

Charles County Sheriff's Office Announces Progress on Policing Strategies and Initiatives

Posted by [TBN\(Staff\)](#) On 06/26/2020

WALDORF, Md. - On June 12, Sheriff Troy D. Berry issued a press release outlining several initiatives he planned to implement immediately to enhance the confidence and trust between the residents of Charles County and the Charles County Sheriff's Office. The Agency is providing an update for Sheriff Berry's initiatives:

• **Request the Charles County Board of Commissioners immediately allocate \$1.5 million of funding to initiate the Sheriff's Body Worn Camera program:**

UPDATE: On June 17, Sheriff Berry participated in a public forum with the Board of Charles County Commissioners and discussed funding for body-worn cameras. The discussion indicated that at this time the funding is not available (perhaps due to COVID-19 budgetary constraints) for fiscal year 2021. If the Commissioners decide not to fund the program, the Sheriff will continue to work toward starting a body-worn camera program through grants and other state and federal funding.

• **Request additional support and funding from the Charles County Board of Commissioners to continue and enhance the Sheriff's De-escalation, Conflict Resolutions and Use of Force training; and ensure the Sheriff's Office continues prohibiting neck restraints and head strikes during normal arrest incidents:**

UPDATE: After speaking with the Board of Commissioners, the Agency was assured funding for the most up-to-date training relating to de-escalation, conflict resolution, and use of force would be made available. Beginning June 1 (with no additional funding necessary), every officer was scheduled for a mandatory refresher course on arrest techniques. These techniques and our policies currently and have always prohibited neck restraints and chokeholds during normal arrest procedures.

• **Complete a comprehensive internal review and evaluation of all use of force policies:**

UPDATE: On June 15, the Commander of the Office of Professional Responsibility began a comprehensive review of the Agency's use of force policies. The Commander will ensure our policies are consistent with legally recommended guidelines and best police practices. This review will also include our training, reporting and investigations into each use of force incident.

• **Request the Charles County Board of Commissioners and the Charles County State Delegation immediately appoint members to the vacant positions on the existing "Board of Public Safety" to provide review and oversight of the Charles County Sheriff's Office, State's Attorney's Office and Courts in accordance with County Code 125:**

UPDATE: During the public forum with the Board of County Commissioners on June 17, Sheriff Berry suggested re-instating the Charles County Board of Public Safety as soon as possible. This board, which is made up of mostly citizens of Charles County, would provide oversight of the entire criminal justice system in Charles County to include the Sheriff's Office, the State's Attorney's Office and the Judicial System. After much discussion, the Board of County Commissioners deferred the need for oversight to the State of Maryland General Assembly for the 2021 legislative process.

• **Establish a Youth Advisory Council for police and community relations comprised of youth from our communities:**

UPDATE: The Sheriff's Office is currently working with community leaders to determine the best ways to proceed in developing and selecting representatives to participate and serve on the council. The Sheriff is committed to ensuring a diverse group with the fresh perspectives and insight only the youth can bring to a discussion.

• **Request the Board of County Commissioners to allocate necessary funding to enhance pre-trial services and supervision for arrested persons in our community:**

UPDATE: Recently, the Maryland Parole and Probation notified the courts that they would no longer provide pre-trial services in Charles County. The Sheriff has developed a framework for a process to ensuring individuals charged with a crime continue to be provided these critical services while awaiting trial. Sheriff Berry is committed to working with the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council and partnering with the County and the Courts to ensure pre-trial services remain available in Charles County. These services are crucial in providing an alternative to incarceration for those are awaiting trial.

• **Conduct a Southern Maryland Law Enforcement Summit in partnership with the Calvert County Sheriff's Office and the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office to discuss improving law enforcement best practices:**

UPDATE: On Friday, June 19, Sheriff Berry (Charles County) joined Sheriff Timothy Cameron (St. Mary's County) and Sheriff Mike Evans (Calvert County) for the Southern Maryland Sheriff's Public Safety Summit to discuss training protocols to ensure the three agencies, which share the Southern Maryland Criminal Justice Academy, are teaching best practices to all staff members. During the summit, the Sheriffs decided to enhance the training curriculum for use of force, de-escalation, cultural diversity, bias based profiling and other topics. Further, each agency collaborated and discussed policies related to use of force, complaint processes, and the duty to intervene among other issues.

"Updating our community and keeping the dialogue open regarding these initiatives is very important to me. I want my community members to know I welcome any oversight of the Sheriff's Office. I believe only good can come from having body-worn cameras and I am committed to holding officers accountable for misconduct," said Sheriff Berry. "I have always been a proponent of providing excellence in police services, and I am an advocate for positive change as a leader who not only cares about the men and women of our Agency, but of each and every person here in our Charles County community."

