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City Manager: Dominic Cloud

City of St. Albans
Police Transformation Roadmap
Adopted August 10, 2020

The City of St. Albans is committed to transforming its police department and building community trust in the wake of multiple excessive force incidents. We believe the most efficient and effective way to achieve this is to adopt the principles and practices of 21st Century Policing and retain national experts to assist our department with timely implementation. We also recognize the need for more training and education in all City departments and boards to better understand our implicit biases and the experience of non-majority communities. Police department leaders will join other department heads in this initiative.

To this end, the City supports the following values:

1. Strike the proper balance between “guardian” and “warrior” roles of our police officers. Most of the time, police officers will be called to act as a guardian and community service officer responding to those in need. Our organizational culture, recruitment materials, and training efforts should reflect this vision of the role of police officer.
2. Embrace community engagement.
Community engagement is a policing philosophy that should be embedded into the culture of the Department. The commitment to work with community members to tackle the immediate and longer-term causes of crime, or other issues requiring police intervention, through joint problem solving reduces crime and improves quality of life.
3. Ensure fair and impartial policing through Procedural Justice Principles.
Procedural justice is based on four principles: (1) treating people with dignity and respect, (2) giving individuals “voice” during encounters, (3) being neutral and transparent in decision making, and (4) conveying trustworthy motives.
4. Build community capital.
Trust and legitimacy grow from positive interactions based on more than just enforcement interactions. Law enforcement agencies can achieve trust and legitimacy by establishing a positive presence at community activities and events, participating in proactive problem solving, and ensuring that communities have a voice and seat at the table working with officers.
5. Pay attention to officer wellness and safety.
Law enforcement officers face all kinds of threats and stresses that have a direct impact on their safety and well-being. Ensure that officers have access to the tools that will keep them safe, and promote officer wellness through physical, social and mental health support.
6. Recruit, hire, and select the best officers possible.
We recognize the need to select, hire and train officers that reflect the values of the Department and the community it serves. The City will also seek to cultivate racial and economic diversity within the police department.

Policy Revisions

In the coming weeks and months, the City will be working to align police department policies and practices with the above values. This will be accomplished by taking nationally approved best practices, modifying them to meet the operational needs of the Department, and submitting the foundational policies to the City Council for approval. The first policies to be adopted will be the following:

1. Recruitment and Officer Selection

This policy will be amended to reflect the importance of hiring the best officers possible (hire for character, train for skills) and include broader representation from the community and the department on the interview panel.

2. Background Investigations

This policy will be amended to go further and deeper when investigating the background and character of potential police officers.

3. Internal Investigations and Complaint Investigation

This policy will be amended to provide independent third party review of alleged inappropriate actions, a clear process for filing complaints and disposition of the complaint, and regular reporting on the number and type of complaints and internal investigations.

4. Response to Resistance

This policy will be amended to ensure the degree of force is appropriately aligned with the degree of resistance, codify the duty to intervene, and other best practices.

5. Officer Training

This policy will be amended to align with national best practices and ensure officers are receiving regular training on de-escalation, guardian strategies, bias-free policing, and other foundational elements of organizational culture in the department.

6. Transparency

This policy will reflect the department's efforts to inspire public confidence and trust through regular publication of Fair and Impartial Policing Data, officer performance data, community policing benchmarks, and general crime data.

Police Advisory Board

The City Council will create a Police Advisory Board to advise the department with implementing the above values and policies. See separate document for mission and charge.

Regular Reporting

Department Leaders have already rolled up their sleeves and begun working on the above initiatives. For the near to mid future, there will be a standing line item at the Regular City Council meeting with the Chief and his/her designee to update the community on efforts to achieve the above objectives.

Long-Term Goals and Aspirations

The gold-standard for law enforcement agencies has long been to become accredited by CALEA, the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies. The City has more pressing matters at hand, but to the extent possible, new policies shall reflect the standards established by CALEA, with the long term goal of achieving and maintaining CALEA Accreditation.