



SARATOGA SPRINGS



POLICE DEPARTMENT

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GREGORY J. VEITCH
Chief of Police

Friday, November 30, 2018

SSPD Statement by Chief Veitch Re: Advisory Board Meeting and Officer Conduct

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

On Tuesday evening I attended a productive meeting with the members of the Saratoga Springs Police Advisory Board. Among other topics discussed, we had a general conversation regarding the policies and procedures for internal investigations conducted by the police department. As explained during the meeting, the police department is not at liberty to publicly discuss specific incidents or internal investigations and the contents of a police internal investigation are protected by law from being released publicly. While the contents of internal investigations are not subject to being released through a FOIL request, I believe that the public is entitled to and may appreciate a general statement from the police department regarding officer conduct. Therefore, I am making this statement to the citizens of Saratoga Springs, and I will begin with a few facts.

During the years 2013-2017 the Saratoga Springs Police Department responded to 162,503 calls for service. As a result of all of those police-citizen encounters, the Police Department received 56 citizen generated complaints regarding the officer's behavior. Put another way, about one third of one percent of all police-citizen encounters in Saratoga Springs resulted in a personnel complaint from a member of the public during those years.

During the same five year period, the Saratoga Springs Police Department made 6,842 full custody arrests. In making those arrests, police officers used force only 109 times, or during about 1.6% of all arrests.

Some additional statistics on our use of force between 2013 and 2017 include:

- There were 13 Taser deployments at violent or fleeing suspects
- There was one use of pepper spray
- There were no reported instances of baton strikes
- SSPD officers have not discharged their firearms at anyone in over 20 years

While the incidents of police use of force and citizen complaints against officers are rare, the leadership of the Police Department takes the internal discipline of our officers seriously. I have been involved in the termination and forced resignations of several officers during my time in the supervisory ranks of the police department. I take no pleasure in making that statement in public. However, my



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record, and the record of our supervisors, indicates that we are willing to take appropriate action to address issues and instill discipline within the ranks of the police in Saratoga Springs.

We were among the first police departments in the region to have implemented and mandated officers to wear body cameras and record their interactions with the public. Police officers are recorded, not only on body worn cameras, but through dash-board cameras mounted in the squad cars, throughout the police department and booking room, and through the public safety security cameras in the downtown area. Practically every cell phone has a video camera today, and despite all of the thousands of hours of recorded behavior collected of our officers on a weekly basis, misconduct or poor performance is extremely rare.

The women and men of the Saratoga Springs Police Department are well trained and well-disciplined officers who carry out their duties with dedication, respect and professionalism. We believe in constitutionally based policing and respect for the rights of all citizens. When incidents of concern do arise, the leadership of this police department is prepared to address those issues. However, I believe that our everyday interactions with the public indicate that concerns about officer conduct in Saratoga Springs are few and far between.

I know that the majority of citizens support their Police Department and I hope that the public is as proud of their professional, courageous and accountable police officers as I am.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gregory J. Veitch".

Gregory J. Veitch
Chief of Police