

**MINUTES OF THE
BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE ON OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCIES
PART II – POLICE AND FIRE DEPARTMENTS**

March 8, 2013

Conference Room A

8:00 a.m.

Members Present: Councilor Brad Lown, Councilor Jack Thorsen, City Manager John P. Bohenko, Dana Levenson, Steve Marchand, Commissioner Paul Wentworth, Commissioner John Golomb, Chief Stephen DuBois, Chief Christopher LeClaire

Members Absent: Councilor Tony Coviello

City Staff Present: David Moore, Adam Cannon

Guests Present: Kym Craven (Public Safety Strategies Group)

Chairman Lown called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

Following this, the Committee unanimously approved the minutes from the February 12th meeting.

Prior to Chief DuBois' presentation, Chairman Lown asked about how calls are communicated on the radio during an event. Chief DuBois stated that our dispatch service has its own radio channel that Police and Fire can use. He also emphasized that if we had a County operated service, we would be wrapped up in the chaos of all the other towns competing for the airtime and gave a summary of the various tasks performed by the Portsmouth dispatch not performed by the County.

Following this discussion, Chief DuBois gave a presentation on the 2011 Police Study. The study concluded with recommendations to civilianize an administrative captain position, split a 6-car squad into 2 single backup cars, place an officer downtown for 16 hours a day, add a school resource officer, and start cross-training in the business office. Additionally, the study recommended that the Police Department reduce its footprint with the ICAC (Internet Crimes Against Children) task force. According to the study, Portsmouth had been over-invested in the program. A final recommendation included considering an integrated Police/Fire public safety facility.

Mr. Marchand and Ms. Craven had a discussion about the survey methods of Public Safety Strategies Group. Ms. Craven indicated that the company examined various calls and made comparisons with other municipalities. She indicated that Portsmouth was much lower staffed than comparable tourist destinations and that some organizations had more civilianization in the ranks. Ms. Craven then cautioned people about basing staffing on service call comparisons because police departments make active decisions to make more stops. She noted that balance was important in staffing.

City Manager Bohenko, Chief DuBois and Chief LeClaire then discussed the various economies of a joint station. Chief DuBois indicated that there were potential savings that could come from a dispatch center, emergency operations, large training room or fitness facility and maintenance. Chief LeClaire stated that from his experience shared locker rooms, kitchens and facilities would not work.

City Manager Bohenko said it would be important to know what size the building is first and to have the square footages in order to put down a footprint. Mr. Marchand asked about the potential for regionalization and combining functions for multiple communities. City Manager Bohenko stated that municipalities were having the same conversation in 1978 and that Chief LeClaire has been a leader in trying to bring people together. He also stated that the County could begin charging for dispatch services and that Portsmouth could incentivize, recruit and bill nearby municipalities.

Councilor Thorsen asked if there was the chance for common areas as most of the space is secured space for the Police Department. Chief DuBois noted that there are new federal regulations on who has access to training spaces and that there are more federal regulations on the way. Councilor Thorsen then stated that he thought the larger efficiency would be to go to two fire stations rather than three. Chief LeClaire stated that there's no one idea that would serve as a magic bullet to solve the issues.

Councilor Thorsen also asked for an estimate of the cost to build such a facility. City Manager Bohenko noted that moving the dispatch service would be a huge expense and that eyes may get wide at the cost. Councilor Lown and Chief DuBois then began discussing positions and overtime. Commissioner Golumb stated that he was concerned that the Committee was deviating from the goal as he believed that the Committee was looking for efficiencies between both departments and not at staffing issues. Councilor Thorsen stated that the Committee is looking at all of it and that the City Council gets to look at these issues every year. City Manager Bohenko said that it is important for all parties to understand the operations.

Councilor Lown asked if it was efficient to have large amounts of overtime and about the Police Study recommendation to eliminate three Police Captains. Chief DuBois said the problem is that overtime is set in the budget to help deal with problems and unexpected events. Councilor Thorsen stated that most organizations are considered efficient if they have between five and ten percent overtime. Chief LeClaire replied that the private sector works differently and that twenty percent overtime is the industry norm.

Next, Chairman Lown stated that the percent of stops resulting in tickets is low and that the revenue from tickets should stay in the City rather than go to the State. Chief DuBois stated that the Police Department does get one benefit from the arrangement. The State will provide free training to police. He also noted that prosecutors ask the judges to pay the overtime for officers and that the money goes back into the general fund. City Manager Bohenko stated that the City is ultimately losing money, should be able to cover the costs and shouldn't be in the business of subsidizing the State.

Chairman Lown asked the Committee to brainstorm a list of ideas. Mr. Marchand recommended discussing the Fire Department. Mr. Levenson recommended discussing human resources, maintenance services and technical issues. City Manager Bohenko said that he would bring the human resources and finance directors to the next meeting. Councilor Thorsen recommended exploring business-like operations to create revenue in the Police Department and also recommended a stronger regional forensics department.

Following this discussion, the Committee set the next meeting date for Friday, March 29th, 2013 at 8:00 a.m. The meeting will be in Conference Room A at City Hall and will feature a discussion on regionalization of the Fire Department and human resources processes for the Fire and Police Departments.

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Adam Cannon
Special Projects Manager