



NORWICH POLICE DEPARTMENT



CHIEF OF POLICE
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November 8, 2007

Stephen J. Soares
Town Manager
Tracy Hall // 300 Main Street
Norwich, Vermont 05055

RE: Report to the Select Board (NPSC report)

Dear Steve;

Per your request I will try and address each recommendation contained in the Executive Summary of the NPSC Report:

- (1) A re-orientation of the NPD toward an emphasis on Community Policing which will require:
 - a. enactment by the NPD of policies, promulgated by the Select board, on issues of actual concern to residents:

I believe that one of the most important recommendations that was made by the NPSC was the desire to have the police department become more "transparent". Future police forums each month starting in December will allow me to hear what practices, and expectations residents are concerned with regarding enforcement.

- b. ongoing education in the form of courses, learning what Norwich residents want and require from the NPD:

Mandates set by the Vermont Criminal Justice Training Council require each officer to have a minimum of 28 hours of training each year. Within those 28 hours, certain training is mandatory such as; first aid and firearms. I also require Norwich officers to have Domestic Violence Training, Blood borne Pathogens and HazMat training each year. I will also require each officer to have training regarding Community Policing. Due to staffing (only four officers including the chief) and budgetary constraints this training will be worked in when officers are available, there is adequate shift coverage to fill the officers' vacancy and training is available. One officer is scheduled to attend a course "Community Policing/Policing with Integrity" in January 2008. The other officers will be attending this or similar courses as staffing and budget permits.

- c. greater positive visibility for the NPD in the form of youth and community involvement, foot patrol or bicycle patrols and informational forums on police related issues:

To become more visible in the community the Norwich Police Department will be working the cross walk in front of Tracy Hall on Wednesdays and we will continue with our foot patrols when activity and weather permits. Bicycle patrols at this time are not practical because we generally have only one officer on duty at a time to respond to calls for service. There is an interest among the officers to establish the bicycle patrols during special events and when there is more than one officer on duty e.g. "Bike to School Day", Halloween, Parades ETC... The Vermont Criminal Justice Training Academy has a 40 hour course "Police Bicycle Patrol". This course is recommended for any officer assigned to bike patrol for liability reduction and safety of officers. There is a problem with radio communication to dispatch via portable radio. Radio coverage is poor unless you are using the radio mounted within the cruiser. If the officer is out of the cruiser he/she may not hear dispatch calling or should the officer need assistance they will not be able to call on a portable radio. I am looking into what, if anything can be done about the radio coverage.

- d. increased transparency manifests in an effort, on the part individual officers, to explain, without arrogance, their actions during arrests or traffic stops and, on the part of the NPD, to make general policies – such as the use of traffic warnings rather than tickets, or the existence of truck scales – known to town residents

Each one of the marked Norwich Police Cruisers is equipped with an "In-Car Camera" system. These systems are event activated and can be activated manually. Event activated means that the system begins recording as soon as the officer activates the cruiser blue lights. We are in the process of upgrading our current VHS system to a more reliable and dependable digital system. Each system cost approximately \$5,000. We have already purchased and installed one such system.

Should the Norwich Police Department be required to enforce laws that have not been enforced in the past the police department will make clear what equipment will be needed and there will also be an educational period before enforcement.

- e. adoption and dissemination to town residents of a Norwich Police Department Mission Statement consistent with community policing:

The Norwich Police Department is currently working with members of the Norwich Police Services Committee to develop a Mission Statement more consistent with community policing. When one has been developed it will be made public to the community.

2. A recognition, on the part of both NPD and the residents of Norwich, of the attitudinal problem that is the basis of the ongoing friction between the NPD and the residents; to wit, it will be necessary for the select board to take an active role in bringing both residents and officers together to achieve mutual respect:

The Norwich Police Department has reserved the community room at the Norwich Public Library each month to meet with residents to discuss and / or explain police related items. This will be a public setting. Those that would prefer to meet with me in private will be afforded that opportunity after the public session, or any time at the police station. I believe this will be the most important part of complying with the recommendations outlined in the NPSC report.

3. The establishment of a vehicle to serve as an intermediary between the police department and the residents with a grievance:

In criminal justice work complaints, grievances, and sometimes even criminal allegations are brought against employees. The complaint may be initiated internally or externally, a whistleblower, a snitch, a supervisor, a chronic complainer, a disgruntled citizen who feels they were treated unjustly, but regardless of the origin, ALL complaints will be investigated thoroughly. The Norwich Police Department NEVER takes complaints lightly, and written procedures in place for complaints against police personnel.

Although we have tried to develop policies and procedures after those recognized as meeting or exceeding state and national standards I am willing to meet with the Town Manager, select board members and members of the NPSC to evaluate our current procedures to make changes that are appropriate and / or necessary.

4. The freedom of the Police Chief to run his department without micromanagement from the Town Manager or the Select Board:

I will continue to manage the Norwich Police Department in the best interest of the town keeping the Town manager and Select Board aware of the activities of the department. I currently attend as many of the select board meetings as I can to stay apprised of town issues so that I may share important matters with my staff.

5. The freedom of the Police Chief to establish hours of patrol coverage consistent with Manpower available from four officers, actual crime statistics in Norwich and scheduling Circumstances of which the Police Chief is aware:

With one less officer I must continually adjust shift schedules to provide coverage I deem necessary. I have to work within the language of the union contract. I have to take into consideration what is fair to the town and the officers as well. I have to consider vacations, holidays, sick leave, training ETC.

6. Clear communications between the Select Board, as the setters of policy, and the NPD, as The implementers of those policies:

I will continue to attend as many select board meeting as I can to learn about the policies being considered by the select board and how those policies might affect the Norwich Police Department.

7. Ongoing accountability of the select board for progress made toward the implementation of the recommendations made in this report:

Meet regularly with the select board and town manager to report the progress of the department.

Respectfully Submitted;

Douglas A. Robinson
Chief of Police