interactions with Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. Policies so that people are treated fairly and with respect. The police department is continually reviewing other Model Policies that are applicable to the police department to possibly adopt.

## Officer Wellness

The Village of Homer Police Department has available to them a police chaplain to assist with their wellness. the police department chaplain aids officers with certain notifications or the officers in a time of crisis.

There are additional outreach programs available to the officers such as Concerns of Police Survivors (C.O.P.S.), which is a peer support organization for law enforcement across America.

# Plan Development

The Village of Homer Police Department's Executive Order 203 plan was developed after a comprehensive review of the police department's current staff, training, deployments and strategies, policies, statistics. The planned involved input from residents and stakeholders.

## Public Forums

Separate public forums were conducted where the information from the comprehensive review of the police department was provided to the residents and stakeholders. The stakeholders consisted of the village board, the Cortland County District Attorney's Office, the Cortland County Public Defender's Office, Homer Central School Board, village business owners and groups of faith. During and after the forums residents and stakeholders could ask questions or make suggestions as to how they imagined their police department. The forum dates and times are listed below:

- Resident's Forum: Monday, February 15, 2021 at 6pm (virtual)
- School Board Forum: Tuesday, February 23, 2021 at 6:30pm (in person & virtual)
- Businesses Forum: Wednesday, March 3, 2021 at 8:30am (virtual)
- Groups of Faith: Monday, March 8, 2021 at 6pm (virtual)

## Community Surveys

In addition to the public forums, community surveys were mailed to residents and businesses throughout the village. The survey, "Community Survey on Public Safety and Law Enforcement" was developed by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) with the support of ICF International and law enforcement experts.

The survey resulted in positive feedback from residents and business owners. The community involvement section of the survey indicated that it was slightly lower than the rest. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic several community events that officer regularly participate in were cancelled in 2020, which reflected to the reason as to why this section was lower than the rest.

## Student Surveys

In August of 2020, the Governor's Office published a guide for public officials and citizens to be used as an aid to with the executive order plan. Part 1 of the manual, "Key Questions and Insights for Consideration" indicated "The work of this Collaborative will be particularly valuable in communities that through bitter experience have come to mistrust law enforcement".

The manual quoted a study that indicated: "A recent study found that in neighborhoods with a high incidence of gun violence, only 35% of young people aged 16-24 said they believe that police officers "try to protect the public from violent crime." At the same time, 81% of these young people reported having themselves been shot or shot at, and 88% reported that a family member or friend had been shot."\*

Although the Village of Homer does not have any issues with gun violence, the mistrust of young people as indicated in the manual was noted and of great concern since the Village of Homer Police Department has school resource officers in each of the schools. Therefore, it was deemed necessary to have student input with this plan.

A student survey was composed, and it involved questions pertaining to the school resource officers being positive role models, trust and officers protecting people. Like the community survey, there was positive feedback from the students that were surveyed. The complete survey studies are attached to this plan.

\*2 Center for Court Innovation. "'Gotta You're your Own Heaven' Guns, Safety, and the Edge of Adulthood in New York City." Pg. 13.

## Consideration Changes from Forums

The forums and surveys were all positive. The residents and stakeholders had no issues with the overall operations of the Village of Homer Police Department. There were questions from the forums such as why does the police department have so many vehicles? Or do the officer's receive mental health recognition and awareness training? Are SROs armed? How diverse is the police department? Is there enough funding for training? Is the department considering restorative justice techniques? These questions were answered and explained with no consideration to change. The question regarding restorative justices is elaborated on further in the Final Plan section of this report.

## Consideration Changes from Surveys

The community surveys and student surveys resulted in positive feedback. As indicated, the community involvement section in the community survey indicated that it was slightly lower than the rest, but this can be due to the Covid-19 pandemic were several community events that officer regularly participate in were cancelled in 2020.

## Public Comments

Melissa Kiser, a leader of the local Black Lives Matter movement indicated during a public forum "I honestly have no concerns with anything that has been going on with the Homer Police Department." "On behalf of Black Lives Matter, I really do wish that more police departments were modeled the way that Homer has been modeled. It has been a distinct pleasure working with Chief Pitman. ... He has been

by far the best chief that we have had to work with.” Two other responses from local leaders are attached to this report in Appendix B.

## Final Plan

The Village of Homer Police Department has always been a community-based police department. As the police department missions statement indicates: “Our mission is to partner with the community to solve problems, improve public safety and reduce crime in a manner that is fair, impartial, transparent, and consistent all with respect for human dignity according to the highest standards of professionalism, integrity and accountability.”

### Changes from the Forums

Although during the forums there were no comments from the residents or stakeholders requesting changes to the Village of Homer Police Department, the village and the staff of the police department recognize that there is always room for changes or improvement to the service they provide to the residents, visitors, and stakeholders.

### Changes from the Surveys

As with years prior to 2020, officers were involved in community events. Moving forward, officers will be involved in community events during 2021 and future years.

Also, prior to the pandemic, there was discussion with village administration of the chief of police having a “coffee with the chief” community engagement once a month. There is a strong possibility that this will occur so that there will be community engagement.

### Community – Police Council

Starting in 2021, the Department will hold quarterly meetings with the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and/or Trustees in order to review Department practices and any relevant updates. These meetings will be open to the public so individuals may ask questions, raise concerns, give feedback, etc. This is another effort in the Department’s broader goal to continually elicit community participation.

### Community Engagement

It is important for our officers to be visible in the community and to get to know the residents they serve. By getting to know each other helps to break down personal barriers. Personal interactions between officers and residents build mutual trust, which is essential to addressing issues. Therefore officers and chief will, when it is safe to do so because of Covid-19 concerns, expand “Coffee with a Cop” to once a month on a predetermined date and time (example: first Saturday of the month between 8am-9am).

### Policies

The police department has several policies in place and have adopted model policies and will continue to develop additional policies as needed or change any existing policies to the times. The department’s use of force policy will be reviewed and will be modeled after New York State’s model policy.

## Training

Officers have and will continue to receive training in areas such as implicit bias awareness training, de-escalation training, excited delirium, positional asphyxia, mental health awareness training. They will also continue with annual use of force training or any updates regarding use of force.

## Recruitment / Hiring Process

The Village of Homer Police Department is bound by the rules of New York State Civil Service. Currently the police department is diverse and will attempt to recruit the best candidates to serve. The future interview process of candidates will include members of the village board along with the chief of police and possibly a police officer.

## Mental Health

The police department is partnered with Liberty Resources / Mobile Crisis to aid a person in crisis. They will continue with this partnership along with being involved with the emotionally disturbed persons team.

## Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion

Law enforcement assisted diversion is a community-based police diversion approach to addressing those involved in the criminal justice system because of addiction, mental illness, and poverty. With this, police officers exercise discretionary authority at point of contact to divert individuals to a community-based, harm reduction intervention for law violations driven by unmet behavioral health needs.

Officers and staff of the police department recognize and are aware of law enforcement assisted diversion programs. In January of 2021 they became involved with New Justice Conflict Resolution Services Inc.

New Justice Conflict Resolution Services is dedicated to the constructive resolution of interpersonal and small group conflicts. The agency seeks to accomplish this mission through the design and delivery of intervention and prevention programming in three Central New York counties of Onondaga, Oswego, and Cortland.

New Justice Services offers mediation, arbitration, and process facilitation services as alternatives to litigation for resolving disputes. Due to its contracts with the NYS Unified Court System, New Justice Services is empowered to intervene in an extensive array of situations and conflicts in the region's civil, criminal, and family courts.

New Justice Services provides a state certified mediation skills training program to its paid and volunteer staff under the auspices of the NYS Community Dispute Resolution Centers Program. Officers will make referrals as needed to New Justice Services.

During the early months of 2020, School Resource Officers in the Jr High and High School recognized a need for a diversion program for students involved in "sexting" or "cyberbullying".

Onondaga County District Attorney's Office has a program in place, entitled "Cyber Justice Program", which is a diversionary program designed to teach youthful offenders about the legal and societal consequences of sexting and cyber-bullying through the internet and other forms of electronic communication. Participants are required to attend a class, and has allowed students from outside the county attend it but travel has been an issue. The Onondaga County District has allowed students from outside the county attend it, but travel has been an issue.

In January of 2020, school resource officers and the chief of police began the formation of a similar program locally, available to all school districts within Cortland County but the Covid-19 Pandemic halted their efforts. There are still intentions on forming this program once the pandemic is over.

### Problem-oriented policing

Problem-oriented policing (POP) is an analytic method used by police to develop strategies that prevent and reduce crime. Officers currently and will continue with this strategy.

### Hot spots policing

Hot spots policing strategies focus on small geographic areas or places. Through hot spots policing strategies, law enforcement agencies can focus limited resources in areas where crime is most likely to occur.

Officers currently and will continue with this strategy. In the past bike patrol officers have been involved with this type of policing because of the “hot spots” incidents have been occurring in the village (parks and community building).

### Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is based on the principle that proper design and effective use of buildings and public spaces in neighborhoods can lead to a reduction in the fear and incidence of crime, and an improvement in the quality of life. CPTED’s goal is to prevent crime through designing a physical environment that positively influences human behavior.

New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services provided a PowerPoint presentation regarding how crime prevention through environmental design was implemented in Binghamton, NY. The village does not share the same issues as Binghamton, but the presentation was forwarded to village business owners so that there may be some future discussion as to implementing it in the village.

### Statistical Data Collection

Although the current computer program (Spillman) records statistical information for arrests it does not for traffic stops. Attempts will be made to contact Spillman to determine if this can be modified so that this information can be recorded.

### Procedural Justice

New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services provides a train the trainer course in Principled Policing (previously known as Procedural Justice I & II). Principled Policing focuses on the way police interact with the public and how these interactions influence crime rates and the public’s view of police and willingness to obey the law. Practicing procedural justice can have a significant impact on compliance, cooperation, public safety, and officer safety. Through this training, officers/ participants can learn the tenets of Principled Policing, gain a deeper understanding of the core concepts of police legitimacy and to build better relationships within the communities that they serve. On two separate occasions this course has been offered locally and during both someone from the Village of Homer Police Department was registered so that they could train officers but due to Covid-19 concerns seating was limited, and we have been denied. We will continue with attempts for someone to attend this program so that officers can be trained in Procedural Justice.

## Equipment

The Village of Homer Police Department does not participate in any program in receiving military surplus equipment and will not participate in any programs in the future.

## Profiling

The officers of the Homer Police Department do not profile any individuals, to include "Stop and Frisk". This practice is not condoned by this agency and will not be tolerated.

## Restorative Justice

The US Department of Justice defines restorative justice as "a process whereby parties with a stake in a specific offense resolve collectively how to deal with the aftermath of the offense and its implications for the future." Because this technique would involve intricate coordination between the Department and the offices for the district attorney and public defender, this will not be a feasible police for the Village or the Department to pursue at this time.

# Appendix A: Survey Report

## Introduction

In response to Executive Order 203: New York State Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative, the Village of Homer and the Homer Police Department collected community feedback in a number of different ways including surveys and community forums. This report summarizes the results of surveys the Village sent out to residents and students.

To facilitate feedback, the Village distributed two surveys to different stakeholders. One format was sent to all water customers and included a comprehensive evaluation of the Department’s Community Involvement, Safety, Procedural Justice, and Performance. An abbreviated survey was provided to Homer High School students that focused on the students’ interactions with School Resource Officers (SROs).

The surveys were developed by the US Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services and with the support of ICF international law enforcement experts. All responses were returned to the Village office and compiled independent of the Police Department. All responses are completely confidential.

## Demographics

Below are tables for the community and school surveys that compare the demographics of individuals who filled out the surveys compared to the demographics estimated by federal agencies. These are included simply to understand how well survey respondents represent the broader municipal or school communities.

### Community Survey

Table 1: Community Survey Demographics Comparison

		Survey Respondents	Federal Estimate
Gender	Male	55.7%	47.6%
	Female	44.3%	52.4%
Race	American Indian or Alaska Native	0.6%	0.0%
	Asian	1.1%	2.4%
	Black of African American	0.0%	0.1%
	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.0%
	White	98.3%	97.5%
Age	18-29	2.7%	12.7%
	30-39	3.8%	8.7%
	40-49	9.2%	13.6%
	50-59	13.6%	17.8%
	60-69	23.9%	11.6%
	70 or older	46.7%	17.1%

The federal estimate for the community survey is from the United States Census Bureau’s American Community Survey for 2019. As the chart demonstrates, responses from males were more common than the demographics of the general population might suggest, and respondents were much older than the estimated Village population. However, racial demographics were fairly true to the demographics of the Village.

In addition to the information provided in the chart, the survey also asked residents to share how long they have lived in the Village. The average respondent has lived in the Village for 31.4 years.

### Student Survey

Table 2: Student Survey Demographics Comparison

		Survey Respondents	Federal Estimate
Gender	Male	62%	54.4%
	Female	38%	45.6%
Race	American Indian or Alaska Native	3.9%	0.0%
	Asian	0.8%	0.8%
	Black or African American	3.9%	1.0%
	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.0%
	White	91.3%	95.2%
Hispanic	Hispanic	7.9%	1.0%
	Not Hispanic	92.1%	99%

The federal estimate for the student survey is from the National Center for Education Statistics' Education Demographic and Geographic Estimates for the 2018-2019 school year and Homer Central High School. As the chart demonstrates, responses from males, American Indian or Alaskan Natives, and Hispanic students were slightly more common than the demographics of the general population might suggest.

In addition to the information presented in the chart, the survey also asked students to share their age and how long they have been in the Homer Central School District. The average respondent is 15.5 years old and has been a student in the District for 8.3 years.

### Data: Community Survey

The Village received 191 responses from residents representing over 5,500 years of experience living in Homer. The data for this survey is provided below and the discussion is divided into four sections for each topic the survey asked residents about: community involvement, safety, procedural justice, and performance. Each topic includes the text of the question asked as well as any relevant notes.

For questions 1-5, 7-28, and 19a-22a, respondents were asked to assign a statement ("not at all," "a little," "somewhat," "a lot," and "to a great extent") that best described their view to each question. In order to visualize the results more easily, each of these responses has been assigned an integer value from -2 to 2 and the results are displayed in *Chart 1*. Question 6 listed many different crimes and respondents were asked to select the three they believe the Village struggles with most and are shown in *Chart 2*. Questions 19b-22b asked respondents to identify how often they have contact with police officers (0, 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, or 7+ times) and are shown in *Chart 3*.

Overall, the feedback – both survey responses and written feedback – was very positive. Many residents wrote notes somewhere on the survey thanking the police department and officers, with gratitude for frequent patrols throughout the Village. Several respondents also wanted to see increased patrols or stationed officers to enforce speed limits. Only one question (Q9) was even close to having a negative mean score and is discussed below. Other than this exception, all other questions had a mean score above 0.6 and most were above 1.0.

Chart 1: Community Survey Responses, Questions 1-5, 7-8, 19b-22b

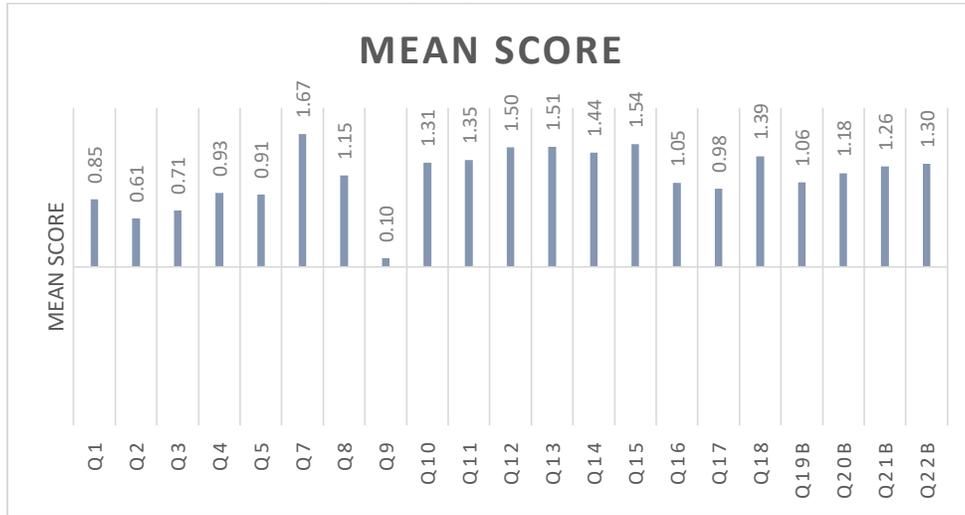


Chart 2: Community Survey Responses, Question 6

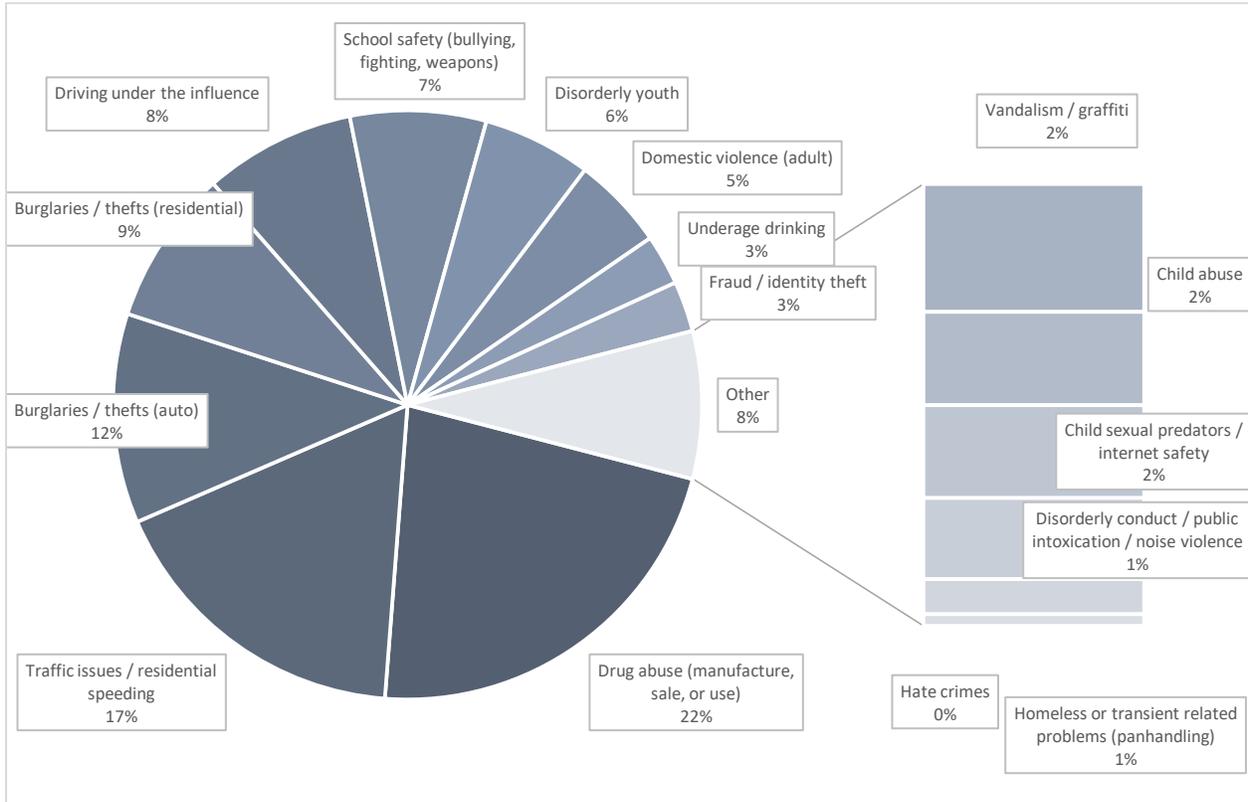
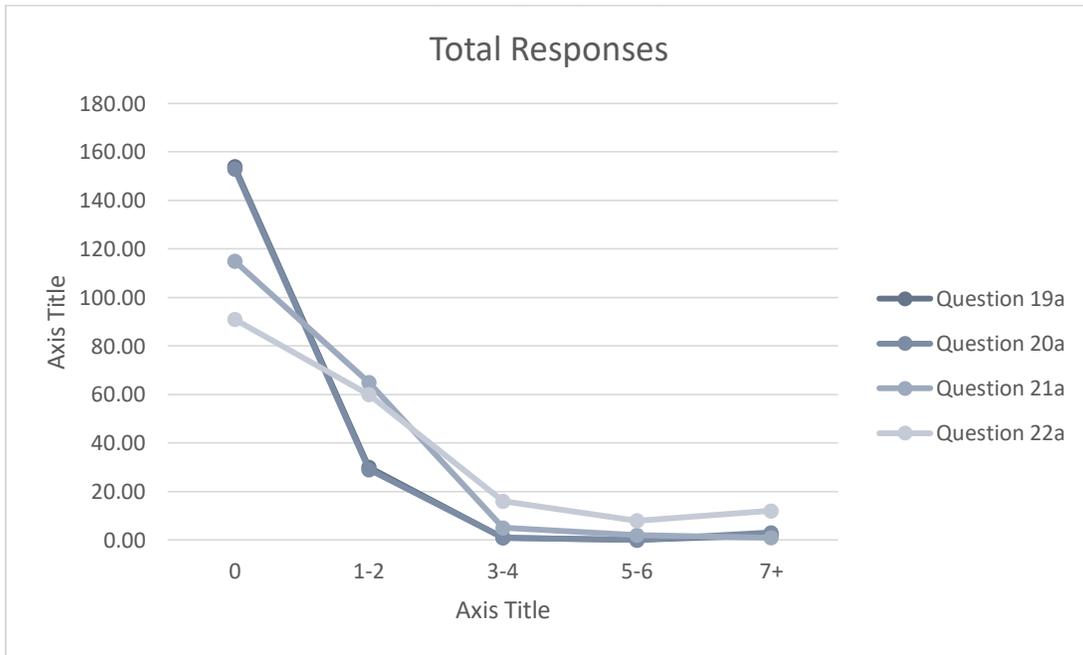


Chart 3: Community Survey Responses, Questions 19a-22a



*Community Involvement*

- Q1: To what extent does your law enforcement agency develop relationships with community members (e.g. residents, organizations, and groups)?**
- Q2: To what extent does your law enforcement agency regularly communicate with community members (e.g. websites, e-mails, or public meetings)?**
- Q3: To what extent does your law enforcement agency make it easier for community members to provide input (e.g. comments, suggestions, and concerns)?**
- Q4: To what extent does your law enforcement agency work together with community members to solve local problems?**
- Q5: Community policing involves officers in your law enforcement agency working with the community to address the causes of crime in an effort to reduce the problems themselves through a wide range of activities. Based on this definition, to what extent do you think your law enforcement agency practices community policing?**

*Safety*

**Q6: Please select the three issues you think are the greatest problems within your community.**  
 There is a fairly wide distribution of answers to this question, as Chart 2 indicates. The two most common responses were drug abuse (22%) and traffic issues or residential speeding (17%). A number of respondents left additional comments about residential speeding issues, including recommending additional patrols on (in order from most requests to least): James St, Main St, Rt 41 and side streets, Clinton St, Cayuga St, and Preston Ave.

Q7: To what extent do you feel safe in your community when you are outside alone during the *day*?

Q8: To what extent do you feel safe in your community when you are outside alone at *night*?

Q9: Over the last 12 months, to what extent have your feelings of safety in your community increased, decreased, or stayed the same?

The given responses to this question are slightly different than the others (“decreased a lot,” “decreased a little,” “stayed the same,” “increased some,” “increased a lot”) because of the way the question is worded. However, the same equivalence scale of -2 to 2 is used to rate the responses since the responses are still centered around a neutral point. This question had the lowest score by far, but since it’s asking something a bit different (how have your opinions changed recently), that’s not necessarily a bad thing. Overall, resident’s views of the Police Department have simply stayed fairly constant over the past year.

#### *Procedural Justice*

Q10: To what extent do officers in your law enforcement agency treat people fairly?

Q11: To what extent do officers in your law enforcement agency show concern for community members?

Q12: To what extent are officers in your law enforcement agency respectful?

Q13: To what extent are officers in your law enforcement agency respectful?

Q14: To what extent do you trust your law enforcement agency?

Q15: If you had contact with an officer in your law enforcement agency during the past 12 months, to what extent did the officer sufficiently explain his or her actions and procedures?

#### *Performance*

Q16: To what extent is your law enforcement agency effective at proactively preventing crime?

Q17: To what extent is your law enforcement agency addressing the problems that really concern you?

Q18: To what extent are you satisfied with the overall performance of your law enforcement agency?

Q19a: How many times in the past 12 months have you had contact with your law enforcement agency for *traffic issues* (e.g. citation, warning, vehicle crash)?

Chart 3 shows how many total responses were received for each answer choice per question. This chart shows that traffic and 911 emergency calls are the least frequent points of contact between police and residents, of the four options provided.

Q20a: How many times in the past 12 months have you had contact with your law enforcement agency for *911 emergency calls*?

Chart 3 appears to only have three curves even though there are four questions, however this is because the responses for 19a and 20a are so similar that their curves lie on top of each other.

Q21a: How many times in the past 12 months have you had contact with your law enforcement agency for *non-emergency calls* (e.g. to report a crime or suspicious activity)?

Based on Chart 3, non-emergency calls are more common than traffic issues and 911 emergency calls, but do not occur frequently.

**Q22a: How many times in the past 12 months have you had contact with your law enforcement agency for *other contacts or interactions* (e.g. attend a community meeting or talk to an officer on patrol)?**

Based on Chart 3, other interactions are the most common type of interaction for residents to have with officers.

**Q19b: To what extent are you satisfied with your interaction(s) with your law enforcement agency for *traffic issues*?**

**Q20b: To what extent are you satisfied with your interaction(s) with your law enforcement agency for *911 emergency calls*?**

**Q21b: To what extent are you satisfied with your interaction(s) with your law enforcement agency for *non-emergency calls*?**

**Q22b: To what extent are you satisfied with your interaction(s) with your law enforcement agency for *other contacts or interactions*?**

### Data: Student Survey

The Village received 136 responses from students at Homer Central High School representing almost 1,000 years of experience in the district. Surveys were distributed during lunch periods, collected, and returned to the Village Office to be counted and analyzed.

The survey consisted of only five questions, all of which provided five answers: “not at all,” “a little,” “somewhat,” “a lot,” and “to a great extent.” In order to visualize the results more easily, each of these responses has been assigned an integer value from -2 to 2. *Chart 4* graphically represents the average of all responses for each question and shows that most respondents have an overall positive view of the school resource officers since three out of the five questions have scores above or near 1. The two exceptions to this, questions one and four, are discussed below.

Chart 4: Student Survey Responses, Questions 1-5



**Q1: Do you believe the school resource officers have close and positive relationships with students?**

Although this question does have a positive score, its average is less than half that of the next lowest, which warrants discussion. One respondent wrote in the margin that the SROs have “definitely positive, but not as much close” relationships with students. While this may or may not be representative of the overall feelings of students, officers could make relationship building a focus for the future.

**Q2: Do you believe the school resource officers promote themselves as positive role models to students**

**Q3: Do you believe police officers in your community and the school resource officers try to protect people from violent crimes?**

**Q4: Have you ever reported an offense to a police officer and if so, were you treated in a fair, respectful manner?**

This question was the only one out of all surveys that had a negative average score, meaning that students ranked below the neutral response of “somewhat.” While it is difficult to speculate, this question is poorly worded because it’s actually asking two separate things: has the student ever reported an offense, and was the student treated fairly and respectfully. It is my personal conjecture that this question was given disproportionately low scores because some students were intending to respond to the first question (have they reported an offense) and not the second (were they treated fairly and respectfully). I say this because multiple students who responded “not at all” to this question also wrote above the question that they had never reported anything.

**Q5: Do you believe the school resource officers are approachable?**

## Summary of Findings

### *Community Survey*

The results of the community survey reflect very well on the Homer Police Department. No question had a negative score, only one was neutral, and many were above 1.0. Overall, the scores in the Community Involvement section were slightly lower than the rest (between 0.5 and 1.0 instead of 1.0 and 2.0) so this is likely the area with the biggest room for improvement. Additionally, some residents would like to see increased speed control within the Village. Other than this, the survey indicates that most residents are happy with the Homer Police Department and appreciate the work of their local law enforcement agency.

### *Student Survey*

The results of the survey overall reflect positively on both SROs and the Homer Police Department. Students believe that SROs are positive role models, approachable, and try to protect people from violent crimes. Poor wording likely contributed to the lower score for the question regarding reporting offenses to an officer. In summation, this survey indicates that SROs are thought of positively within the student body, but could focus on building relationships with students and the student reporting process.

# Appendix B: Community Responses

For the Love of Honor

Reply Reply/All Forward Set 3

is exceeding expectations! I'm pleased with the amount of training that's being done to keep all of the officers "in the know". Keep up the great work!

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WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2021



Kevin Conlon/city editor

Rob Garrison, manager of the Homer Men and Boys Store on Main Street, talks Tuesday afternoon with Homer Police Chief Robert Pitman.

# Police await surveys

## Homer chief eager to hear feedback on department

By KEVIN CONLON  
City Editor

kconlon@cortlandstandard.net

Homer Village Police Chief Robert Pitman said Tuesday he is looking forward to the results of community surveys of the police department's operation and suggestions to improve the agency.

But his department has already gotten some good reviews.

"I honestly have no concerns with anything that has been going on with the Homer Police Department," said Melissa Kiser, a leader of the local Black Lives Matter movement. "On behalf of Black Lives Matter, I really do wish that more police departments were modeled the way that Homer has been modeled. It has been a distinct pleasure working with Chief Pitman. ... He has been by far the best chief that we have had to work with."

"I was very pleased to hear that," said Pitman, who was hired as chief in 2016 after his predecessor Mark Helm was elected Cortland County sheriff.

Pitman gave an hour-long presentation Monday on his department's history, staffing, training and other matters,

followed by questions and comments from observers.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo issued an executive order in June requiring local police agencies to review their operations and propose reforms by April 1 in the aftermath of protests nationwide — including some in the greater Cortland area — after George Floyd was choked to death by a Minneapolis police officer during an arrest.

Pitman said he has already made improvements in hiring and training policies and he was looking forward to the results of surveys of residents and Homer school students. He encouraged residents to respond to the survey by the March 1 deadline.

"We will see what the residents want," Pitman said.

He noted that the training program for village police officers, which was revamped in 2019, emphasizes community policing and treating people fairly and with respect.

"That is what I want to impose on our new recruits," he said.

Since last summer, a village working group has met almost every week to create a police reform plan, Mayor

Darren "Hal" McCabe said Monday. The Board of Trustees plans to complete a proposal by its next meeting. Comments will then be accepted for a week and changes made, if necessary, in advance of a vote by the board at its second monthly meeting in March.

Pitman said meetings with the school board and business leaders are also planned.

The village of Homer has 3,123 residents, according to 2019 U.S. Census data. The population is 97.5% white, with 0.1% percent black or African American, and 0.9% Hispanic or Latino. The largest minority group is Asian, which represent 2.4% of the population.

Pitman emphasized the importance of connecting police and residents. He said the conversations can lead to changes, large and small.

He recalled a conversation a couple of weeks ago with Rob Garrison, manager of Homer Men and Boys Store on South Main Street. Garrison was talking about getting rid of some older clothing when a suggestion by Pitman led to a donation to the Wishing Wellness Center in Cortland.