



Haverhill Police Patrolman's Association

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Date: September 15, 2011
To: Chief Alan DeNaro
From: HPPA Executive Board
Re: Staffing Levels

Dear Chief DeNaro,

As you are well aware the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), within the United States Department of Justice (DOJ) has a National Average of 2.5 police officers per 1000 residents. At this time The City of Haverhill has a staffing level of 1.38 per 1000 residents, far below The State of Massachusetts average of 2.0 police per 1000 residents. Furthermore, Haverhill is well below comparable cities in the commonwealth with populations exceeding 60,000 residents.

→ 1.29 as of 5/11/11
(4 retirements not filled)

The following suggestions and opinions are in direct response to your request for the Union's stance on the current staffing levels. We stand by our belief that this Department is currently under-staffed and we, as responding Patrol Officers and Detectives, bear the burden, stress, and safety issues that are directly related to this lack of "man-power". However, the HPPA understands the constraints placed on the police department as a result of the financial difficulties that the City of Haverhill is currently facing.

At this time, based on the number of officers assigned to the Patrol Division Day Shift (seven officers on Saturday and Sunday and eight officers Monday- Friday) combined with the high level of calls for service throughout this shift, it has been brought to my attention that it is difficult for officers to effectively police the community. Depending on car assignment, Officers have informed me that they average as many as 8-12 calls per shift, leaving them with a very limited time to finish their assigned reports from prior calls. On many occasions, these Officers are called away from their reports and required paperwork to respond to more calls for service. They often have no time for a meal break and are informed by dispatch to hold off from these breaks. How can we feel confident that with the number of calls for service that these Officers take, and the safety issues that arise from this scenario, that we can effectively police our community. Further, due to understaffing issues officers are only able to obtain basic information at calls, and because of these time constraints they are limited in their ability to follow up on the crimes committed. The detective division is equally as understaffed and they often must select crimes that are fully investigated until the crime is solved.

In regards to the Early Night shift, I have spoken with these Officers and they also feel that they have the similar issues as the Day Shift (eight officers assigned; two additional officers on the 6-2 shift). They are averaging a high number of calls per officer and often do not have enough time to finish reports in progress before they are pulled away to answer pending calls for service. This issue has been supported by the complaints from dispatch Officers who often are forced to leave calls in pending, or on "the stack", while they search for an available Officer to respond. The Sergeants are used to back up patrol officers, sometimes even being dispatched to calls because there are not enough officers available on a busy shift. I have been informed that this situation occurs fairly commonly. (The utilization of Sergeants/Supervisors to respond to calls is not limited to the early-night shift. It is a common occurrence on all other Patrol Shifts.)

In regards to the Midnight Shift, there is a minimum manning level of five officers Sunday Night through Thursday Night, and seven officers on the weekend. There are often situations that require an Officer to be assigned to a specific duty that leaves him/her unavailable for Patrol response. An example is the common occurrence of a prisoner requiring medical treatment while in custody. This requires at least one Officer, or in some instances this may even require two Officers, to be assigned to secure and monitor the prisoner until released from the Hospital. This has occurred while only five Officers are on Patrol for the shift, leaving four to respond to calls for service. If there is one serious incident requiring at least two Officers to be present, along with the Street Supervisor, this would leave two Patrol Officers available; one Officer to cover the entire city north of the Merrimack River, and one Officer to cover the Bradford section of the city, south of the River. Clearly this is an inadequate amount of personnel.

It is rather disturbing that a city with a population of over 62,000 people, a land area of over 34 sq. miles, with over 400 miles of roadway would have four Police Officers to patrol the city. I would suggest there are very few cities, if any, in the commonwealth with the level of crime present in our city combined with a population over 60,000 residents, which have only five Patrol Officers working on the Midnight Shift.

We would suggest that when there is a full compliment of Officers, and they are not allowed to run at low minimums, that the Officers are safer and more effective. We offer this opinion with the understanding that we do not have the amount of Officers necessary to properly and safely patrol our community, and that we are basing this suggestion on the limited number of Police Officers currently available.

Even now, in a time of economic distress and discomfort, both for the individuals in our community and the City itself, we ask that we at least maintain the same number of personnel, 71 Officers, which has dropped to 64 over the past few years. We have gone over two years without replacing retired Officers and open positions, leaving us with a shrinking number of Police Officers in a City with a recent flourish of businesses and growth in population. In short, this means more businesses and more residents but less Police to serve and protect them.

As we stated throughout this letter, the staffing levels in the city do present a public safety issue, as well as an Officer Safety issue. We, as a community, have had a police department that has been woefully understaffed for far too long. I ask you, what will it take for this situation to change and for the City of Haverhill to begin staffing its Police Department at a level that is acceptable to the officers and to the people we serve?

Respectfully Submitted,

HPPA Executive Board Members

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Cc: Doug Louison, Esq.