

TAPPAHANNOCK POLICE DEPARTMENT

January 25, 2021

2020 Annual Staff Inspection Report

Chief James G. Ashworth, Jr.

The following is a summary of the staff inspection review process and overall activities accomplished by the Tappahannock Police Department during 2020.

A review of the overall operation of this office has been completed. It is my opinion that the members of this department are effectively pursuing department goals and objectives and there were no overall deficiencies discovered.

This inspection included, but was not limited to, a review of the following items:

- The Agency Goals and Objectives themselves were reviewed, with changes.
- The Agency Mission Statement was reviewed, with no revisions.
- The day-to-day operations standards of the various sections of the department were reviewed with no discernible concerns detected.
- A complete review and revision of the department's policy and procedures manual was conducted and completed in accordance with accreditation standards.

ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION: Captain Jacob H. Siddons

Below you will find the annual staff inspection report for the Administrative Division. Overall the division enjoyed a positive and productive year.

Administrative:

Office/IT Equipment:

The police department headquarters did not have any notable additions to administrative equipment or software within the last year. We are currently still on hold for the new RMS ID Networks to go live which should be in the early part of 2021. Once that program is online, the Office Manager and I will need to attend training on its use. Future training of additional staff will be done as needed.

The first full year in our new headquarters has highlighted a major deficiency in the building's office space. There is currently not enough room to give each member adequate space in which to conduct their official business. There are currently two officers who do not have a desk or space in which to work from and no additional space is available. The imminent assignment of Officer Johnson from patrol to criminal investigations exacerbates this problem as he will need adequate space in which to perform his duties. The department still has no interview room where officers can meet with victims or interrogate suspects. An interview room with proper and modern A/V capabilities is necessary in this day and time.

There is also a need for more secure storage and the perfect remedy for that problem is conversion of the inoperable bathroom in the rear of the building. That space could easily be converted into a secure storage area for department property with little cost incurred.

Mobile Data Terminals should be a priority moving forward soon. As we progress, now 21 years into the 21st century, the fact that this department does not have this technology is extraordinary. We are currently the only agency in this area that does not have MDT's for their sworn staff. Officers would be more productive in their patrol assignments as they will no longer have to rely on dispatchers for certain tasks. This would also allow officers to complete reports electronically and gather information through the web-based services.

Training:

The most notable training accomplishment of the year was the graduation of new Officer Tymeisha Williams from the RRCJA Basic School. Officer Williams started her training in January 2020 and completed in August 2020. The delay in completion was due to the academy's partial shut-down in April.

The spring in-service session was cancelled due to COVID-19, but we were able to hold our fall session in October in conjunction with the King William Sheriff's Office. Despite the restrictive guidelines over 200 officers from across the Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula attended.

All TPD officers needing recertification in CY2020 did so without the need for extension. Specialized training was not utilized due to availability. All sworn members requalified in their respective firearms without the need of remedial instruction.

Looking ahead, I would recommend that Officer T.B. Johnson attend the basic evidence training presented by the International Property & Evidence Association. Currently there is no in-person classes scheduled for this region, but it is possible to complete online if practical. The cost of this training would be approximately \$400. The training is essential for anyone that will be part of the department's property & evidence function.

Grants:

DMV Highway Safety Grant:

The police department was awarded \$5,400 in federal funding to address speed violations within the town. This grant followed the federal fiscal year of October 1, 2019 – September 30, 2020. The grant allowed for 180 hours of overtime for officers to work individual patrols targeting the identified problem areas. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic the grant saw a suspension of use from March 2020 – June 2020. Because of this, we were forced to return \$2,100 in unused funding. This however was not unique to this agency as nearly every agency in Virginia was inclined to do the same. The grant funds that were spent were used by Officer O.L. Hurd who issued 152 summonses on selective time during the grant cycle.

The department also received two grants through the Department of Criminal Justice Services. Grant No. 20-T1094LO17 totaling \$5,923 was used to purchase the following items.

1. Three patrol rifles
2. Two rifle optics
3. Temporary traffic control devices
4. Vehicle rifle rack
5. Custom event canopy
6. Six patrol first aid kits

N100 HEPA masks were budgeted prior to the pandemic but could not be obtained due to the timing of the funding and demand due to COVID-19.

Grant No. 20-A4888AD16 totaling \$8,950 was used to purchase 10 WatchGuard Vista body-cameras. The new cameras replaced the older and outdated VieVue cameras. The new cameras are the department's third different system and to date has been deployed in the field and fully operational.

Department Accomplishments:

One National Drug Take Back was held in October in partnership with the DEA, ECSO, and Wal-Mart of Tappahannock. Approximately 50 lbs. of unused medication were collected for disposal.

It is my opinion that the department website needs a major overhaul. The page, while still useful, does not have a modern appearance and lacks current content. The page is currently updated at our direction by David Broad. The department Facebook page is managed by the Office Manager and has nearly 4,000 followers. Its primary use is for quick information distributed to the public and is easily edited.

It cannot be said enough that 2020 was a trying and extraordinary year for the department. The uniqueness of the COVID-19 pandemic left us all with many more questions than answers. Overall, the members of the agency, both sworn, and civilian met the challenges head on and were professional in doing so.

Accreditation:

The department was audited on February 5-7, 2020 by the Virginia Law Enforcement Professional Standards Commission for our first re-accreditation. The department was able to achieve 100 percent compliance on all applicable standards. VLEPSC unanimously voted to re-accredit the department in June and our award will be received on a later date. Currently we are near the end of term one of this cycle with no issues to report. Thanks to Ms. Amanda Smith, Asst. Accreditation Manager for her work during this assessment and throughout the year.

2021/2022 Budget:

As we move forward towards the next budget year, I would like to highlight areas that need more immediate attention. It is understood that the town manager is working to secure more suitable funding for our vehicle fleet which needs attention so I will not address it at this time.

The most immediate concern is the replacement of the department issued side arms. The current Sig Sauer P229 is over 10 years old and has had no normal maintenance performed. The night sight systems are nearing the end of their expected life and replacement for them would not be cost effective given the age of the firearm. A few of our current sworn staff have some level of difficulty in qualification, mainly due to the full-size frame. It would be prudent to develop a plan to replace the firearms within the next 12-18 months. There is an ongoing concern of ammunition availability which does not look to end anytime soon. We currently have 2000 rounds of both duty and training ammo on order under the current budget and I expect delivery in the next month or so. Cost of new firearms is impossible to estimate at this time but it should be noted that our current weapons would receive trade value.

The MDT project, noted earlier, should also be considered for budget consideration. Costs of both hardware and software would need to be secured from ID Networks and at least three laptop vendors. A rough estimate of that project would be near \$100,000.

Each sworn member of the department should also have a department issued phone for official business. Today's law enforcement operations require more "in hand" techniques and much of the patrol duties entail phone communication.

Events:

- The Tappahannock Police Department and the Essex County Sheriff's Office conducted a prescription drug take-back programs at Wal-Mart in October.
- The TPD provided off-duty security at Walmart and the Annual TEVFD Oyster roast.
- We also provided assistance with the monthly Tappahannock Farmer's Markets.
- TPD provided extra patrol and security for Halloween.
- TPD sponsored a Shop-with-a-Cop event at the Tappahannock Walmart in December.
- TPD conducted one 40-hour Law Enforcement In-Service Schools at the TEVFD.
- TPD provided security and traffic control for the Black Lives Matter protest in Tappahannock in June.
- TPD provided traffic control for the Black Lives Matter "Slow Roll" through town in June.

- TPD provided traffic control and security for a protest at the Confederate Monument in July 2020.
- TPD participated in the Dunkin Donut grand opening in November.

OPERATIONS DIVISION: Captain Charles F. Davis, Jr.

After discussion with Operations Commander Captain Charles F. Davis, Jr., it was determined that the patrol section had met its goals and objectives for the reviewed period of time despite the COVID-19 pandemic. The patrol section continues to function in a professional manner and continues to meet the expectations of the agency. He also stated that the department's Radar and Lidar equipment is in good working condition. He also advised that the department's patrol vehicles are in satisfactory condition although aged and consideration should be given to upgrade by purchasing or leasing new vehicles. Captain Davis advised that officer morale is not where it could be due to lack of incentives. He suggested that the department's annual performance evaluations were not really an incentive to excel because no rewards are provided.

Captain Davis explained his goals for the upcoming period as follows:

- Continue to support training of patrol officers and their activities.
- Increase traffic enforcement.
- Improve and maintain officer morale and motivation.
- Continue to obtain useful equipment and update current equipment.

2020 Total Calls for service and Enforcement statistics:

- Calls for service (Routine) – (2057) – increase of 43 from 2019
- Criminal Investigations – (255) – decrease of 49 from 2019
- Total accidents investigated – (192) – decrease of 31 from 2019
- Criminal arrests – (319) – increase of 58 from 2019
- Illegal narcotics criminal arrests – (62) – increase of 10 from 2019
- Traffic summonses issued – (407) – decrease of 145 from 2019
- DUI and DIP arrests – (44) – increase of 10 from 2019
- Total calls for service – (5238) – increase of 1594 from 2019

Criminal Investigations:

The section continues with weekly discussions regarding active cases, information received, and case reviews are being conducted. Major case investigations have been successfully prosecuted. Training continues regarding crime scene procedures, evidence handling and packaging, and evidence storage. A total of 255 criminal investigations were conducted which resulted in 319 arrests. Captain Davis advised that the promotion of Officer T. B. Johnson to detective in January 2021 will fill the need to conduct serious investigations and for follow-up

investigations from patrol units. Captain Davis and his narcotic canine Drego have been utilized for building and vehicle searches and are regularly available for use.

Narcotic Detection Canine – 2020

- Vehicle searches – 31
- School searches – 0
- Search warrants – 2
- Traffic checking details – 2
- Illegal drugs seized – marijuana; cocaine
- Weapons seized – 5
- Vehicles seized – 0
- Arrests made – 13
- Money seized - \$134.00

Personnel Complaints:

Personnel complaints are either handled formally, (Documented with disciplinary action if proven and sustained) or informally (written or oral counseling administered). The total number of personnel complaints for 2020 are below:

- Complaints investigated – 4
- Complaints sustained against employee – 1
- Complaints unfounded against employee – 2
- Complaints not-sustained against employee - 0
- Complaints handled informally with counseling – 1

Use of Force Investigations:

Use of Force investigations were conducted whenever any type of force was used against an individual who resisted arrest or upon complaint from an arrestee. All incidents of this type were thoroughly investigated to include a written report by the officer and any witnesses as well as a supervisory review of body cam video. This was followed by a recommendation by the officer's supervisor to the Chief. There was an increase of two in the number of Use of Force incidents over the previous year.

- Use of Force investigations – 5
- Officer Justified – 5
- Not Justified – 0

General Condition of Department:

- The Tappahannock Police Department maintains a high condition of operational readiness despite COVID-19 issues during which several officers tested positive with the virus. We have had to quarantine officers which have created scheduling problems. Through it all so far, we have continued to operate and provide police services. We have adequate equipment and each officer is very well trained. DCJS Accreditation Standards are being adhered to and we were re-accredited by VLEPSC on February 5, 2020. Patrol vehicles are well maintained however, several vehicles will need to be replaced in the future and six of our vehicles are over seven years old with high mileage. The addition of a replacement police headquarters has assisted us with office and storage space. Raises and incentives for performance should be considered for retention of personnel in the future.
- As the town continues to grow and evolve, the police department should be properly staffed in order to provide better and more effective law enforcement to its citizens. The department is busy and the amount of calls for service has increased substantially. The future addition of two additional police officers for patrol would allow us to become more proactive, enhance officer safety by providing two officers on every shift, and provide more better police services to the community.

Future Projects and Planning

- The new Police Department Headquarters Building should have a generator system installed for use of the office and computer systems during power outages. (Same as last year's report)
- A Police Officer Career Development Program is still in the planning stages. This would allow officers who achieve certain career benchmarks to progress to a higher level within this rank. Department policy has been created however funding for this program has not been determined. This program is another incentive to retain and attract good patrol officers and has been implemented by most law enforcement agencies. (Same as last year's report)
- Implementation of incentive based Performance Evaluations. Consideration should be given to reward some incentive such as a salary increase or additional leave time for those employees whose work performance exceeds expectations and performs their duties in an exemplary manner. The department has been conducting employee performance evaluations since 2012. (Same as last year's report)
- Mobile data terminals or tablets for patrol vehicles would assist officers with overall enforcement and increased officer safety. This would also allow electronic submission of required reports by officers. This can be added to the new RMS/CAD system at any time funding is available. This should be a priority for the future and will allow the department to become more efficient and will provide officers with instant notifications of wanted persons to include photos, information from dispatch

- that can't be over the radio system and instant GPS locations for dispatch if the officer needs assistance. (Same as last year's report)
- The addition of a sergeant dedicated to supervising patrol operations would greatly enhance operations and enforcement.

SUMMARY

- The department has continued to operate despite the COVID-19 virus. We have received PPE equipment and each officer uses extra precaution when answering calls and dealing with the public. Calls for police services within the town have greatly increased. This department has strived to be proactive and maintain the safety of our citizens. In this current society, officer safety is paramount and more officers are needed to provide effective coverage and response to ever increasing calls for service. A modern police agency however, is not just about enforcement but also about community involvement. Besides enforcement, we are asked to handle many different police services and community events which squeeze our current staff very thin. In my opinion, a modern, well-staffed and fairly compensated police department reflects to visitors and citizens what kind of town Tappahannock has to offer and what it can achieve.