

Report of the Police Department 2011

The year 2011 continued to present challenges to our organization, where we have been tasked again this year to continue to keep up with the increased demands placed on our police department by a depressed economy, while at the same time proceeding with attempts to replace the police officers who left our agency and went to others for new challenges and opportunities. Fortunately Officer Steven Janvrin, who was deployed to the Middle East for 12-14 months returned safely and we are very glad to have him back with us providing services to the town. For all of 2011 we again worked at a reduced level of officers, where we were down an average of two officers for the entire calendar year. We were very fortunate to find another excellent officer to fill our eleventh position in November of 2011, and he comes with an incredible amount of experience out of the state of Florida. Although this new officer's field training will be done in early March of 2012, because of the Certification and Administrative Rules through New Hampshire Police Standards and Training, he will not be able to perform solo duties until the middle of April, 2012. Unfortunately our efforts to fill the last open position the department, has caused us great difficulty. The standards we have in the police department relative to the background of our police officers is creating considerable delays in filling that position, where we have withdrawn Conditional Offers of Employment because of problems discovered during these Background Investigations. I must add though, that the two replacement officers hired in 2010 have really grasped the mission of the department very quickly and have become excellent additions to our team. As I have explained to the Select Board, the Budget Committee, and many residents in passing, whether we have twelve police officers or a reduced number of police officers, we remain committed to providing uninterrupted service to the town so this has certainly kept us busy for the last two years.

Once the officers are finally all replaced and trained properly according to the department's policy and procedures, and of course in line with State Laws and the Standards and Training Administrative Rules, the next challenge will be to retain them. The police officers in North Hampton have become very desirable to other organizations at the state and local level because of their reputation as professionals, and of course because of the amount of training they have received while here in North Hampton. A new concern that I have that has not ever been an issue in North Hampton, is the trend where North Hampton Police Officers are now paid approximately \$3000.00-\$5000.00 less than other officers in neighboring agencies. Historically, this caused a very high turnover rate in other police departments when they experienced the same pay differential compared to other departments. Although there are times when turnover is healthy and advantageous to an organization, there are also times when a failure to retain your newest employees has a very negative impact on a police department and the consistency of the services it can provide. This creates an environment where our department may end up hiring new employees and putting them through the 14-week police academy, putting them through 14-week field training program, and spending three to four years making them self-sufficient, only to have them leave the organization for considerably higher

pay. As we began Contract Negotiations in September of 2011 this was a concern I had in the back of my mind, and of course a specific plan that Deputy Chief Maddocks and I both had to solve this forecasted problem during contract negotiations. Based on the current trends we see in the negotiations process, I believe that the Select Board and the Union can come to an agreement and resolve this dilemma that the department faces. Of course, any agreement that is tentatively agreed to has to be approved by the voters at the polls in May. Please keep in mind that if you do see a warrant article to cast a vote for a police contract the police department will need your support in order to complete our goal of making our pay and benefits comparable to our neighboring agencies.

Based on the personnel levels mentioned above, I am pleased with the activity in certain categories in 2011 compared to 2010. In 2011 the overall calls for service increased from 9,900 to 10,459 (+5.6%). At the same time total number of Vehicle Accidents decreased from 150 in 2010, to 146 in 2011. Many of these Vehicle Accidents revealed more severe injuries sustained, but we were fortunate enough to make it through another calendar year with no Fatal Vehicle Accidents. Overall Motor Vehicle Stops increased in 2011 from 1835 in 2010 to 1864 in 2011 (+1.5%). This data does not include the motorcycle and traffic checkpoints that were once again conducted over the summer of 2011. Investigative cases in 2011 were down from 566 in 2010 to 505 (-10.0%) in 2011. Although there are not always arrests made in these investigative cases, many times there is substantial time put into investigating them by our Detective, or by the Patrol Division. It is important to residents and non-residents that we continue to approach investigative cases in this manner in order to make sure that victims of crime are well represented. Of course it is also important that when someone has been accused and the reported event does not meet the definition of a crime, then we clear the names of those accused as well. In the arrests category where the arrests in 2010 totaled 173, we saw a decrease with the total arrests in 2011 being 165. Half of these arrests (51%) were on view arrests during the commission of a crime, such as operating after suspension, and Driving While Impaired, Reckless Driving, etc. The remainder of these arrests of the incident based/warrant type which requires a great deal of investigation time before an arrest can be made.

As was the case last year we continued to assertively enforce the problem of Motorcycle Exhaust Noise, not only with our own officers but also by forming a coalition with other seacoast communities to share equipment and personnel to carry out this important function. I have also continued to work with members of the House of Representatives in order to come up with a new State Statute that will help police officers to test motorcycles roadside, and also will help reduce the current decibel levels down from 106 Db. to 92 Db. This state process is even more important after the Superior Court found that the Ordinance that passed at the polls in 2010 relative to the decibel levels of motorcycle exhaust is non-enforceable and a permanent injunction was issued to the town not to enforce it.

Another new program that was added in December of 2011 is the addition of a Prescription/Non-Controlled Drug Drop Box in the lobby of the police department. Although this project was started in July of 2011, it was finalized in December after

working with the Pharmacy Board, the Department of Safety, the New Hampshire Attorney General's Office, and the Federal Drug Enforcement Administration to make sure we were providing this service legally. Please refer to the Police Department page of the Town of North Hampton Website at www.northhampton-nh.gov to find instructions of how to package prescription and non-controlled drugs for drop-off into our drop box. Please remember under Federal or State Law Cocaine, Heroin, Ecstasy, Bath Salts, Marijuana and other illegal drugs cannot be placed in this drop box. Also sharps such as needles, syringes, or lancets of any type are not allowed in the drop-box. There are also instructions on the police web page of organizations to contact for the disposal of sharps. This service which is meant for residents and non-residents is an imperative step toward solving the epidemic of the illegal use, abuse, and overdoses caused by prescription and non-controlled drugs. It also keeps these dangerous substances from ending up in our wells or public water systems after being buried in a land fill, or flushed down toilets.

As always, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the residents of North Hampton for their support, and also to remind them to call us if they see anything they consider dangerous or suspicious. This is more important than ever during the type of recessed economy we are currently experiencing. The success of any police agency relies greatly on the eyes and ears of the public, so please do not hesitate to call and make us aware of your concerns. In addition, I will take this opportunity to ask that any resident who wishes to be put on a volunteer list for hosting at an Emergency Warming Center should call us at the police department to leave your name and telephone number. These types of volunteers would be asked to provide light refreshments, coffee, and hot chocolate in the event we open the Warming/Cooling Center at the North Hampton School. I thank all in advance for any assistance you can give us with this mission, and look forward to working with any and all volunteers.

Brian P. Page
Chief of Police