

POLICE TASK FORCE

REPORT TO THE

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

October 5, 2006

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Colchester Police Task Force Overview

In May of 2003, the Board of Selectmen appointed an eight-member Police Task Force comprised of citizens, elected officials, and police commissioners, who were charged with studying and assessing police services in Town. The members of the Board of Selectmen realized that with the growth of the Town and the increasing demands placed on its police force, they needed to proactively plan for the future the Town's police department. Accordingly, the Police Task Force was given the following charge:

1. To assess the long-term policing needs of the Town of Colchester;
2. To consider options and alternatives to determine the most effective way to provide policing services to the residents of the Town of Colchester; and
3. To perform a cost-benefit analysis of the options and alternatives that may be available.

The Task Force met regularly for over three years, and this report represents a compilation of resources and recommendations gathered over that time.

WHERE ARE WE NOW ?

Currently, the Town of Colchester participates in the State of Connecticut's Resident State Trooper Program. Under this program, one state police sergeant and one resident state trooper supervise and direct the members of our Town police force. Our police force is currently comprised of a force of municipal police officers, the state police sergeant and one resident state trooper.

Overall a 5-member police commission provides administrative and procedural oversight of the Town's police department. These police commissioners, together with the state troopers and our local Colchester police officers, all work collaboratively to protect the residents of our Town and provide the police services required. We also have available to us the resources of the State Police, which include its Criminal Investigation Unit, Emergency Services Unit, School Resource Officer program, and other specialized services.

The first priority of Colchester's police department is to provide quality police services that maximize public safety. In addition, the department's philosophy centers on the concept of "Community Policing." This is a philosophy that takes a proactive approach to crime so as to improve the quality of life in town. This is quite different from other policing efforts, which are usually reactive in nature. Community policing requires our police commissioners, our officers and our resident troopers work with the community to come up with solutions to local concerns. Some of our local initiatives include:

- 1 D.A.R.E (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) in the schools;
- 2 Child safety seat inspections;
- 2 Burglary prevention education;
- 3 Establishment of neighborhood watches; and
- 4 TRIAD programs to protect our senior citizens.

All of our policing efforts are in support of this community-based philosophy. And as our community grows and our needs change, our policing efforts will adapt accordingly. To give you a sense of how our efforts are currently focused, here is a table and illustrative chart of police statistics for Colchester for the year 2004:

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE OPTIONS ?

As the Task Force began its work, members first discussed and brainstormed over what some options would be for the future of police services in Colchester. Based on the collective experience and knowledge of the Task Force members, three principal options were identified:

- (i) Establishing an independent Colchester Police Department and ending our participation in the Resident State Trooper program;
- (ii) Hiring additional police officers for our Town force and remaining in the Resident State Trooper program; or
- (iii) Expanding our involvement with the Resident State Trooper program by funding additional resident troopers to police our Town, rather than using local police officers.

THE TASK FORCE'S METHODOLOGY

In order to assess the relative merits of the three identified options, the Task Force embarked on a comprehensive and extensive process to assess the current system of policing in Colchester and to review the systems and structures used in other towns of similar size to Colchester. The Task Force separately interviewed each member of the Colchester Police Force, asking similar questions of each in order to gauge officer satisfaction and to identify potential issues. Individual members of the force then embarked on field trips to neighboring towns and towns of similar size to Colchester, where they interviewed town officials and others involved in providing police services in each town. The Task Force sought expert opinions from various officials from the Connecticut State Police and the Connecticut Police Chiefs Association. Other resources used included local, state and federal crime statistics and on-line surveys.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We all know the statistics and we all know the quote -- "Colchester is one of the fastest growing towns in the State of Connecticut." That growth can be attributed to many things, but one of the most important factors, if not THE most important factor, is that Colchester is a great Town -- and the safety and security of its residents is of paramount concern.

The members of the Police Task Force applaud the efforts of our current police force and the work of all of those -- volunteers and staff alike -- who have brought our force to the level of skill and professionalism that it enjoys today. Nonetheless, change and growth are inevitable, and proper planning is key. The Task Force, through its study and review of the materials enclosed here, has identified four primary areas in which the Town should focus its efforts. In no particular order, these areas are as follows:

1. **Strive to achieve "24/7" police coverage, while remaining within the Resident State Trooper Program**

Currently, staffing limitations do not allow the Town to have round-the-clock, seven-day a-week local police coverage. Certainly police services are always available to Town residents, but at some hours those services are provided by the State Police -- not local officers. The Board of Selectmen, through its Police Commission, should work with the Board of Finance to fund a force of sufficient size to allow round-the-clock local coverage. Additionally, the Task Force, at this time, identified no compelling reason for moving the police force from the Resident State Trooper program and into an independent police department.

2. **Continue to address issues of officer safety, equipping our officers with the best and most appropriate safety equipment and technologies. Laptops or Mobile Data Terminals allow access to governmental agencies and obtain information rapidly on motor vehicles, criminal history and outstanding warrants. That information may save an officer's life or the system may provide instant response from multiple agencies allowing a lost child to be found. The system for activating the Mobile Data Terminals is currently not in place. Another useful technology is the car video camera, which can be used to monitor police pursuits, provide photographic documentation and reduce litigation claims. In addition to the above technologies computer aided dispatch and a records management system are needed to store records and information specific to Colchester and also provide immediate access to that information.**

3. **Establish a Commission on the Formation of a Police Department**

As noted above, at this time the Task Force identified no compelling reason to leave the Resident State Trooper program. Nonetheless, as the Town grows and the Town police force grows, a move toward an independent police department will be desirable. Interviews with police officers in Colchester and other surrounding towns in the Resident State Trooper Program indicated a strong desire to be part of an independent police department. The Colchester Police Commission also holds this position. With such an independent department, the Town will achieve maximum control over its police services and will be able to most efficiently address residents' needs. This move, though, is not a short-term endeavor. It requires preparation in areas such as records management, communications, prisoner holding facilities, personnel, rank structure, rules and regulations and collective bargaining. Additionally, a revision to the Town Charter is necessary. This Commission will take on the task, thereby allowing the Town to continue on a path toward an independent department.

4. Establish a Police Facilities Committee

As the police force grows, whether within the Resident State Trooper Program or independently, the need for expanded and updated facilities will become all the more apparent. Again, so as to proactively plan for these growing needs, the Town should establish a committee to define our long-term facilities needs. The size of the Town may soon warrant the construction of a Public Safety Complex to house police, fire and emergency medical services. Rather than waiting for our facilities to be strained to the point of crisis, the Town should begin to study its options for constructing a modern police / public safety facility.

Colchester Police Task Force

Executive Summary- Trip Reports

Various members of the Task Force visited eight surrounding towns to obtain information on their policing operations and set-up. Discussions were held with both elected officials and police supervision. The towns that were visited were Ledyard, Montville, Essex, Portland, Mansfield, Coventry, East Lyme and East Hampton. The Chief of Police of Redding was invited to a Task Force meeting and a "trip report" was also conducted with him at the meeting. Five of the towns visited are in the Resident State Trooper Program and four are municipal departments with their own chief.

Years ago the only police services available in small towns in Connecticut were provided by the State Police. As time went on the State Police formed the Resident State Trooper Program and assigned the town a trooper that lived in the town. The program has grown to what it is today. The towns the Task Force visited do not seem to have the same formula for why they continue in the Resident State Police Program or why they changed to a municipal department. It appears that each town weighs its own circumstances and factors in the desires of its people. In general though, the police personnel in the Resident State Trooper Program towns indicated a strong desire to be an officer in their own municipal department.

All the towns in the 14,000 to 19,000-population range we visited have between 10 and 22 full-time officers. These towns all have 24/7 police coverage and a rank structure. Colchester is the only town without either, although it is very close to putting a rank structure into effect.

In summary the elected officials and police supervision of the towns we visited indicated that effective policing requires:

1. Enough officers and/or troopers to provide the services required
2. A promotion/career ladder and good salaries and benefits for officers
3. Being cost conscious and cost effective.

Colchester Police Task Force

Executive Summary- Comparison Chart with other Towns

The purpose of the "Comparison of Colchester with other Towns" chart was to gather pertinent information on policing to enable a comparison between Colchester and surrounding towns. The data was obtained from the CPEC (Connecticut Policy and Economic Council), the website www.ct.gov, the publication "Crime in Connecticut" and telephone calls to the various police departments.

The data can vary over time and the item "per capita police spending" is difficult to compare because of the different ways each town presents its budget. Costs, such as those for defined benefit packages, show up in many different places in other town's budgets.

In general the towns in the chart with higher populations have more officers than does Colchester. Colchester is also well below the published Federal Bureau of Investigation data that indicates New England towns between 10,000 and 24,999 population average 1.8 officers per 1000 people. Using this guideline Colchester should have approximately 27 officers.

Comparison of Colchester with other Towns (5/16/06)

Town	Population (2003)	Square Miles	Road Miles	Police Authority	Number of Troopers and Officers (2005)	Per Capita Police Spending (2003)	Crimes per 1000 Population (2003)
Colchester	14,885	49	111	State Trooper Program	2 T, 9 Off	62.4	6.0
Coventry	11,765	38	100	Municipal Department	13 Off	124.6	13.7
East Haddam	8,525	54	117	State Trooper Program	2T, 8 PT	60.8	4.9
East Hampton	13,660	36	84	Municipal Department	16 Off	84.6	8.4
East Lyme	18,530	34	xx	State Trooper Program	2T, 19 Off, 5PT	80.9	8.7
Essex	6,655	10	41	State Trooper Program	1T, 4 Off	80.0	5.6
Haddam	7,320	44	93	State Trooper Program	2T	N/A	4.8
Hebron	8,805	37	74	State Trooper Program	1T, 6 PT	70.8	6.5
Lebanon	7,065	54	91	State Trooper Program	1T, 3 PT	N/A	7.4
Ledyard	15,025	38	108	State Trooper Program	1T, 22 Off	93.2	7.3
Mansfield	11,500	45	104	State Trooper Program	5T, 4 Off, 4 PT	64.7	9.4
Marlborough	5,840	23	59	State Trooper Program	2T, 3 PT	30.4	7.7
Montville	18,970	42	116	State Trooper Program	1T, 21 Off, 1 PT	75.9	8.5
Portland	8,930	23	62	Municipal Department	10 Off	114.2	15.1
Salem	3,950	29	39	State Trooper Program	2T	86.8	4.6

Note: FBI data for New England towns/cities (2002) indicate that:

- Towns/Cities under 10,000 population average 2.5 officers per 1000 people.
- Towns/Cities between 10,000 and 24,999 population average 1.8 officers per 1000 people.
 - This data is from "Crime in the United States, 2002" by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (pg. 325)

Colchester Police Task Force

Connecticut Police Chief's Association Report on Colchester Police Services

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As part of the evaluation process the Task Force enlisted the assistance of the Connecticut Police Chief's Association. We asked that group to evaluate the Colchester Police and provide their insight regarding the feasibility of creating an independent police department. The group consisted of Police Chief Douglas Fuchs of Redding, Police Chief James Strillacci of West Hartford and Chief William Knapp, Retired. Their feedback is summarized below.

Police Department Building

The building has adequate space for report writing, records management, and office space at this time. Any planned expansion should include improved locker facilities, a training room, and prisoner holding facilities.

Dispatch and Civilian Support Staff

The current outsourcing of dispatch services (emergency calls) to a regional dispatch center (K-X) is cost effective. The Town of Colchester is not responsible for certifying the dispatchers or maintaining their certifications. A recommendation was made to investigate the possibility of moving the dispatch center in with the Colchester Police for further savings and benefits.

Staffing, Levels, Investigations and Prisoner Detention

Staffing levels should be of overriding concern. There should be at least two Colchester Police Officers on duty at all times, from the stand point of officer safety and service to the community. The four-hour block of time between 3:00 am and 7:00 am also leaves a large communication gap between officers going off duty and officers coming on duty.

Should the Colchester Police Force become independent it will need an agreement with another police department to house persons in custody. Any further building expansion should include prisoner detention facilities.

Supervision and Professional Development

Current supervision is provided by the Connecticut State Police. When there is no State Trooper on duty the Colchester officers have no direct supervision, as there is no rank structure. The lack of upward mobility may not have an immediate impact on the young officer, but as one progresses in the law enforcement profession this lack of rank structure can have a demoralizing effect on a more senior patrol officer. The flat rank structure not only negatively impacts department morale but also officer retention.

Schedule

Currently, the Colchester Police Force has an authorized strength of ten Colchester Officers and one State Trooper or eleven officers. By hiring one additional officer, inclusive of the State Trooper, thus increasing the department's strength to twelve it is possible to maintain shift coverage twenty-four hours per day.

The authorized strength of the Colchester Police Force should also be reviewed. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) maintains a record of what is considered an acceptable staffing level for police departments based on population and geographic location. For the northeast, statistics are found to be between 1.7 – 2.1 officers per 1,000 residents.

Currently the Colchester Police Force does not meet a level of 1.0 officer per 1,000 residents. The recommended ratio should be taken into consideration when planning to become an independent department.

Contract

If the Town of Colchester makes the decision to organize their own police department, the entire Collective Bargaining Agreement needs to be renegotiated. Completing this process after the reorganization is difficult to accomplish.

Budget

Cruisers

The Colchester Police Force maintains a fleet of six patrol cruisers, half of which have Mobile Data Computers installed in them. This number of cruisers is adequate to form an organized police department.

The hiring of a Chief of Police would most likely necessitate increasing the fleet by one cruiser.

Overtime

The town needs to review the overtime and training budgets. If the Town of Colchester is interested in maintaining two officer coverage, the overtime budget will need to be increased to fill shifts that are created by paid leave and training.

Radio/Communications

The Colchester Police Force does not have independent radio communications capabilities as they rely on the State Police communications equipment. In order to organize, the Colchester Police will need to secure communications equipment (both mobile and portable radios).

The Colchester Police Force should have radio communication that is separate and independent of the State Police. The decision to install a Colchester Police radio system should be made independently of the decision to "organize"

CAD/RMS (Incident Reporting)

The Colchester Police Force has the computer workstations necessary to allow officers to complete incident reports. Currently, the department does not maintain department records independent of the State Police. The department will need to obtain a small server and CAD/RMS (Computer Aided Dispatch/Records Management System) to operate independently.

It is suggested that the Colchester Police procure a CAD/RMS system as soon as possible and maintain a separate database from the Connecticut State Police records. Not only will this allow a smoother

transition to an organized department, but will allow Colchester Police Officers to have their own database.

Chief of Police

Having a police department that is run and managed by a police chief has numerous benefits.

A chief of police is a part of the First Selectman's management team.

A police chief additionally adds stability and consistency to the organization. Under the "Resident Trooper" program, it is possible that the "Resident Trooper" will not be in that position for any extended period of time.

Police chiefs are eligible to join numerous organizations, which afford them the opportunity to develop professionally and bring their education and experiences back to their respective departments. Every police chief in Connecticut is also a member of the Connecticut Police Chief's Association.

Colchester Police Task Force

Executive Summary- Survey Results

The Task Force realized that it was important to obtain public opinion on policing issues in Colchester. They designed a questionnaire that provided some background information on policing in Colchester and included eleven questions to be answered. These questions were designed to determine what people in Colchester think of the present police services, what their main public safety concerns are and what form of future police services they would support. The questionnaire was made available to the public in June 2005 for about three months. It was accessible on-line on the town web page and as a hard copy in five locations around town.

The Task Force received approximately 155 replies to the questionnaire, the majority of them from the on-line location. Approximately sixty percent of the respondents felt that present police services are good or excellent and that the response time and results are satisfactory. The respondents also clearly identified the three most serious public safety concerns in Colchester. These concerns are: 1) children being exposed to drugs or alcohol, 2) speeding cars and 3) drunk driving. In addition the results showed that most respondents favored hiring more police but were fairly even on whether to go independent or remain in the Resident State Trooper program. And many respondents indicated in various places in the questionnaire that they would like more information to help them make a final decision.

**COLCHESTER POLICE TASK FORCE
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
INTERVIEWS WITH COLCHESTER OFFICERS**

The Police Task Force interviewed numerous Colchester police officers; Officers Edwards, Farnior, McNeill, Owens and Suchecki. One of the officers has since left Colchester. The purpose of these interviews was to seek input regarding areas that could be improved upon to be able to recruit qualified individuals and retain them once they are hired. We also sought their opinions on the future of the Colchester Police Force and what impact our long-term plan would have on growth and expansion to better serve our Town.

The police officers' comments were consistent. They all felt strongly that the new union contract that included a defined benefit plan was a very important draw for new officers and would also assist in retaining existing staff.

Hiring additional police officers was a top priority and also critical in providing 24/7 police coverage and support for existing officers. Appropriate staffing levels also make a rank structure a viable option.

A rank structure would also provide officers an incentive to stay because there would be advancement opportunities. In order to have a rank structure, staffing levels must be adequate. You cannot have a rank structure with 5 officers.

The officers all supported the town moving forward to an independent police department.

One officer commented that a permanent School Resource Officer should be included in our long-term planning.

Specialized training was also mentioned as an issue we should focus on.

A public safety complex would give the police force a home and space to expand as we plan for the future.

The officers all work well-together and enjoy the camaraderie that exists between them.

In assessing all the interviews, the issues are prioritized as follows:

1. Retirement Plan
2. Increased Staff
3. Rank Structure
4. Independent Police Department.

**COLCHESTER POLICE TASK FORCE
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - INTERVIEW WITH LT. L.J. FUSARO, CT. STATE POLICE**

So as to provide as complete an analysis as possible of the Town's policing services and the future policing needs of the Town, the members of the Task Force had a lengthy and informative discussion with Lieutenant Louis J. Fusaro, Jr., the current Commander of Troop K.

Lieutenant Fusaro is very supportive of the Task Force's efforts. He is of the opinion that the residents of Colchester would be best served if the Town remained in the Resident State Trooper Program, rather than establishing an independent police department. In addition to the costs the Town would incur if an independent department was established, Lieutenant Fusaro discussed the range of State resources and expertise that are available to the Town as a participant in the Program.

Lieutenant Fusaro acknowledged that the Program, and Colchester's satisfaction with the Program, could be enhanced. In particular, he commented about the need to improve opportunities for career advancement and professional development. The Lieutenant also commented that police visibility could be enhanced. He acknowledged that most residents, and even some Task Force members, do not see "24/7" police coverage in Town. Lieutenant Fusaro hopes to work with the Task Force and others to combat that false perception. He stressed to the members of the Task Force that due to our involvement in the Program and the presence of the Troop K barracks in Town, the Town indeed does have "24/7" police coverage.

The members of the Task Force and Lieutenant Fusaro also discussed the issue of officer retention. Several Colchester officers have recently left the Colchester force for either other municipalities with independent police departments, or the State Police. This poses several problems for the Town, including the loss of valuable experience and the financial drain of sending multiple officers through training. Lieutenant Fusaro is confident we can address this problem by adopting better incentive plans (both monetary and non-monetary) and by providing enhanced opportunities for career advancement.

COLCHESTER POLICE TASK FORCE

Law Enforcement Council Report for Colchester Police Department

Administrative and Operational Recommendations for Growth and Development

Executive Summary

Prior to the establishment of the Task Force the Town of Colchester requested that the Law Enforcement Council (LEC) provide recommendations for the future growth and development of the Colchester Police Force. The following is a summary of background information that was given to members of the Task Force prior to it beginning its charge. This information is taken from a report by the LEC in May 2002 and includes the following recommendations.

Patrol Coverage

Assuming sole responsibility for the delivery of police services to the citizens of Colchester will require the town to recruit, hire and train a sufficient number of qualified personnel to insure patrol coverage of the town on a 24/7 basis. The minimum number of officers needed is two per shift. The L.E.C. recommends, to achieve twenty-four hour coverage, two officers per shift, the town would need a total of twelve officers.

Career Ladder (Promotions)

As the department grows in the number of officers, the need for supervisory personnel and specialized functions also increases. There is also a need within the organization for professional growth and development of its employees.

The current Collective Bargaining Agreement provides for the ranks of Officer First Class, Corporal and Sergeant. Presently, the only promotion above entry level officer is Officer First Class. The L.E.C. suggests two corporal positions be created, Administrative Corporal and Patrol Corporal. Once the department reaches twelve officers, L.E.C. suggests an Administrative Sergeant position and a Detective position be created.

Department Rules and Regulations Manual

Officers are employees of the town of Colchester, subject to the policies and procedures adopted by the town. The officers are also required to function in accordance with the provisions of the State Police Administrative and Operations Manual.

As an independent police department Colchester would need to develop a detailed administrative and operations manual. The town could adopt sections of the State Police Administrative and Operations Manual and further define specific provisions should they wish.

Unity of Command

There is presently a dual system of management within the police department. The Police Commission provides general administrative management while the State Police manage law enforcement operations. The Resident State Trooper is recognized as the first step in the grievance process. The Resident Trooper Sergeant and the police Commission act together on all labor issues.

Police Commission Role

The task of the police commissions is to supervise and manage the police function. The L.E.C. report recommends the commission prioritize the L.E.C.'s recommendations and work with other town committees and boards to insure the systematic development of the police department.