



STAFF REPORT – CITY COUNCIL MEETING

May 06, 2020

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

FROM: Brian Ahearn, Chief of Police

PREPARER: Eileen Verbeck, Police Business Manager

DATE: April 29, 2020

TITLE: **Arcata Police Department Update on the Implementation of the National Police Foundation's Recommendations.**

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council receive and discuss an update on the Arcata Police Department's Implementation of the National Police Foundation's recommendations.

INTRODUCTION:

The National Police Foundation, NPF, was contracted by the City of Arcata to conduct a review of the Arcata Police Department's response to the stabbing of HSU student David Josiah Lawson in 2017. The Arcata Police Department conducted a review of Department operations while the National Police Foundation assessment of the Department's response was ongoing. From this review the Police Department initiated several changes to Department operations as the NPF review continued. Since the release of the NPF report, the Department is working to address and incorporate each of the recommendations (some which were already initiated through the Department review) through the operational and structural changes within the Department.

DISCUSSION:

IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS: The Arcata Police Department has undergone change within several key areas of Department operations. The Department's commitment throughout the entire NPF review process was to use the final report as a roadmap for continued adaptation while not necessarily waiting for the NPF assessment to be completed before implementing best practices and industry standards. Hence, a majority or thirty-three (33) of thirty-six (36) of the NPF recommendations have been implemented. The Department continues to work on a plan to implement the remaining three recommendations.

The APD leadership team recognized the need to strengthen the Department's investigative and training capacity. In addition, preparing employees for leadership positions was a key component in establishing the skill development necessary for Field Training Officers, serving as Acting Watch Commanders, to be prepared to supervise a team of Officers and to manage crime scenes and critical incidents in the absence of a Sergeant. New positions were created and the organizational structure

of the Department was modified in order to build a contemporary Police Department foundation to include Patrol, Investigations, and Dispatch.

Amongst the change were significant benchmarks that the Department met that advanced Department operations to reflect contemporary police practices. Specific areas, each managed by a middle manager, were created within the organization during the Department restructuring process. The Police Business Manager was placed in charge of the Business Operations Division while a Police Lieutenant was assigned to manage the Patrol Division and one was assigned to manage the Investigations Division.

As each area was established personnel within the organization were re-assigned to the area of the Department that their duties aligned most closely with. The middle managers, based on the priorities established by the Chief of Police, work as a team and share resources to accomplish City and Department goals.

Once personnel were assigned to specific areas, there was a need to establish roles and responsibilities of select units and personnel. The Investigations Division replaced the Special Services Unit; a mainstay of Department operations for decades whose versatility model no longer met the needs of the community and the organization. The murder of David Josiah Lawson identified two areas of Department operations where additional capacity was needed. The first was in preparing Field Training Officers to perform the role of Acting Watch Commander. The second was in the ability to immediately deploy a team of investigative personnel to investigate crimes of violence; especially those resulting from a complex set of circumstances.

Through the restructuring of the Department, the Detective Sergeant position was re-defined to focus on, and specialize only in, investigations. Two Field Training Officers were promoted to Detective and assigned to the Investigations Division. The Investigations Lieutenant was placed in charge of managing all facets of criminal investigations including operations, training, equipment, personnel and property room operations in addition to other collateral duties. The addition of the Police Evidence and Property Technician position provided additional capacity in the Department's ability to identify, preserve and process evidence as well as training Department personnel on contemporary evidence collection and property storage techniques.

The National Police Foundation, in their review of the APD's response to the stabbing of David Josiah Lawson, evaluated the investigative response from the perspective of the Detective Sergeant who, until that night, was the only employee assigned to conduct homicide investigations. Prior to the publishing of the NPF report the Department restructured to include not only the creation of an Investigations Division, a team of personnel who can respond 24/7 to any crime, but a restructuring that also introduced to the organization a leadership development component that never existed in the APD and is just starting to emerge in other Police Departments.

Implementing the Watch Commander Training Program created the structure and the plan to prepare Field Training Officers to fulfill the duties and the obligations of a Police Sergeant when serving as Acting Watch Commanders. Prior to the implementation of this leadership development program, there was not a structured plan to train Acting Watch Commanders on how to supervise a Patrol team.

An Arcata Police Department Sergeant developed the Watch Commander Training Program. Coupled with the creation of the Administrative Sergeant position the Department was now capable

of providing Field Training Officers the knowledge to supervise and lead Police Officers and the opportunity to practically apply that knowledge through and after the training period.

The Administrative Sergeant position was built into the organization from existing staffing. A uniformed assignment, the Administrative Sergeant is assigned along with all other uniformed personnel under the leadership and guidance of the Patrol Lieutenant as part of the Department restructuring. The appointment of the Administrative Sergeant created a Sergeant vacancy on a Patrol team; a vacancy now filled by Acting Watch Commanders who either have completed the training program or are currently enrolled and who serve on a rotational basis in four month increments.

Acting Watch Commanders are introduced to the Sergeant position, taught how to supervise a Patrol team and then apply that knowledge in practical terms as they supervise Patrol Officers for an entire shift. They are provided guidance and direction from the cadre of APD Sergeants and are also scheduled to attend the 80 hour POST Basic Supervisory Course; providing additional opportunities for Acting Watch Commanders in leadership and skill development.

As the NPF assessment team reviewed the APD's initial response to the fight that resulted in Josiah being stabbed, they praised APD Officers and all other public safety personnel for their heroic attempts to save Josiah's life. However, they also recognized that there were deficiencies in training, organizational leadership, planning and supervision.

This is a similar conclusion that the Arcata Police Department's leadership team reached month's earlier and initiated plans to turn those deficiencies into areas of strength for the Department. As such, the Administrative Sergeant's roles and responsibilities were defined to include preparing the City and the Department for responding to emergency and catastrophic events and to take a leadership role in facilitating training, de-briefing and tabletop exercises. These duties increase the APD's capacity to utilize the principles of command and control, National Incident Management System, Incident Command System and manage Criminal Multi Casualty Incidents. The Administrative Sergeant has also participated in developing Incident Action Plans and collaboration with community partners on active shooter, domestic terrorism, shelter in place and the initial response to armed suspects and acts of violence. The Administrative Sergeant also provides direct supervision to a team of uniformed Officers who respond directly to concerns of community members and who work on long-term Patrol projects.

The restructuring of the Arcata Police Department, the creation of an Investigations Division, the implementation of the Watch Commander Training Program and the creation of the Administrative Sergeant position are modifications that have positioned the Department to be better trained, better prepared, more organized in our response and more effective in our utilization of personnel than we were on April 15, 2017. The value of clarifying roles and responsibilities and establishing clear lines of authority and decision making in order to identify, in all incidents, who is in charge, cannot be underestimated.

While these changes took place, the Arcata Police Department infused community policing within the daily operations of the organization. What began with an Inside Look at the APD evolved into community walks, neighborhood clean-ups and impromptu meetings to identify and solve problems impacting neighborhoods. Coffee with A Cop, Bicycle Rodeo, National Prescription Drug Take Back Day, National Night Out and attendance at civic and community events continued the process of building relationships and maintaining credibility with community members. The Public Safety Committee, comprised of community members, provides APD direct access to ongoing insight and

guidance on how to best Police the City of Arcata as committee members make public safety recommendations to the Arcata City Council. All Hands meetings, employee recognition, a social media presence, the I Block Party, BMEN We Family Fish Fry, Convivio de Bienvenida and a renewed commitment to serve the HSU community continued APD's evolution into a community policing organization.

Arcata Police Department Staff spending time on the HSU campus has included events such as Volunteer Day, Career Day, Family Orientation and Graduation. Participating in these events are opportunities to continue the process of humanizing the uniform. The Department has worked with HSU to develop a more formal internship program, with six job descriptions written that should be ready for a Fall 2020 launch. APD's participation in, and commitment to, Equity Arcata; the Police and Student Safety Working Group, Home Away From Home Pot Lucks and the design team further strengthen our commitment to racial equity, inclusion, diversity and the provision of equitable, just, compassionate and fair policing services to all people.

As APD's leadership changed and staffing grew so did the need to define and provide additional training opportunities/standards for all personnel. Investigators attended specialized training classes including Homicide and Sexual Assault Investigations. Sergeants learned the intricacies of an officer involved shooting response and investigation at an Officer Involved Shooting School. Interview and Interrogation, Terrorism Liaison Officer, Tactical Dispatching, FBI Crime Scene Training, Criminal Investigations Course and Critical Incident Response are examples of other classes APD personnel attended throughout 2018 and 2019. In addition, the Department's Field Training Program was modified to reflect a contemporary FTO program and two Sergeants attended FTO Supervisory School. Arcata PD's commitment to best practices and utilizing emerging technologies extended to de-escalation techniques and the procurement of a Mobile Options Simulator to enable APD staff to provide on-going state of the art training in reducing threats to community members and Police Officers posed by persons armed with weapons.

When examining the NPF report there are many similarities between what the NPF recommended and the changes initiated within the organization. For example, preparing personnel for leadership positions and the identification of the roles and responsibilities of investigative personnel have been completed. Providing training opportunities for personnel as well as establishing protocols to conduct thorough case review and case management with the Humboldt County District Attorney's Office and collaboration with all Humboldt County law enforcement agencies are all in place. Preparing personnel to perform their duties and responsibilities during the initial response to crime, while managing the crime scene and during the investigative process have all been strengthened. Notifications to the chain of command, having response protocols in place, managing and guiding the on-going investigation by command staff personnel as well as presenting an organized case file to the DA's Office are protocols that have all been refined under the Department restructuring.

Internal accountability systems have been bolstered as have the use of debriefs and tabletop exercises to continue the process of learning and skill development. A family liaison position has been established and Officers are scheduled to be trained in combat medical care, two recommendations of the NPF. Systems are now in place to manage information better and to utilize external partners and video to assist the Department in communicating with community members during and after critical incidents or incidents that community members inquire about. The Department's relationship with the Humboldt State University community is getting stronger as our partnerships with campus community stakeholders including HSU administrators, members of the HSU Police Department and faculty, staff and students from throughout the university continue to grow.

Attached to this staff report is a list of each NPF recommendation along with a summary of the work completed in support of implementation. Before all NPF recommendations will be considered implemented there are three recommendations within community policing that are not completed and will require additional work while the Department continues on a trajectory of building and maintaining community policing as our core philosophy. One recommendation is for the Department to provide training on community policing principles as well as procedural justice, implicit bias and police legitimacy. It is anticipated that this training will be completed in the Fall of 2020 or Winter/Spring of 2021. The second recommendation not completed is to incorporate community policing into the APD performance evaluation process. Members of the Department's leadership team will work with the City of Arcata's Personnel Department to modify the performance evaluation to incorporate community policing into the evaluation. The third recommendation yet to be completed is to develop a survey instrument to gauge community sentiment on the performance of the Arcata Police Department. Developing a survey instrument is one of the HSU internship program job descriptions already created. This recommendation will be completed during the 2020/2021 academic year once a student who would like to complete this assignment is identified.

ATTACHMENTS:

Arcata Police Department Implementation Update of NPF Recommendations (DOCX)