

TAPPAHANNOCK POLICE DEPARTMENT

January 24, 2022

2021 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 2021. 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 : Captain Jacob H. Siddons

Office/IT Equipment:

The police department transitioned to a new RMS vendor in October as necessitated by the upgrades by the Essex County Sheriff's Office. The new vendor, ID Networks, has been received with mixed reviews. Issues with the new software and the department's older equipment and current internet speed has caused serious performance problems, most notably with the property & evidence, and office manager's stations. Internet speed has been increased and new CPUs are being installed to alleviate the concerns. It is not yet known whether these changes will make the necessary corrections.

We are currently waiting on an upgrade to the office's phone system from Code Blue Technologies. This project was initially approved in December 2021. A modern voice/IP phone system is scheduled to replace the outdated analog system that has been plagued with operational problems.

New Equipment Needs:

The police department is still in the process of outfitting units with MDT stations (see Grants for further explanation). We have secured funding to start this project, but that grant will not cover all required expenses.

New office IT equipment is needed to replace workstations for the office manager, bodycam, Chief's office, and Captain's office. A quote from Code Blue has been obtained but as of today not approved.

Training:

In the year 2021, all officers needing recertification did so without special consideration. Officer Hurd successfully completed General Instructor and was officially certified in October after her required apprenticeship.

The department completed annual Use of Force review and firearms qualifications with no remedial instruction needed. LODA and bloodborne pathogen training was completed in December as well as RADAR/LIDAR recertification.

The NN/MP Regional In-Service was held in November in cooperation with the King William Sheriff's Office. A spring in-service was not held due to the TEVFD being used as a vaccination site.

Grants:

DMV Highway Safety Grant:

The police department was awarded \$5400 in Speed Enforcement and \$3350 in Occupant Protection funds. Officers worked as much federally funded overtime as possible and targeted designated problem areas for enforcement, i.e., Water Lane and Route 17 around TES.

The town was awarded \$105,000 as part of the FY2021 State Homeland Security Grant Program to install a backup generator at the police department. As of this writing the project is still in final approval.

Grant money for the installation of MDTs in police vehicles has been awarded but will not cover 100% of the costs. As of today, the project is still in development.

Department Accomplishments:

Officer Timothy Johnson was reassigned to criminal investigations and a new title of Detective. He is also assigned to the Chesapeake Bay Narcotics Task Force and has been a valuable member.

Captain C.F. Davis officially retired this year after a long career with the department. Many thanks and best wishes to him for the future.

Accreditation:

The department is halfway through the accreditation cycle and Term 3 will begin on 2/7/22. All files comply and well-maintained. Amanda Smith continues to do an exceptional job on this task.

Uniform Operations and Criminal Investigations: Captain Jacob H. Siddons

After discussion with Captain Jacob H. Siddons, it was determined that the uniform patrol section had met its goals and objectives for the reviewed period of time despite the COVID-19

pandemic and existing vacancies. The patrol section continues to function in a professional manner and continues to meet the expectations of the agency. He also advised that the department's patrol vehicles are in satisfactory condition. Captain Siddons advised that officer morale is not where it could be due salary issues. The patrol officers have continued to work well in very difficult times. Morale has been challenging due to remaining anti-police sentiment, pandemic rules, and salary concerns. In December, Officer Megan Mills resigned to take another job outside of law enforcement. Because of this, officers have worked extended shifts and overtime to fill the void. Captain Siddons and Detective Johnson have also worked patrol shifts to help cover the schedule.

Captain Siddons 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.
- Fill existing patrol vacancies.
- Addition of a patrol sergeant to assist with supervision.

2021 Total Calls for service and Enforcement statistics:

- Calls for service (Routine) – (4044)
- Criminal Investigations – (164)
- Total accidents investigated – (133)
- Criminal arrests – (212)
- Illegal narcotics criminal arrests – (22)
- Traffic summonses issued – (385)
- DUI and DIP arrests – (16)
- Total calls for service – (4976)

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. The department investigated one homicide during 2021 which resulted in an arrest and is awaiting trial. Training continues regarding crime scene procedures, evidence handling and packaging, and evidence storage. A total of 164 criminal investigations were conducted which resulted in 212 arrests. Captain Siddons advised that the addition of Detective T. B. Johnson to conduct serious investigations and follow-up investigations from patrol units has been of great assistance. Detective Johnson also is assigned to the VSP Drug Task Force and has been involved in numerous narcotic investigations.

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 2021 are below:

- Complaints investigated – 6
- Complaints sustained against employee – 0
- Complaints unfounded against employee – 3
- Complaints not-sustained against employee - 0
- Complaints handled informally with counseling – 3

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 – 2
- Officer Justified – 2
- 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. DCJS Accreditation Standards are being adhered to and we were re-accredited by VLEPSC on February 5, 2020. Patrol vehicles are well maintained and the addition of three low mileage Ford Taurus patrol vehicles was a welcome addition along with a new vehicle purchase. Raises and incentives for performance should be considered for retention of personnel in the future.
- We currently have two patrol officer vacancies. It has become very difficult to attract qualified certified officers. Starting salaries and no set pay scale continue to hinder this process. Consideration must be made for years of experience pay for qualified applicants. We are currently at the lowest per officer salary in comparison with adjoining agencies. We are also the busiest agency per population in the area. This must be rectified soon in order to retain experienced officers and to attract new applicants.
- 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 future addition of at least 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. The Town of Tappahannock currently has the area's highest reported Crimes per population at 6328 crimes per 100,000 and also the highest Arrests at 7452 arrests per 100,000. (2020 – VSP – NIBRS Agency Crime Report)

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. A VDEM grant was obtained for purchase and installation of this project and should be completed in 2022.
- Our current issued weapons should be replaced. They are 12 years old and use .357 caliber ammunition which is extremely hard to obtain and costly. (CIP has been submitted for this project)
- Implementation of incentive based Performance Evaluations and Career Progression Program. Consideration should be given to reward some incentive such as a salary increase for those employees whose work performance exceeds expectations and performs their duties in an exemplary manner.
- Mobile data terminals for patrol vehicles would assist officers with overall enforcement and increased officer safety. This would also allow electronic submission of required reports by officers, checking for wanted persons as well as driver transcripts and vehicle registrations. A DCJS grant was obtained which will partially complete implementation of this project. Additional funding will be required.
- The department's police officers need to be fairly compensated and in line with other jurisdictions. This includes not only starting salaries but also should include compression pay issues which considers years of experience. Hopefully, the proposed salary study included in next year's budget will address these issues.

SUMMARY

- The department has continued to operate despite the COVID-19 virus. 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. 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. We are appreciative of the support we have received from town council.