

Report of the Police Department 2013

The year 2013 was a very difficult year for me as a police chief, and the other officers on the department who all want to provide as much service as possible to the residents who live in North Hampton, and also those who visit North Hampton. Calendar year 2013 became the year we at the police department had dreaded as it pertained to the services we wanted to provide for all citizens and residents, compared to the services we were able to afford to provide based on an economy that forced us to tighten our belts as far as the overall town budget was concerned. Fiscal 2013 left us no choice in looking at the services we have always provided, and making some reductions in those services in order to leave the limited number of officers on duty at any given time so we could respond to priority calls for service. This budget trend continues in Fiscal 2014, which of course included the last six months of the period this Police Annual Report covers. Although many of the services I had suspended so we could prioritize other services are back in place currently, in viewing the current condition of the police budget I may have to drastically reduce overtime expenditures again in order to prevent the police bottom line from being over-expended. This of course once again will put us in the same circumstances we were in at the end of last fiscal year with many fewer officers on shift to detect and respond to crimes in progress or calls for service requested by residents and visitors alike. In order to assist in coming in at or under budget for this fiscal year, I have chosen to delay the replacement of a police officer who left our agency for a neighboring police department at the end of November of 2013. With this explanation to the residents in place, it does not surprise me that we saw considerable decreases in many categories of activity in calendar year 2013. Over the years I have explained to the Select Board, the Budget Committee, and many residents in passing, whether we have twelve police officers or we are operating with a reduced number of officers, we remain committed to providing quality, professional services, and additionally a fast and efficient response to priority emergency services no matter the budget situation or number of personnel that we have available to us.

The following statistics may make it appear that the officers on the department have not been as busy as they were in calendar year 2012. Based on a recently I completed an overtime analysis for the Budget Committee relative to the filling of shifts vacated for an array of operational reasons. Following this analysis it is obvious to me that the department functioned with up to 54% of the personnel hours vacant, due to the inability to expend the overtime to fill those hours. Based on this knowledge I can tell you the officers who were on shift were working much harder with a much higher case load than previous years when we were fully staffed, or had the overtime funding to keep a much higher percentage of the vacated hours filled. The following are the activity comparisons between calendar year 2012 and 2013 in spite of all the above circumstances. In 2013 the overall calls for service decreased from 9,900 to 8912 (-9.9%). At the same time total number of Vehicle Accidents increased slightly in 2013 from 146 in 2012 up to 172 in 2013 (+1.5%). 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 increased in 2013 from 1153 in 2012 up to 1959 in 2013 (+40%). This is a particular area of activity that we concentrated on in order to reduce the number of motor vehicle complaints from citizens and also to better control the number of accidents that were occurring in town. Although I am pleased with the resulting number of stops based on where we were in August of 2013, but I am aware

that we need to dedicate more time to traffic observation and enforcement, and radar speed enforcement. Investigative Cases decreased in 2013 from 599 in 2012 down to 458 in 2013 (-23.5%). With this said, the increased severity and the complexity of investigative cases where it included computerized child pornography cases, cases involving car-jacking and attempted kidnapping, and an increased number of drug cases, the time put into a fewer number of cases met or exceeded the personnel hours committed to the 599 cases in 2012. 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 2012 totaled 202, there was a decrease in 2013 down to 167 (-17.3%). This number again does not surprise me based on the considerably reduced number of officers on duty during calendar year 2013. Nearly half of these arrests (48.5%) 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.

Another successful 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. A disappointing discovery for calendar year 2013, was finding that our collections in the Non-Controlled Drug/Prescription Drug Box was only 48.2 lbs. Although this is a considerable amount of drugs being disposed of in a proper way, it did not come close to what we collected in 2012 (130 lbs). This Annual Report will be the first of many efforts to get the word out that our box is still open and we need you to utilize it as much as possible to dispose of your non-controlled and prescription drugs that are no longer needed. The good news is; that two area departments added the same type of disposal boxes so our decrease may be due to the fact we are no longer servicing those communities, which are considerably larger than North Hampton.

In late 2013 there was considerable concern in the community that the police department may not be effectively communicating with the public as to potential safety hazards or dangers in the school environment. I hope that the reaction from the police department following a forum held at the school has convinced all the residents of North Hampton, particularly those who have children who attend the school, that we heard the message loud and clear. We have, and will continue to communicate issues that affect the safety of the school and the children through the press, through the town website, the town's e-

mail system, and with the cooperation of the school through their e-mail system. As always, the police department and the school have made it our continued mission to work together in order to keep the children in the school as safe as possible. These efforts include the police department's involvement in serious discipline and bullying situations, involvement in situations where a memorandum of understanding dictates when we will definitely work as a team on a particular criminal act or certain misbehavior, and of course to keep each other informed so when an issue arises that is not serious for it to be known about by the school and the police so we can prevent it from becoming a much larger, or more serious safety or behavioral problem.

Other services added by the police department in 2012 was the availability of a Rape, Aggression, and Defense Course sponsored by our department and presented by the RAD Organization to residents and non-residents. There will be another offering for this course in 2013 based on the success of this first class. A second service started in 2012 sponsored by our department and carried out by Homewatch Care Givers, is the availability of daily phone calls to those who sign up to receive them in order to check on their well being. These daily calls are available to all residents who desire to sign up, and are designed for those who are elderly, permanently or temporarily infirmed, are housebound, on bed rest etc. Those who wish to sign up for services with Homewatch Care Givers are urged to go to the police department page of the town website at http://www.northhampton-nh.gov/Public_Documents/NorthHamptonNH_Police/index to download a sign up form. You can then contact Sue Hills, a dedicated town resident who is assisting with this program in order to complete the application process. Her telephone number is 603-380-2375. Of course if you wish to obtain more information on this program you can feel free to contact the Police Administrative Assistant, Jess Miehle at 603-964-2198.

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