

Barnstead Police Department

Barnstead, New Hampshire

Management Letter

March 2012

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MANAGEMENT LETTER



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Barnstead Police Department

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OVERVIEW

The Barnstead Board of Selectmen commissioned Municipal Resources, Inc. (MRI) to provide a general management review of the Barnstead Police Department with an emphasis on “best practice” and retention of officers. This review is to assess, generally, the strengths and weaknesses of the police department, as well as to identify potential deficiencies and risks. This Management Letter sets forth MRI’s findings and recommendations to the Board of Selectmen and is intended to assist the Board in determining and prioritizing any ‘next steps’ toward risk reduction while providing for the optimal efficiency and effectiveness of the delivery of police services to the community.

MRI initially visited Barnstead on January 12, 2012, to meet with Police Chief Ken Borgia and Administrative Assistant to the Board of Selectmen Karen Montgomery. A tour of the police building was completed during the meeting with the chief. A good amount of material for review by MRI including department operating procedures, budget proposals, crime reporting and calls for service information, and sample officer work schedules, was provided by the chief at that time. Additional information concerning calls for service (provided through the Belknap Sheriff’s Office), prosecutorial statistics for the Barnstead police, and police officer hiring and selection information was provided at a subsequent meeting held with the chief. Telephone interviews were conducted with all full time, two part time, and two former Barnstead police officers to gain their insights about department operations.

This report contains findings of significant and serious deficiencies in the manner in which police operations are managed in Barnstead. Some of the deficiencies leave Barnstead in untenable risk and liability situations and some negatively impact retention of police officers.

Recommendations are made that can minimize the deficiencies now facing the town while optimizing the efficient and effective use of resources for the delivery of police resources. The report is organized in four (4) sections: Overview, Identification and Management of Risk, Retention of Personnel, and Conclusion.

Role of the Chief of Police

In any community, the chief of police is a highly visible representative of the community's governance and a leader in providing for the community's safety and well-being. The chief must establish an organization that consistently exhibits ethical behavior in the delivery of police services. This is accomplished by the chief exhibiting ethical behavior at all times, by selecting people of good character to serve in the department, by setting clear guidelines for ethical behavior for all members, and through constructive periodic evaluation of each member's performance. Beyond this, as the department's leader, the chief must be instrumental in setting the future direction of the department and in establishing realistic and measurable goals to evaluate progress.

Police officials have the unique responsibility in society to monitor the behavior of people against legal standards and under certain situations to place people in custody using the reasonable force necessary to do so. To insure that police officers discharge their duties appropriately, the chief must be a capable risk manager on behalf of the community limiting to the extent possible behavior by police officers that is inconsistent with safe, prudent, and legal behavior. To do so the chief must insure that people selected for police service meet well defined standards and that they are properly trained, guided, supervised, and evaluated in the performance of their duties. These requirements are best met when the chief provisions the department with policies and practices that meet contemporary best practice standards for personnel selection and management.

While the chief is a visible agent of the community's policing efforts, the chief must have an effective on-going relationship with the community's elected officials who are responsible to the community members for the overall performance of the police department. The Board of Selectmen and the Chief of Police must agree on the overall direction, programs, and practices of the police department and have a periodic reporting process, such as monthly activity reports, and formal evaluations of the chief's efforts against known criteria to maintain a level of satisfaction that things are progressing as expected.

IDENTIFICATION AND MANAGEMENT OF RISK

Written Directives

One of the most important components of the management structure of any police department is a set of written directives that guide and direct employees as they conduct their tasks. The policy and procedures manual is the foundation for all of the department's operations. When properly developed and implemented, a policy and procedures manual provides staff with the information to act decisively, consistently, and legally. It also promotes confidence and professional conduct among staff. Ideally, these directives should be readily accessible to each employee so that they may immediately access them for guidance. In today's technologically savvy workplace, having the policies and procedures readily available electronically allows employee access while facilitating periodic updating. As policies are living documents that provide timely guidance and reflect modern policing environments, they should each have a review date in order to ensure that they are revised when appropriate and remain relevant. To ensure employee's awareness, each employee should sign an acknowledgment of receipt and review of the manual also attesting that they have had an opportunity to ask and have resolved any questions that they may have with each policy and procedure. A copy of the signed receipt must be retained in each employee's personnel file.

The value of such a manual is paramount. Without it, it is virtually impossible to discipline an errant officer and have the discipline imposed survive a legal challenge. Additionally, the existence of policies, particularly in such high liability areas as domestic violence, uses of force, police pursuits, and sexual harassment, protects the Town of Barnstead and its employees in the event of lawsuits. Finally, good policies, when accompanied by regular training and consistent supervision, help to ensure that the Barnstead Police Department is consistent in the way it handles similar situations, regardless of when they are handled or which employee handles them. However, if policies are only in place and there is minimal and/or inconsistent demonstration of adherence, then exposure to litigation and the defense of the organization becomes untenable at best.

To underscore concerns for exposure to litigation, it should be noted that in recent years the amount of litigation against police officers and their employing jurisdictions is increasing, accompanied by larger monetary damage awards. Much of the alleged misconduct litigation is being brought in federal court. The federal cases are frequently brought under Title 42, U.S. Code, section 1983. These so-called 1983 actions have been used by the courts to support alleged negligence cases aimed at police management.

In reviewing the status of the police department's written directives with Chief Borgia on the first MRI visit to Barnstead, he acknowledged that they were out of date and that getting them current has been in the works for two or so years. During this period, new members of the police department have not been issued a copy of the SOP's, although some members thought there might be an on-line copy available to them. In either event, Barnstead police officers are operating generally with outdated policies that they have not been furnished with and which they have not acknowledged receipt or understanding of.

The extent to which police department standard operating procedures (SOPs) existed prior to his appointment as chief is unclear, but the chief explained that when he was hired in 2002, he developed a set of SOPs within his first six months at the police department using policies from accredited police departments as templates whenever possible. It is recommended by MRI that Barnstead update its SOPs, adopting policies developed by The Commission on Accreditation For Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA; www.calea.org) as CALEA policies are nationally recognized as best practice. Barnstead could simply find a similar police department that has adopted CALEA policies and borrow that department's policy manual to follow. Chief Borgia was fully aware of the value of adopting accredited policies and identified an accredited area police agency that he will be working with as he updates Barnstead's SOPs.

In Barnstead, the Board of Selectmen must adopt all municipal operating department policies to formalize them. To mitigate the current liability posed by dated and not approved police department SOPs, the Chief of Police and the Board of Selectmen will have to act in a timely and concerted manner.

Training

Training is an important responsibility for every police agency. Training serves four broad purposes:

- Well-trained officers are generally better prepared to act decisively and correctly in a broad spectrum of situations.
- Training results in greater productivity and effectiveness.
- Training fosters cooperation and unity of purpose.
- Training provides protection for the department and the town against successful liability lawsuits for failure to train their employees.

Municipalities have frequently been held civilly liable for failing to train their officers. The City of Canton, Ohio v. Harris, 489 US 378 (1989), is considered to be a landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision. This decision held that Canton's "deliberate indifference to the duty to train its officers" in the area of their constitutional limits to their authority created a policy or custom that held them civilly responsible. Where a failure to train reflects a deliberate or conscious choice by a municipality, a city can be liable for such a failure under 42 U.S.C. 1983 according to the Court. The cost of one lawsuit can far outweigh the cost of properly training police employees.

To be effective, training must honestly reflect community and departmental values, goals, programs, policies, and procedures. A professional training program should begin with a formal needs assessment. Critical functions are identified for each performance area in terms of risk and frequency. Armed with that knowledge, a training officer can design a training program that meets the needs of the organization for the present and into the future.

Certification and Refresher Training

The information provided above is presented to underscore the importance and significance that a competent training program provides to the police department and the Town of Barnstead. Police officers in Barnstead have all received required state certification at either the full or part time level to serve as police officers. To maintain their certification the state requires each police officer to complete, on an annual basis, refresher training as prescribed in the policy adopted by the New Hampshire Police Standards and Training Council (Council). The refresher training requires, in part, eight (8) hours of training in topics sanctioned by the police department. On an annual basis, the hiring authority must submit to the Council within thirty (30) days of the completion of a calendar year, certification that this requirement has been met. The lesson plans and attendance roster of training topics used to satisfy this requirement must be retained for five (5) years. Police officers must successfully complete annual firearms qualifications as set forth in Council policy and the qualifications must be administered by a Council certified firearms instructor. Finally, police officers who are issued or carry a defensive weapon (i.e., baton, pepper spray) must annually complete a four (4) hour training session on the use of deadly and non-deadly force. The police department and the town must be vigilant to insure that its police officers meet the prescribed annual refresher training and that the reporting and retention of lesson plans and attendance standards are strictly observed to meet continued police officer certification requirements and to mitigate liability exposure stemming from a failure to train its police officers.

Field Training

Police officers newly hired by Barnstead, both full and part time, are assigned to a field training officer (FTO) prior to being allowed to undertake patrol duties. The idea of the FTO program is to compliment the basic academy training by providing hands-on training and orientation to departmental policies and procedures under the direction of a qualified police officer who acts as a mentor and evaluator for the new officer. It is vitally important that all field training officers be trained in the skills and philosophies surrounding the field training program and that the process of field training be constantly reviewed, updated, and documented. Consistent with best practices, the new officer should be evaluated daily by the FTO through completion of a daily observation report (DOR) based on a set of well- defined standards of behavior including appearance, attitude, knowledge, performance, and relationships. This careful tracking of performance documents the improving abilities of the new officer while identifying areas where remedial work might be necessary. The FTO period often covers a set time while allowing flexibility to accommodate individual officer needs. In the end, the FTO makes a recommendation to allow the new officer to move forward to assume patrol on his/her own or that the officer is not capable of assuming that level of responsibility, which may result in the termination from service of the new officer. Either decision is based on well documented observation or training by the FTO based on bona fide position requirements. The Barnstead Police Department sets forth its field training program in an SOP that is nearly ten (10) years old. The program does not meet the scope, protocols, or detail required by best practices FTO programs. MRI recommends that the current police department field training program and practices be updated based on CALEA standards as soon as possible.

Career Development and Training

The vast majority of law enforcement departments in the United States are very small with generally less than ten (10) officers. Departments of this size, including Barnstead, rely primarily on the patrol officer, regarded as the most important person in the department, to deliver the fundamental services of the department to the community through police patrol. Because the patrol officer in small departments performs almost every policing activity with little support from specialists (i.e., detectives, evidence technicians), they need to be well trained generalists. To be effective in their undertakings, the patrol officer must receive training in a broad array of subjects including animal control, accident investigation, interview and interrogation, pursuit driving, domestic violence, and many more. The best way to approach the provision of needed training in the police department is by first assessing its training needs and then comparing those needs against the skills held by its members. Identified gaps are then prioritized to become the department's annual training plan. Funding for the plan is carried in the annual

department budget request and training is accomplished as funding becomes available. Much training is available at little to no cost. However, in small departments the cost of training often includes the cost of filling a vacant shift with another officer for the one attending training. This replacement cost will likely be at straight time if the replacement officer is part time or at an overtime rate if the replacement officer is full time. These are not insubstantial cost considerations, but they must be weighed against the essential need to keep the front line officers *well trained* generalists and by so doing improve the daily performance of the officer, while at the same time mitigating risk to the town from lack of training.

This training is certainly skills development for better performance, but it should also be considered as career development for the officer who receives it. The town and the police department rely on competent and dedicated employees to deliver the many services it provides to the community. To achieve this level of competent and dedicated service over the long haul the police department must invest in the career development of its employees.

One of the consistent frustrations and cause for concern expressed by current and former members of the Barnstead Police Department during interviews with them was the lack of training. One of those being interviewed characterized the training at the police department as “awful”. Frustration was often focused on late notice or last minute cancellation of scheduled training which happened frequently enough that it became an expectation that scheduled training would not happen and was thus demoralizing.

The provision of training effects more than skill and career development in organizations. Additional aspects of training will be discussed in the Retention section of this report. MRI recommends that in addition to an annual training plan, that the police department develop a career development plan for its employees. This plan would key on the skills, abilities, and aspirations of employees as compared to identified training and personnel development needs of the department. While the annual training plan identifies what training is needed, career development plans help identify who should receive the training for the betterment of the employee and the department.

Performance Evaluations

Part of the town’s strategy to mitigate liability stemming from employee misbehavior should be to conduct periodic performance evaluations. These evaluations also serve to motivate employees to maintain desirable levels of performance, pinpoint strengths that can be built on, weaknesses that can be corrected, and salary decisions.

To be of benefit in risk and liability reduction, evaluations must meet several standards which have been developed through the examination of court cases concerning performance evaluation¹. Several of the standards include:

- Appraisals must focus on performance standards identified by a job analysis.
- Performance standards must have been communicated to and understood by employees.
- Any rating system should contain an appeal mechanism for employees who disagree with their rating.

In essence the evaluation must be made on valid job tasks that the employee understands.

No performance evaluations are performed in the Barnstead Police Department. It was pointed out that this is so, as none are conducted in any town departments. Even if that is the case, conducting proper evaluations in the police department could help reduce risk by monitoring employee performance and correcting behavior that is inconsistent with job tasks. The practice of conducting evaluations could also help mitigate liability.

MRI recommends that performance evaluations for all police department employees be conducted periodically on a set and sustained basis.

Chain of Command

The Barnstead Police Department is responsible for providing service to the town seven (7) days a week, twenty-four (24) hours a day. One of the ways police agencies accomplish providing their service in an effective and efficient manner is to organize themselves by developing a line of authority that flows from the top of the organization to its bottom in a clear and unbroken line. The line creates a set of superior and subordinate relationships known as a chain of command. The chain provides for accountability and adherence to department policy and procedures by members of the department. The chain of command also sets a pattern of communications that generally flow up the chain and back down. Delegation of responsibility and authority also follow the chain as greater responsibility and authority are assigned at each higher level in the chain.

As the chain of command serves to provide coordination and consistency to the department's efforts over time, adhering to the chain of command is a basic and important requirement to maintain. Failure to do so can lead to confusion in internal department communications,

¹ W.F. Cascio and J. Bernadin, "Implications of Performance Appraisal Litigation for Personnel Decisions" *Personnel Psychology* 9 (1981): 211-226

reporting relationships, and operations. These failures can result in mistakes being made that may present risk and liability situations to the department and the town.

During interviews held with current and former police department employees it became clear that they see a deteriorating chain of command in the police department especially as it relates to the authority of the sergeant's position. Specifically, it appears that officers feel able to circumvent requests and directives of the sergeant by going to the chief. Officers also primarily go to the chief for guidance and supervision when there is no on-duty supervisor. While this practice may stem from budgetary concerns of overtime compensation for the sergeant who may be eligible for overtime when contacted off-duty, these budgetary concerns must be weighed against the impact on the chain of command and its importance to the overall success of the police department.

MRI recommends that the chain of command and specifically the manner in which positions of responsibility within the department are defined and operate be reviewed with the goal of creating and maintaining clear lines of responsibility, authority, and communications that improve the quality and consistency of police services and help minimize risk and liability exposure.

Evidence

In the course of carrying out their duties, police officers take into their possession physical evidence from crime scenes that become part of the case that is presented to a prosecutor for review toward a criminal prosecution. Police officers also take into their possession property that is found with an eye to determining who the rightful owner is and returning it. All property that comes into the possession of an officer must be strictly accounted for and controlled. For evidence in criminal cases a strict chain of custody of the evidence must be established and documented to show that the evidence gathered at a crime scene has not been contaminated and remains competent evidence for trial.

Police departments should adopt clear and specific policies and practices to insure that all property in their possession meet these stringent requirements and then monitor adherence to the policy by officers to insure compliance.

On MRI's initial visit to the Barnstead Police Department, a tour of the police building was taken to include an external view of the evidence room through its mesh wall. Chief Borgia described the procedures used by the officers to secure evidence and to establish its chain of custody. A review by MRI of the department's SOPs found a policy establishing overall evidence and property management system; however, MRI determined that this policy was not being

followed. Where no policy to control evidence and property exists, the potential for the misuse or misapplication of the evidence and property is increased. This is an untenable situation for a police department to be in and one where the potential for liability is clear. Further, if evidence and property are not carefully controlled, resulting in evidence not being suitable for prosecution or the discovery and return of property being suspect, the reputation of the department can be seriously damaged, a situation from which it is difficult to recover.

MRI recommends that if not already completed, a full audit of the police department's evidence and property system be conducted to determine the status of all evidence and property currently in the department's possession. MRI recommends that the department adopt an updated evidence and property control policy that clearly defines and controls the collection, retention, auditing and disposition of evidence and property to meet CALEA standards. Training of all department personnel in this policy must be completed and the training acknowledged by the employees and recorded in their personnel file. MRI recommends that the above actions take place as soon as possible.

RETENTION OF PERSONNEL

Almost without exception, the greatest part of any police department budget goes to paying the salaries of the sworn and civilian staff members of the department. Generally salaries which typically account for more than 80% of a department's budget include line items for straight time, overtime, on-call, sick leave, and vacation leave compensation. In 2010, the salary costs in the Barnstead Police Department budget were 84% of the total budget. This information is provided not as an analysis of the police department budget, but to highlight that personnel are the single most expensive and valuable policing resource the community supports. As such, having a top flight program to find, select, and retain well qualified police department personnel is essential.

There are several factors that affect the retention of personnel in any organization with the level of financial compensation being one of them. The salary survey presented below addresses that issue in the Barnstead Police Department. Other factors that affect retention are also presented in this section of the report.

Salary Survey

Although this report should in no way be considered a wage study, MRI does have a significant amount of wage data for positions within a police department. This data has been collected by MRI directly from participating towns in relation to our full wage and compensation studies

provided to the towns of Farmington (2011), E. Kingston (2010), and Danville (2011). The data from these studies does provide some comparative data for towns and police departments that are the same, a little larger, and a little smaller than Barnstead. When taken collectively, this data, as outlined below, provides a good general overview of police wages being offered in central and southern New Hampshire.

The police departments providing data for these studies were Sandown, Danville, Fremont, Atkinson, Kingston, Brentwood, E. Kingston, Kensington, Newton, Somersworth, Alton, Barrington, Berwick ME, Pittsfield, Wakefield, Andover, Canterbury, Fitzwilliam, Kensington, Madbury, New Hampton, Thornton, Ashland, Colebrook, Deering, Grantham, Greenville, Hampton Falls, Holderness, Madison, Marlborough, Mont Vernon, Newbury, Northumberland, Plainfield, Troy, Tuftonboro, and Whitefield.

For those positions in Barnstead we found the following salary ranges:

	Avg. Low	Avg. High	Barnstead*
Police Chief	\$53,395 (\$25.67/hr)	\$72,762 (\$34.98/hr)	\$63,336 (\$30.45/hr)
Sergeant	\$20.74	\$25.94	\$20.13
Officer (FT)	\$18.58	\$22.55	\$19.54
Officer (PT)	\$15.01	\$17.06	\$16.00

*Actual current rates as reported by Chief Borgia

A review of this information would tend to indicate that with the exception of the position of sergeant, the Barnstead wages are near the midpoint of those communities involved in our previous surveys. Without completing a full wage study, it is difficult to know how the Barnstead wages compare to the other communities when years of service are given some consideration. Although the hourly rate for the Barnstead position of sergeant appears low when compared to the other communities, some consideration should be given to the fact that the Barnstead sergeant has a “take home” vehicle. At the current IRS mileage rate of \$.555 per mile, a 40 mile roundtrip commute may be equal to \$22.20 per work day. Given a 10 hour work day, this could be viewed as an additional \$2.22 per hour in compensation. Given the above information we do not believe that wages, alone, constitute a significant reason for employee turnover. The town should however give consideration to implementation of a wage scale that recognizes years of service at a satisfactory level of performance.



Recruitment

The selection process starts with developing a sufficient pool of candidates to evaluate for current and future openings. While small police departments compete in the same candidate pool with larger departments that may pay higher salaries and offer more promotional opportunities, small departments can compete successfully if they develop innovative strategies that inform candidates of their special attributes. These are often built on providing a healthy and rewarding work environment. The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP; www.theiacp.org) has developed an excellent guide to assist small police departments with recruitment and retention issues entitled *Best Practices Guide for Recruitment and Retention of Qualified Police Personnel*. A key point made in the guide concerning recruitment is that to be successful, the police department must determine its recruitment and retention goals. Once established, action steps to meet the goals are identified and implemented. Evaluation of how well the department is meeting its goals must be performed periodically. If the goals are not being met, adjustments to the effort must be made.

While developing and carrying out a recruitment plan will be time consuming, it is an essential undertaking and one that needs to be followed consistently to attract the caliber of employees best suited for the town's needs. The development and implementation of the plan should be a shared responsibility within the police department and the community. While the chief may be the leader of the effort, all department personnel and representatives of the community have a vested interest in the selection of qualified personnel.

Successful recruitment and retention programs build on themselves. As the department strengthens its reputation as a great place to work, it will attract larger numbers of desirable candidates.

Selection

Policies adopted by the NH Police Standards & Training Council set minimum requirements for police departments to meet in order to determine if a police officer candidate will meet state police officer certification standards. Very detailed information must be gathered and evaluated in the areas of education, criminal and motor vehicle records, physical and psychological examinations, and overall background. Once complied with, the hiring department must notify the Council attesting that the gathered information of the candidate shows that the candidate meets the Council's minimum standards. This rigorous process is necessary to help insure that only those who meet high standards are authorized to carry out law enforcement duties in our communities.

The Barnstead Police Department has had some experience adhering to a comprehensive selection process that meets the needs of the Council leading to police officer certification. In that process, the police department also included a polygraph examination which permits careful examination of a candidate's past especially as it relates to honesty, integrity, and possible criminal behavior.

MRI learned that in the past several years the police department has placed a strong emphasis on recruiting police officers who have already been certified by the Council. The reasons offered for this include the desire to have experienced officers who can be "plugged in" to the patrol force quickly with a minimum of training, orientation, and supervision, to save the expense of sending an officer to the basic training police academy, and to acknowledge that the police department is somewhat a stepping stone to other police department employment. This last concern is an acknowledgement that since turnover of police officers is an issue, it is more practical to avoid the costs associated with hiring non-certified officers.

This approach to police officer selection has several down sides. Hiring personnel is likely the single most significant thing that a public employer does. The importance of hiring the right personnel cannot be overstated. More than one of the interviewed past and present police officers felt that the practice was much about "getting a warm body" into the department as quickly as possible. It was also said that recruiting efforts were focused on people who were not happy with their current employment. In our view, hiring candidates that are not happy, dissatisfied, or disenfranchised with their current employer, have a lower probability of success at a new department. Typically, the focus may be on getting out of their presentation situation, for any number of reasons, and less on making a career at the new department. The best predictor of future behavior is past behavior. These officers will likely contribute to the high rate of employee turnover.

Further, as certified police officers have been considered in the selection process for Barnstead, the police department has accepted psychological and polygraph examinations that were conducted by the certified officer's current employing police department. The results of these examinations are from two to six years old in recent hires. MRI believes that having the results of psychological and polygraph examinations taken during the selection process is very important for all candidates whether certified or not. When a police officer is hired, Barnstead needs to undertake due diligence to insure that the new hire meets the high standards required of law enforcement officers.

MRI recommends that psychological and polygraph examinations be administered as part of the selection process prior to a police officer, either full or part time, being hired. MRI

recommends that given the undeniable importance of hiring the most well qualified candidates for the police department, that the fully developed and historically applied selection process be used consistently. In so doing, the issue of police officer certification will be only one of many selection criteria to consider. Failure to do so will continue to allow the selection process to be viewed as less than it should which may yield less than hoped for results.

Training

In an earlier section of this report training was discussed in terms of mitigation of risk, liability, skill, and career development. Beyond that, the lack of training impacts retention in the following ways.

- Training results in greater productivity and effectiveness.
- Training fosters cooperation and unity of purpose.
- Training fosters a sense of self-worth/self actualization.
- Develops teamwork/esprit de corps.

While training does result in greater productivity and effectiveness, a lack of training reduces productivity and effectiveness. As noted earlier, the lack of training offered by the police department and frustration with canceled and postponed training was a common theme expressed by interviewees. Most employees including police officers want to feel on top of their game and equal in ability to their peers. Feeling less than fully trained and being frustrated by the delivery of training in the department can lead to job dissatisfaction and looking to greener pastures.

When police officers train together they are better able to develop cooperative working relationships. Training also develops team building and a sense of common purpose. The absence of these attributes means the department is less unified, has less common identity, and lacks esprit de corps. When this happens, employees are less committed to the department and more apt to seek better employment situations.

One of the great advantages that a small police department has over larger departments is the opportunity for officers in the smaller department to have exposure to all types of police work, whereas in larger departments specialized positions exist greatly limiting a patrol officer's exposure. For instance, in larger departments police officers are more likely to be initial "report writers" rather than investigators for crimes such as burglary, sexual, offenses, aggravated assaults, computer crimes, etc. It is crucial that officers on department's such as Barnstead be given the opportunity to develop themselves in areas that interest them such as juvenile offenses, photography, fingerprinting, sex crimes, and computer crimes to name a few. Officers

allowed to develop these specialized talents are able to share their training/expertise with the other officers of the department and work more significant cases with a team approach. This is a positive opportunity for smaller departments and can pay huge dividends in the areas of recruitment and retention.

Evaluation

While performance evaluations serve to develop skills and facilitate the supervision and management of employees as discussed previously in this report, they also serve to provide meaningful feedback to employees as to their job performance. Evaluations let employees know what is expected of them. It is often the case that employees are doing satisfactory or better work meeting those standards. Therefore evaluations allow employees to feel grounded in their work and to receive positive feedback about their work. Where improvement is needed, constructive steps can be taken to get the work to an acceptable level with the employee being provided with feedback and encouragement along the way. Knowing what is expected of you for job performance and receiving positive feedback are powerful aspects of job satisfaction.

In addition to being discouraged that no performance evaluations were conducted in the police department, those interviewed also noted that there were almost never “atta boys”, positive comments as to performance, handed out. Rather, when performance comments were made they tended to be negative ones. This is not a situation that promotes retention.

Scheduling

The police schedule is simply the display of the days of the week and times of the day that police officers are assigned to work. The creation of the schedule takes into consideration several things. The first order of business is to determine with as much accuracy as possible the number of calls for police service (CFS) received by time of day, day of the week, and by call location. From this information shifts are configured and officers assigned, often to apportion a greater number of officers to peak CFS periods. The Barnstead Police Department has CFS data available to it through the Belknap County Sheriffs’ Office communications center.

Chief Borgia provided CFS data by time of day and day of week for 2010 from the communications center to MRI. He also provided a geographic location in the community for the calls. During the year, 3,167 CFS were logged for the police department. As is typical, CFS begin to increase early to late afternoon toward the end of the week, with Friday and Saturday having the heaviest CFS volume. As early Sunday morning arrives, CFS begin to slow down.

In 2011, the police department was staffed with the chief, a sergeant, three full time police officers, and several part time officers. Police coverage by full time officers was scheduled for 20 hours each day, seven days each week. An officer is assigned to be on-call to respond if necessary from 2:00 A.M. through 6:00 A.M. each day. From looking at the CFS data provided it was determined that during the on-call hours, 2.6% (84 calls) of the 3,167 calls received for the year, were received.

Police scheduling must also take into consideration how assignment of schedules affect the officers. Officers realize that they are likely to rotate between the several shifts progressing from day shift, to the evening shift, and then to the night shift for example. The length of being on a particular shift before changing is also a consideration. It is more difficult to change shifts frequently than to have a longer time on a shift before rotating. This is because quick changes from shift to shift adversely affect sleep patterns while a long period on a shift permits better adjustment for sleep patterns. Changing shifts can also conflict with other family member schedules of work, school, and family time.

Currently the police department has a six week rotation from one shift to another shift. Concern was expressed by interviewed officers that six weeks was too short a period. They cited it being overly difficult to get their bodies adjusted to that cycle as well as it being difficult to plan out other aspects of their lives, preferring a longer period of time between rotations. With that said, the interviewed officers, both current and former, said that the current scheduling practices of the department were now more stable and therefore better than before. There were strong feelings of displeasure expressed at previously less stable, frequently changing schedules. This was clearly an issue that negatively affected morale. More than one officer said they mentioned these concerns directly to the chief.

Schedules must be developed with meeting the needs of the community the primary focus, but they must also consider the health and relative wellbeing of the officers who fill them. MRI recommends that police officers be provided with a reasonable voice in the overall development of police schedules, and that once the schedule is determined, it be followed consistently except for significant circumstances that require it to be changed. Longer shift rotations, at a minimum of ten to twelve weeks, is recommended instead of the shorter six week rotation.

Communications

Where communications throughout the chain of command in a department does not function well, the structure and organization it should provide is compromised. In such instances, a well

regulated and consistent flow of communication suffers as does clear delegation of responsibility and authority. This causes a sense of discord and disharmony in the ranks. Team work and a sense of togetherness suffer as does morale. This sense of disunity was expressed by those interviewed. In order to resolve this, the chief must take stock of current department practices and correct any deficiencies found, as measured against proper use of a chain of command and delegation of responsibility and authority.

MRI recommends that the chief solicit constructive feedback from members of the department regarding their concerns in this area. It should be well understood that this clearing of the air and the response to it is not to be based on personality, but rather on returning to basic and healthy principles of organizational behavior that will improve the morale, effectiveness, and commitment to the department and the community it serves.

Building and Equipment

The quality and “serviceability” of the equipment provided to department members has an impact on their ability to perform their jobs. It also affects how they feel about themselves and their employer. A key piece of equipment for police officers is the police cruiser. In Barnstead, the cruisers are aging and have high mileage. The oldest is a 2003 model that is “beat up”. The 2005 model has 123,000 miles on it, but is in decent shape. The 2006 Explorer has 127,000 miles and has required frequent repairs. The 2007 model with 117,000 miles is in good shape. The 2010 Explorer operated by the chief is in good shape. There is concern that the annual replacement of a cruiser is no longer on schedule, which will lead to a lower quality, less serviceable fleet, with increasingly higher repair costs.

The uniforms issued to officers are considered adequate. The department does provide good quality firearms and defensive weapons (i.e., pepper spray, batons, Tasers). While the status of this equipment is considered to be adequate, there is concern that the level is slipping due to difficult financial times.

The police building has significant deficiencies. The space is crowded, the roof leaks, the basement is damp, and the water is not potable. For the members of the department, operating out of this substandard building is an ongoing negative experience and there is little hope for improvement.

During the tour of the building the chief pointed out, and MRI noted, several significant building related problems that deserve immediate attention. Ground level windows are not secure and thus could allow someone to break in. While there is camera surveillance outside and inside the building that may serve as a deterrent, building security needs to be increased. The

department's records system is stored in a computer located in the building with insufficient back up of the data. Preferably, the storage of data should be off-site but in all cases, provision should be made for off-site storage of the data back- up.

MRI recommends that the chief and the town undertake a sufficiently funded replacement plan to support to the police department's need for good quality and serviceable essential equipment items to include police vehicles, uniforms, body armor, firearms, and defensive weapons. This type of planning should serve to smooth the highs and lows of the police budget, and this level of support will improve the effectiveness and efficiency of police operations, as well as sending a clear message of support to department members. MRI recommends that the quality and sufficiency of the police building be brought up to standard.

Community Engagement

During their interviews the former and current police officers were asked if their workloads permitted them to get out of their cruiser to interact with the public informally and if they were encouraged to do so. They were also asked how they felt the community perceived the police department. Almost without exception those interviewed said plainly that there was little to no encouragement to interact, or to engage with community members informally in non-enforcement circumstances. While several of those interviewed said they did so, on their own initiative, they also saw their actions as clear exceptions to the rule. Those who did take such initiative said they were chastised by some of their peers for doing so. It was of little surprise to them that the interviewed officers felt that members of the community held the police department in low regard. While police officers, due to the nature of being agents of enforcement actions, can often feel set apart from the community, the level of feeling separated from the community in Barnstead was *well* beyond what is common. It was clearly felt that the chief does not value, promote, or personally demonstrate non-enforcement community interaction and engagement activities.

MRI found this level of estrangement between the police and community counterproductive to the good and necessary workings of the police department and corrosive to a constructive police and community partnership. If retention of police officers is to be improved, this issue of building healthy and constructive police and community relationships must come to the fore and be substantially improved.

MRI recommends that a working group representative of the community and including police officials be formed to assess the current status of police and community relations. Once determined, the group should identify action steps for improvement and make

recommendations for their implementation. Once underway, the effect of the recommendations should be measured to insure they are having the desired outcomes. If that is not the case, modification to the action steps will be needed to meet the outcomes. MRI recommends that the town continue to periodically assess the nature of police and community relations so as to maintain them in positive fashion. The chief and officers should be encouraged to interact with and be a positive presence in the community.

CONCLUSION

The Barnstead Board of Selectmen commissioned MRI to evaluate, generally, the management of the Barnstead Police Department to determine where improvements could be made to reduce risk and liability, adopt best practices, and to address the retention of police officers. MRI found that there are deficiencies in the management of the police department that expose the town to unnecessary liability. Recommendations have been made in the report to improve management practices and reduce liability, often through the adoption of best practices. MRI has also recommended steps to be taken that should significantly improve Barnstead's ability to attract, select, and retain qualified police officers.

To reduce undue exposure to liability from police actions, the first priority is to adopt a set of standard operating procedures that meet CALEA standards which are deemed to be best practice. Once adopted, the SOPs must be provided to department personnel who must become familiar with them, have them available for guidance, and be held accountable to them.

Additional priorities to reduce liability include the development and delivery of an annual training program to insure that employees meet state standards for refresher training and to develop the skills and abilities needed to properly perform the complex and ever changing policing role. Officers must be evaluated periodically to make sure their performance meets expectations and to provide remediation if required.

It is also a priority that management practices in the police department meet well established standards so that the operations of the department engender clear and consistent communications. These practices must extend to proper delegation of responsibility supported by the authority to discharge them. These practices, once established, need to be consistently maintained. Doing these two things should end a sense of confusion and a lack of consistency now present in the department.

To address the issues of retention of police officers, the first priority should be to establish an overall recruitment plan where recruitment goals and action steps needed to meet them are fully defined. As over 80% of the annual police budget supports personnel costs, competent recruitment practices that help insure the hiring of well-qualified police officers are essential. A priority must be placed on the development and consistent application of a selection process that evaluates all aspects of the applicant, with state certification being just one of them. There should be no shortcuts when it comes to hiring personnel. Properly selected personnel with the proper mindset should greatly reduce retention issues. Once selected, proper training, professional development, and evaluation of police officers are key tools in developing a sense of common purpose and teamwork. Providing a work schedule that meets the community's needs and also addresses the needs of the officers to the extent possible is also important for a healthy working environment. Having all of these things supported by positive management practices that are clear and consistent will go a long way to improve morale in the department that is characterized now as "bad and getting worse."

Police agencies can only provide a good quality level of service when there is understanding of the role of the police and support for it from the community. That level of understanding and support is not evident today in Barnstead. Police officials must work hard to develop the positive community perception that is required to provide quality services. It must be a priority of elected and police officials joined by representatives of the community to address this issue in a constructive way for the short and long term.

MRI understands that the Town of Barnstead has been studying the concept of merging its department with the Belknap County Sheriff's Office (BCSO) and then contracting with the BCSO for policing services. It is apparent that the town, through its study, is aware of many of the issues and challenges involved with making such a change. Consolidation/merger has been a trend throughout the country for a number of years and needs to be given careful consideration. There are potential benefits as well as significant challenges to making this work in a way that satisfies the community. Although MRI was not charged with making a recommendation regarding such a consolidation/merger, this report should serve to identify a number of key deficiencies that should be addressed if the community is to continue to provide its own policing services.