

Dover, N.H. Police Department

Strategic Planning Committee

STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE FUTURE OF THE DOVER POLICE DEPARTMENT 1997 - 2005

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REPORT PREPARED BY:

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During the period from September, 1996 through April, 1997, the Dover Police Department embarked on an effort to assess its current activities and future needs with an overall goal of determining the needs of the Police Department into the next century. This assessment included a comprehensive survey of all Police Department employees and a five month assessment conducted by a committee of citizen volunteers.

Both the citizens committee and the department employees were asked to consider many factors that could potentially impact how the Police Department should prepare to deliver policing services in Dover over the next five to ten years. These factors include such things as:

- Growth in the community.
- Changes in the services requested by members of the community.
- Changes in technology.

After evaluating the responses from employees and the written and oral reports of the citizens committee, the administration of the Police Department is recommending that the following steps be taken to prepare the agency to provide appropriate policing services in the future.

Staffing

Both the citizens committee and employees strongly cited the difficulty in providing the services that the community expects with the current level of staffing. Although the department has been able to provide a very high level of service to this point through the aggressive use of volunteers, a high level of training and proficiency in the paid staff, efficient use of computer technology, and the department's good fortune in receiving a variety of state and federal grants, the staff in the agency is stretched to the limit in virtually every area.

The citizens committee made a case that 57 sworn personnel could be justified based upon the national average of 2.2 officers per 1,000 residents. This was also noted as being politically unrealistic. For our part, we feel that a realistic goal is to attempt to achieve a level of 50 sworn personnel by the year 2002.

The citizens committee strongly endorsed the concept of civilianizing positions in the Police Department wherever feasible. Keeping with this thought, the department would also like to develop the concept of a non-sworn security force that would be utilized in a variety of activities, that would thereby free sworn personnel from these requirements. This would allow sworn personnel to focus on issues that specifically require a trained, and presumably more expensive, police officer. There are a wide variety of duties that these people could potentially perform to help out in the Police Department, to include:

- Taking written reports for minor crimes that are not in progress.
- Perform neighborhood watch activities.
- Provide an extra pair of eyes in trouble prone areas such as community parks or around the Riverwalk.

Effective development of this concept could negate the need to increase the sworn force to the same extent that would otherwise be necessary.

Technology

Probably nothing received as much scrutiny and generated as much concern as the Police Radio Communications System. Both the citizens committee and the police employees considered this to be an extremely high priority. In fact, the first appropriation in capital money to begin replacing the system was approved just this month. Specific complaints included the age of the equipment, the high level of maintenance required, lack of reliability, and a concern that the portable radios will leave an officer unable to get assistance. It is our recommendation that the communications system be completely overhauled and upgraded over the next three years.

Although the Dover Police Department has been highly effective in harnessing the power of the advances in computers and other electronic technology, it is clearly necessary to establish a goal of achieving a paperless office system within five years. The department arrests hundreds of people each year and responds to about 26,000 calls for service each year, each of which generates a report. Many of these reports could be generated on laptop and electronically stored, thereby negating the need to ever print them in a hard copy paper format. This would save an immense amount of time in handling and

filing, as well as the obvious savings in the purchase of paper.

It is also our goal to maintain our technological edge in order to also maintain maximum efficiency of department personnel.

Equipment

It is the goal of the Dover Police Department to convince the city administration to establish and maintain a reasonable vehicle replacement plan.

Internal Communications

The observations of the citizens committee and a review of the surveys returned by department employees indicated a need to work on internal agency communications. It was obvious that department employees had a wide variety of concerns relating to the overall operations of the department. What's more, many of these concerns reflected a lack of understanding of all of the issues and rationale for some of the decisions and actions that were criticized. To achieve better two way communication between management and employees, and to insure that there is a ready means for questions and concerns to be aired and resolved, the department will establish a regular schedule of meetings for all agency personnel. This will be done every six months and will be accompanied by an ongoing program of open solicitation of issues. This system will allow any employee to submit anonymous concerns or issues to be discussed at the departmental meeting.

Police Service

The citizens committee found that the department's current emphasis on community policing and proactive crime/drug prevention is very well received by the community at large. It is our assessment that this emphasis on community policing should continue to compliment our traditional police patrol/investigative services. It is our feeling that the nature of the crime trends of the future and the expectation of the citizens will be that the Police Department should take a more active role in preventing crime. This includes a concerted effort to involve the citizens themselves in crime prevention.

Training

It is a goal of the Police Department to continue to maintain a high level of specialized training. This training acts to increase the efficiency of employees and ultimately improves the services provided to the public by agency employees. Examples of areas of specialized training that are particularly valuable include:

- Crime scene and evidence processing.
- Computerization and technology.

- Crime prevention/drug prevention.
- Specialized responses to critical incidents.

Facility

And finally, it is clear from our evaluation of departmental activities and from comments made by employees and the citizens committee that it is necessary to plan for the eventual replacement of the police facility. Currently, there is no unused space in the police facility and the activities in many sections of the department are very cramped, particularly in communications, records and investigations. Although the department continues to function in the current situation for the immediate future, it is clear that at some point it will not be possible to continue to compress more activity into the same limited footprint. The administration feels that it is necessary to start planning for a new facility. It is our goal to have a complete plan for a new facility in about three or four years and plan to have constructed and occupied a new facility by the year 2005.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 1996, the Dover Police Department recognized the need to engage in a process of strategic planning in order to plan ahead for the next five to ten years. Part of the agency's strategic planning activities included the establishment of a citizen based Strategic Planning Committee whose purpose was to evaluate the operations of the Police Department with a goal of helping to establish the priorities and resources needed for policing in the City of Dover into the next century.

The Citizens Strategic Planning Committee is comprised of 12 individuals representing a broad array of constituencies within the community. This committee included representatives from the business community, City Council, the elderly, parents, public housing, the legal community and others.

The department publicized its interest in having volunteers apply for this assignment in September of 1996. The members of the committee offered to volunteer their time after the project was advertised through the local newspaper and other media outlets. Meetings took place throughout the fall and early winter of that year, with emphasis on presentations to the committee and research by members into department operations. Members of the committee were given ID's and were given unlimited access to the agency, the facilities and its employees.

The members of the committee were broken down into four primary areas of focus, which also correspond to the four sections of this final report. The four focus areas were:

- Organization & Management
- Technology
- Human Resources

- Police Service

During the winter of 1997, the various subcommittees met, conducted research, sent out surveys, and completed interviews in order to obtain information relative to the questions and issues pertinent to their area of concern. The final reports of each subcommittee became the core of this final report, which was presented to Chief Fenniman in April of 1997.

The Management Subcommittee looked at the overall administration of the department. The key findings of this subcommittee included:

- The administration is stretched very thin as a result of the department reducing the number of Captains from three to two several years ago. This suggests that management positions should be shifted from mid level to senior level.
- Existing middle management supervision would be sufficient to effectively supervise additional officers, if they were added to the agency.
- That the allocation of middle management positions and the number of positions be re-evaluated as attrition takes place.
- Management is very aware of concerns which might divide the patrol officers and management. They are working to address all critical issues (within the balance of competing priorities) while juggling grants, federal money, and diminishing city budgetary funds to keep this department operating at the level it is now.
- Both management and employees realize that better communication will lessen the impact of misunderstandings which can lead to a morale problem with some individuals.
- Management is in touch with department and staff needs for the future. It appears clear to the committee that management will continue to meet those needs and those of the community as best as possible. Budget realities and political influence will continue to have an impact on this effort.

The Technology Subcommittee looked at the utilization of past technology by the agency and considered new and upcoming technological advancements as they may impact on the operations of the department. Some key findings of this subcommittee include the following:

- The radio system in general, and the portable radios in particular, need significant upgrading.
- Recommend video cameras be installed in marked police cruisers.
- Questioned whether the new technology utilizing the Worldwide Global Positioning System technology, which displays to the dispatcher the location of each cruiser in the community, was worth the expense.

The Human Resources Subcommittee was responsible for considering current staffing levels and the personnel management activities of the agency such as the selection process. This subcommittee found that a case could be made that the Dover Police Department should have 57 sworn personnel, but felt that the job of providing police services could be done effectively and reasonably with 47 sworn not

counting the Police Chief.

Other findings by the Human Resources Subcommittee include:

- The DPD—especially in light of the current inadequacy of staffing—has been doing an outstanding job of recruiting, selecting, training and evaluating personnel, while at the same time making the best possible use of personnel.
- The DPD’s prevention efforts and philosophy are endorsed.
- Recommendations for the future, are largely predicated on increases in staffing in the years to come.

The Police Services Subcommittee was responsible for examining if the services provided to the community are appropriate and cost effective. The committee was also to consider what future changes would impact the services that can or should be provided in the future. This subcommittee found:

- Community based policing and direct citizen interaction can and should increase.
- Drugs, youth related crimes and domestic related violence appear to be most important to the community.
- That police/citizen interaction is perceived to be professional and in most respects outstanding.
- A community survey conducted revealed a concern as to whether the current police resources are appropriate to meet current and projected community needs.

All the members of the Strategic Planning Committee would like to take this opportunity to thank Chief Fenniman and the entire Dover Police Department for their cooperation in this project. We have come away from the process with a great deal of respect for the strong dedicated staff and a fine organization.

Strategic Planning Committee Membership

Mr. Tim Barretto	UNH Professor
Mr. Seymour Osman	Dover Resident
Executive Director Jack Buckley	Dover Housing Authority
Ms. Susan J. DeCrescenzo	Dover Resident
Mr. Bob Weisner	Robbins Auto Parts
Attorney Thomas C. Dunnington, Jr.	
Mr. William Urmston	Liberty Mutual Insurance Company
Mr. Michael Plavnicky	Liberty Mutual Insurance Company
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