

Report of the Police Department 2012

The year 2012 revealed increased 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 slow moving 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. Although our efforts to fill all of these positions were delayed where we have withdrawn Conditional Offers of Employment because of problems discovered during Background Investigations, the final open police officer's position was filled on October 5 by an excellent candidate, and he will begin the mandatory fourteen-week police academy on January 7, 2013 in order to obtain his full-time certification. We all certainly hope within the department that this will be the last hiring process we have to run for a while. The steps in these hiring processes and the Background Investigations that go along with them place a great deal of added work load on all of the department staff from the bottom to the top of the Organizational Chart, and it will be a great relief to move away from those hiring responsibilities and return to a concentration on the services we can offer to the public. I must add though, that all six of the replacement officers hired since 2009 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 remained committed to providing uninterrupted service to the town so this has certainly kept us busy for the last three 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. I am pleased to report that as of July 1, 2012 the contract negotiated between the town and the New England Police Benevolent Association not only saved the town thousands of dollars in Medical Benefit Costs, but also will assist greatly in retaining the officers we worked so hard to hire and train over the last three years. My opinion in this situation is based on the salary adjustments, the educational and training incentives, and the medical insurance change incentives that were negotiated in this four-year contract make us very competitive with other agencies relative to salaries and benefits. Of course, without the support of the Select Board, the Budget Committee, and most importantly the vote of the Residents of town this success would never have been realized. This is just one of many examples where I have been fortunate over my nearly twelve years as Police Chief to have incredible support from the community so the department can remain efficient and professional.

Based on the many responsibilities and projects the department has been tasked with over the last year, I am pleased with the activity in the following categories in 2012 compared to 2011. In 2012 the overall calls for service decreased from 9,900 to 9,181 (-7.2%). At

the same time total number of Vehicle Accidents stayed exactly the same at 146 in 2011 and 2012. Many of these Vehicle Accidents resulted in moderate to severe injuries, but we were fortunate enough to make it through another calendar year with no Fatal Vehicle Accidents. Overall Motor Vehicle Stops decreased in 2012 from 1864 in 2011 to 1153 in 2012 (-38%). Investigative cases in 2012 were up substantially from 505 in 2011 to 599 in 2012 (+18.6%). 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 arrests in 2011 totaled 165, but we saw an increase in 2012 with the total arrests ending up at 202 (+22.4%). Nearly half of these arrests (48%) were on view arrests during the commission of a crime. The remainder of these arrests is the incident based/warrant type which requires a great deal of personnel hours 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. After many hours of meetings with the motorcyclists, the motorcycle dealers association, members of NH CALM (Citizens Against Loud Motorcycles), other Seacoast Police Departments, and of course the New Hampshire Legislature, we were successful in changing the law regulating the “sound pressure” that motorcycle exhaust systems are allowed to emit into the environment. This new law will not only will help to satisfy the residents who have demanded a quieter environment, but it also enable two police officers to conduct roadside measurement on the motorcycles that exceed the new 92 Db limitation, as opposed to the old law which required three to four officers. Utilizing an encumbrance from last year’s Police Fiscal Year Budget, we were also able to obtain the Decibel Meter, External Tachometer, and Calibrator that we need to continue our enforcement of excessive motorcycle noise. In the past we have had to rely on equipment and manpower from the New Hampshire State Police to conduct an acceptable level of motorcycle noise enforcement, and it limited how often we could do this type of enforcement. We are no longer limited under these circumstances where we have purchased our own equipment, and will continue to train more officers in the procedures to conduct the exhaust testing.

Another new program that was added in late December of 2011 was the addition of a Prescription/Non-Controlled Drug Drop Box in the lobby of the police department, 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, epi-pens 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. In 2012 we collected a total of 131.4 lbs. of dangerous prescription and non-controlled drugs in our drop-box. Adding in the two take-back days in April and September of 2012 we were able to collect and destroy 177.3 lbs. of prescription and non-controlled drugs preventing it from ending up in our environment, or even worse ending up causing an overdose to an addicted person, or a naïve person who does not realize the dangers of these types of drugs. On December 19, 2012 this 177 lbs. of dangerous substances was transported to the Wheelabrator-Concord Facility in Concord, NH and was placed in their incinerator properly disposing of them.

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. All of us should be very aware that Prescription Drugs, certain non-controlled drugs, Marijuana, and Heroin seem to be the most common drugs we are making arrests for. I ask the residents of North Hampton to continue assisting your police department in the apprehension of the people selling or using these dangerous substances, or of course assisting us in apprehending those who are committing certain crimes to fulfill their need to obtain these types of dangerous and illegal substances.

Brian P. Page
Chief of Police