



Cumberland Township Police Department Operations

Assessment Report

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Introduction

This assessment was performed at the request of the Cumberland Township Board of Supervisors who requested an independent analysis of the critical administration and operational functions of the Cumberland Township Police Department. This assessment follows the departure of a Chief of Police who served for 16 years, as well as the recent departure of other senior officers.

The recommendations contained in this report offer a path toward strengthening the organization. This assessment does not constitute an accreditation assessment or management audit. The purpose of the assessment is not to be critical of any person or department. However, it is necessary to objectively identify organizational weaknesses in order to improve the organization. This assessment contains references to candid disclosures of practices, culture, and leadership which negatively impacted the overall performance of the Department. These disclosures were willingly offered by the officers of the Department during this assessment process. While this assessment will focus on many aspects of the Department that need improvement, it is important to note that the department is comprised of dedicated public servants who desire that the Department overcome past deficiencies and be a premier agency within the region.

The assessment is the result of numerous Department visits, interviews with all current employees of the Department as well as interviews with two retired officers, interviews with all of the elected supervisors, the Township Manager, and administrative personnel. The interviews lasted between one to two hours each and provided a clear picture of the police department's past issues, current capabilities, and areas needing improvement. The recommendations contained herein are based on my law enforcement experience, on generally accepted principles of leadership and policy, and generally accepted practices within the law enforcement profession.

On February 28, 2022, I met with the Cumberland Township Public Safety Committee-Township Supervisors Toddes and Biggins and the Township Manager Ben Thomas regarding the assessment. The public safety committee members, acknowledging that they are not law enforcement officers, affirmed that the Township was looking for a professional and objective view of the police department's operations. Additionally, I was asked to evaluate if there was a need to conduct a process for a new chief of police and provide recommendations on improving the relationship between the township supervisors, administration, and the police department.

Township Supervisors

There was a consistent and overarching theme in my interviews and conversations with the township supervisors, which was their desire to see a return to normal and positive operations for the police department. The supervisors support the department and want to see it return to its previous levels of proactivity and increase its community engagement activities. Some Supervisors have received concerns from their constituents that the department is not as visible while patrolling and should be more active at community events (for example, Trick or Treat). Also, the Supervisors expressed concern about a Department culture condoning unprofessional conduct and a lack of accountability. The Supervisors also expressed concern about what they characterized as significant lapses in leadership in the Department including the use of Township resources, time, and authority of office to engage in political activity, a failure to consistently administer policies, and a minimization of complaints from the public. They wanted ideas on a method or procedure to implement to avoid the identified issues from reoccurring.

All Supervisors expressed their support for the police department, and they wanted to make sure both the department and Board were on the same page moving forward. The process included

evaluating acting chief Trostel's ability to potentially lead the department as its next permanent chief.

Communications with the Board

Some of the Board members stated that a reoccurring issue with the former chief was a lack of communication, including following up on guidance and directives. The Supervisors noted that communication has dramatically improved under Trostel; he is receptive, responsive, and informative to the Board and Township Manager.

Recommendation- Hold weekly or bi-weekly meetings to ensure the Board is thoroughly briefed on police department operations through the Public Safety Committee. The sessions also allow follow-up discussions on previous directives issued by the Board or Public Safety Committee.

Supervision of the Chief

The chief of police position is generally autonomous, with varying degrees of oversight. Good police chiefs do not want to be micro-managed, but they recognize that a system of checks and balances is a necessary, vital, and proven management procedure. One of the concerns expressed by the Supervisors was the lack of accountability of the Chief position. Some of the Supervisors relayed that the former chief would take leave with little or no notice and without supervisory approval and that the Supervisors had little or no notice of the chief's work schedule. In addition, the Board expressed frustration with directives of the Supervisors not being implemented by the former chief. While dedicated and responsible for the authority their elected

positions give them, the Board members are not full-time employees, and daily contact with the chief may not be possible.

Recommendation- The weekly or bi-weekly meetings can also serve as a supervisory practice. The meetings should include the Supervisor committee members, the Chief, the Township Manager, and at least one of the members of the Department Supervisory staff. This committee complexion will promote an atmosphere of cooperation and accountability, as directives and information are conveyed to more than one supervisory employee. This meeting structure will also help prevent information from being miscommunicated or spun, as such concern is discussed herein. Additionally, the Supervisors can more clearly delineate the Township Managers' authority with respect to the oversight of certain functions of the Department. The Township Manager is empowered, by Township Ordinance, to oversee the administrative business of the Township and can provide peer accountability for the chief of police. I recommend that the Board of Supervisors clearly delineate the peer accountability expectations with the chief of police and the Township Manager.

Finally, I recommend that the Board of Supervisors not less than annually review the performance of the chief of police through a formal performance evaluation. The Board should develop standardized performance expectations and measurement criteria. This annual evaluation should not be the only feedback that the chief of police receives regarding performance. Rather, throughout the year the Supervisors should engage in open and honest communication with the chief of police regarding the chief's performance. The chief should, in turn, endeavor to provide similar performance feedback to the chief's subordinates. Performance discussions should include the development and implementation of specific performance expectations. For the chief, these

expectations can include reference to training objectives, policy development and implementation, project identification and execution, and leadership development.

Police Officers

I interviewed all current Cumberland Township police officers and found them to be competent, professional, and respectful. All officers spoke to me freely; they were not compelled to participate in the assessment. The interviews were at a minimum of one hour, with some lasting a little over two hours. The interview questions focused on understanding the department's past morale issues, the officer's training records, and their views of the community and department. Additionally, the officers were asked for their assessment of acting chief Trostel's leadership abilities, specifically if they felt that he would be a qualified and competent candidate for chief of police or if the Board of Supervisors should conduct an external selection process.

Former Chief Boehs

Every officer interviewed described former police chief Boehs as a "nice guy." However, they also place most of the blame on the department's morale and leadership issues solely at his feet. The main complaint against former chief Boehs was his desire to be every officer's "friend." The officers relayed that he would tell them what they wanted to hear, not the truth of the situation. Many of the officers questioned the former chief's directives to "slow down" enforcement under the guise of COVID-19 precautions during the last eighteen months. Local police departments did initiate COVID-19 protocols, but those protocols did not include an extended period of non-enforcement. These concerns were relayed by all officers. There was a pervasive lack of accountability in the Department. Morale and professionalism must be modeled at the top. A chief

must foster an environment of trust, accountability, and professionalism. The officers relayed that they lost confidence in the former chief's ability to lead due to his duplicity and ineffectiveness in addressing or mitigating their problems.

Healthy communication among all levels of the Department must be reinstated. There must be clear lines of responsibility and authority established within the Department and accountability standards must be applied consistently. The focus of the organization must be on providing excellent police service, which is not attainable when the focus is on placating Department employees. Further, as discussed more fully below, when officers have concerns with a chief's ability to lead, there must be an established procedure for those concerns to be expressed, evaluated, and appropriately addressed.

The Cumberland Township Police Department is in urgent need of leadership, motivation, vision, and accountability. The open chief of police position provides an opportunity for much needed change.

Morale Issues

The department's morale issues mainly stem from the officers feeling stuck in the middle of political "gamesmanship" between the Board and former chief Boehs. The officers relayed that former chief Boehs would often blame the Board for decisions that did not go his way. Most of the officers knew, based on Boehs' prior behavior, that there was always an "agenda" attached to his complaints regarding the Supervisors and their decisions. The officers noted that he would openly criticize the Supervisors in an unprofessional manner. The officers expressed how uncomfortable they felt being placed in the middle of the perceived or actual conflict between former chief Boehs and the Board. Former chief Boehs' obsession with the Board was mentally

draining and stressful to the officers. It affected their morale and marked when they lost confidence in his ability to lead the agency effectively.

Recommendation- In a law enforcement agency, it is important to respect the chain of command. However, that chain of command should not be used by Department supervisors to suppress valid concerns about leadership. The Board of Supervisors should develop a mechanism by which concerns regarding the chief of police can be brought to the attention of the Supervisors. This mechanism could include a procedure by which Union shop stewards can bring concerns to the Public Safety Committee regarding egregious errors or misconduct by the police chief. Just as the chain of command should not be used to suppress complaints, this mechanism should not be used to subvert the chain of command. Except under extenuating circumstances, this mechanism should only be utilized when the stewards have addressed the concerns with the Chief and they remain unresolved and not disclosed to the Board of Supervisors by the Chief. This mechanism can also be utilized by the Supervisors to convey information to the bargaining unit if the Board of Supervisors believes that the chief of police is not conveying accurate information to the officers.

Staffing

Another issue affecting officer morale is staffing. Almost all the officers enjoy working the current 10-hour schedule. However, the officers stated that when officers leave the department due to resignations or retirements and are not promptly replaced, it stretches their ability to staff the schedule effectively. When staffing issues are not addressed over an extended period, the pressure to fill the gaps with overtime can affect morale.

The scope of this assessment does not include a detailed analysis of the necessary Police Department staffing level to support the needs of Cumberland Township. There are many cookie-cutter formulas that can be used to analyze staffing levels based on population or call volume, but these formulas fail to account for community characteristics such as geography, socioeconomics, transient or seasonal populations, pass-through commuters, and the expectations of residents. Further, the current recruitment environment is difficult. The number of qualified candidates for law enforcement positions has steadily declined, the passage rate for police academies is down, and the vetting required for hiring new officers is more stringent. Identifying candidates to fill vacancies is a time-consuming process, therefore, to the extent possible, agencies should routinely evaluate anticipated separations and plan accordingly to limit the duration of vacancies.

Recommendation- The Board, following the recommendations of this report (see the organizational chart on page 19) and in conjunction with the chief of police, should decide on the number of officers the department needs to operate effectively. Once that number has been established, the Board should facilitate the police chief in maintaining that staffing level. A good practice is temporarily increasing that number in anticipation of confirmed impending retirements.

For both the Board of Supervisors and the chief of police there must be a willingness to engage in strategic, creative planning and not adherence to what is familiar or comfortable. Reviewing how officers are scheduled and assigned and how resources are deployed should occur on a routine basis. The use of scheduling software should be considered to reduce the administrative burden involved in the manual process that presently occurs. The use of scheduling software would also provide a level of transparency so that the elected officials have real-time information regarding the number of officers on shift.

Training

The officers have a good amount of training for a department of its size. Many officers have specialties, i.e., firearm, defensive tactics, and DUI instructors. The department tends to continue to attend training in those specialties; the "fun" courses. The officers acknowledge that they know their training is not as well-rounded as it should be. In addition, more emphasis should be placed on leadership and management training. There is not a clearly established training plan to develop employee skills, knowledge, and abilities in a manner that best suits the needs of the Department. Training needs are not clearly tied to performance expectations.

Recommendation- 1) The department should develop a mandatory list of classes that all new officers should attend within two to three years of their start of employment date. These classes should include report writing, basic investigations, interview & interrogation, courtroom testimony, and accident investigation.

2) The department should continuously require leaders to improve their management and supervisory skills. They should have the opportunity to attend conferences and additional training. Receiving a promotion and attending one supervisory course is not enough for the success of a modern police leader. A career progression plan should be clearly delineated so that younger officers know what training may be necessary to prepare them for promotion within the Department.

3) Training is crucial in reducing the department's liability and improving officers' ability to police their community correctly. Therefore, the Board should support the department's training by increasing that budget line. The chief of police should evaluate the training needs of the Department and present a budgetary request that is supported by objective data.

Community Views

The officers feel they have strong support and a great relationship with the community they serve. However, the officers acknowledged that the public's support could easily be lost if they do not continue to engage the public positively whenever possible. I also relayed the Board's desire for the officers to attend more community policing events.

Community Engagement

Social media is a proven method to keep the public informed of arrests, scams, accidents, wanted persons, emergency notifications, and community events. Currently, the department depends on the local newspaper to pass on that vital information to the public. Unfortunately, the local newspaper does not have the same objectives as the Department, and at times the agency's message can be diluted. A solid and proven social media platform can tremendously increase the department's ability to inform, engage, and communicate with the community.

Recommendation- The Board of Supervisors and chief of police should contact CrimeWatch, a South-Central Pennsylvania-based company specializing in social media engagement. CrimeWatch currently has over 200 Pennsylvania law enforcement agencies using its platform. In addition, CrimeWatch is easy to use and allows the community to submit tips and information anonymously to the department. The chief of police should develop a policy for the engagement of citizens through social media and ensure that all officers are adequately trained on the use of social media as it is related to the Department.

Acting Chief Trostel

All the officers interviewed believe that acting chief Trostel can lead the department and should be considered for appointment to the chief's position. They all stated that he had been the "unofficial" chief for the last year, often taking it upon himself to solve a problem or issue when the former chief ignored it. The officers respect Trostel's organizational ability and his willingness to directly confront the daily problems and issues encountered when running a police department. As acting chief, the officers stated that Trostel had returned structure and order to the agency.

Recommendation- Trostel has the complete confidence of all the department's officers; this is a rare feat. The Board should take the officers' vote of confidence in Trostel seriously when considering who the next chief of the department will be.

Regionalization with Gettysburg Borough

To a man, none of the Cumberland Township officers want anything to do with a regionalization plan including Gettysburg Borough. The officers feel that regionalization is not in the best interest of Cumberland Township as the efficiency and quality of police services may suffer. In addition, the officers did not understand why former chief Boehs pushed for regionalization, knowing how unpopular of an idea it was with all Township officers. At least two officers stated, "If we ever regionalize with Gettysburg, I am leaving."

Recommendation- Regionalizing two or more police departments can be a complex undertaking, specifically when the agencies have different and distinct cultures. With such vehement opposition from the department officers, an attempt at regionalizing with the Gettysburg Borough police department would be extremely difficult to implement. If the Board of Supervisors desires to explore regionalization, the Board should consider the concerns that may be raised by

officers in the Department and explore ways in which those concerns may be addressed. If a regionalization effort is to be successful there needs to be buy-in from a majority of the officers who will be a part of the resulting agency.

Past Assessments

Cumberland Township has had several departmental assessments conducted since 2006. The officers expressed disappointment that many recommendations in the prior assessments were not implemented. The chief of police must energetically embrace the recommendations and commit to implementing the recommendations. The Board of Supervisors must financially support the recommendations. Both the Board of Supervisors and the Department must recognize that organizational improvement takes time and both must be committed to continual advancement. Understanding that the development of institutional memory can be challenging due to the elections of new Township Supervisors, the past assessments can be a guide for the Board to follow regarding incremental and necessary change within the Department. Implementing change will also show the officers that the Board is serious about improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the department's operations and administration.

Recommendation- I urge the Board members to review the past departmental assessments, specifically the 2006 Safe City and 2019 Homeland Security reports. Past and current assessments provide the Board with a clear direction to improve the police department's operations, administration, and infrastructure. Implementing recommendations also reinforces the Board's commitment to the department and its officers. I urge whoever is appointed as the new chief of Police to take ownership of the recommendations and shepherd them through implementation.

Acting Chief Trostel

I have had at least five hours of interactions and interviews with acting chief Trostel, and I found him to be a dedicated professional who genuinely wants to do well in his role as interim chief. In addition, he is intelligent, an experienced patrol sergeant, and has a good command of the administrative functions of a police department.

Training

Trostel understands and acknowledges that he lacks executive and management training. Forward-thinking police departments practice succession planning, including the development of young leaders. However, leadership development did not occur within the department with any consistency (see the prior discussion on training). Trostel has sufficient training and knowledge for a Sergeant; additional leadership and management training can close the experience gap for his role as acting or permanent chief of police.

Recommendation- 1) If the Board selects Trostel to become chief, he should attend executive management courses. I am recommending the Northwestern University School of Police Staff and Command course. This intensive course covers the many facets of administrative, planning, and command within a law enforcement agency. The course is completed online, and there is no selection process. However, there may be a two- or three-month waiting period before he can attend.

2) Trostel has no problem reaching out to police chiefs in the area for advice and guidance. This process should be formalized by retaining a "Chiefs Coach" as an additional resource for him. The coach should be someone that Trostel feels comfortable with and

is accessible, experienced, and knowledgeable. The initial retaining period should be six months, with an evaluation to see if another six months is needed.

Administrative Civilian Position

During my first interview with Trostel, we spoke about his duties as the acting chief and how many of those tasks could be accomplished by a civilian administrative employee. I was informed that the former chief of police rejected the Supervisors' offer of an administrative employee. Payroll, ordering supplies, training requests, scheduling vehicle maintenance, report filing, and processing traffic/parking tickets are some of the duties that an administrative civilian employee can do. Township Manager Ben Thomas believes that the chief's position should be a "working chief," allowing for more time to supervise and mentor the department's officers. The addition of a civilian administrative position frees up the chief of police to plan, direct, and lead the operations of the police department.

Recommendation- The Board and the chief of police should work together to identify if the civilian administrative position will be a part-time or full-time position, or whether these functions can be shifted in whole or part to other administrative employees. They should distinguish what specific administrative duties will be assigned and develop a timeline for the transition of these duties to a civilian.

Chief of Police or Officer in Charge

Trostel has the confidence, desire, and ability to perform the duties of police chief. However, he has concerns about his career and the pension implications if the Board changes dramatically. Trostel is currently a member of the bargaining unit and is subject to the terms of the

collective bargaining agreement (CBA), and if he is appointed to the chief of police position, he would be removed from the bargaining unit. His removal from the bargaining unit removes a layer of protection. In addition, he has approximately ten years left until he can collect his police department's pension.

Trostel suggested that he be promoted to Lieutenant, which is a position within the bargaining unit and making him the "officer in charge" of the department. Following this logic, he is still acting as the chief of police, but with a different title and under the protection of the CBA.

I told Trostel a simple solution to his fear of losing CBA protection is exploring entering into an employment agreement with Township. He could request that the Supervisors include a provision providing that if he was removed from the position of the chief of police for any reason other than "for cause," he can return to his previously held rank and reenter the bargaining unit.

Recommendation- It is my professional opinion that acting chief Trostel has the skills and ability to hold the position of Cumberland Township chief of police. If Trostel desires to enter into an employment agreement with the Township providing some level of protection, he should address the request to the Board of Supervisors. The Township Solicitor has the legal knowledge and expertise to draw up a contract amiable to both the Board and Trostel.

Police Department Building & Infrastructure

I found the police section of the Township building to be cramped, outdated, and problematic in sustaining the eventual growth of the Department and Township. The building's deficiencies were well documented in the Safe City Solutions assessment conducted in May 2006 and again in the Department of Homeland Security Infrastructure Survey, Security, and Resilience Report conducted in May 2019.

Recommendation- I urge the Board to revisit the prior departmental assessments and develop a long-term plan to improve the infrastructure of the police department. It may be prudent for the Township to seek grants and other government funds to assist with addressing the infrastructure needs of the Department. I would be happy to share my experience with such projects if requested by the Board of Supervisors.

Evidence Procedures

The evidence management process appears adequate on the surface, although acting chief Trostel admitted that there is much work to be done concerning the disposal of old evidence and the day-to-day management of such, which is handled by the acting detective sergeant, who is the sole key holder to the evidence room. It was reported that there is a bar code system for evidence, and each piece of evidence from a certain point in recent time is marked with a bar code for tracking. In addition, evidence records are easily viewed through the RMS system. However, Trostel was unaware whether there was a paper backup system for evidence records.

There is no backup person at present that handles or manages evidence; Trostel had no access to the evidence room. However, Trostel did indicate that he understood evidence audit procedures. There was some discussion and understanding between him and the acting detective sergeant that they needed to complete a full audit of their evidence room and evidence.

Recommendation- 1) Trostel and the acting detective sergeant must conduct an evidence audit.

2) Trostel and the acting detective sergeant must identify old evidence and legally purge or destroy it.

3) Trostel must identify and train an officer to serve as a backup evidence custodian when the acting detective sergeant is unavailable.

Evidence Room

The physical evidence room was unavailable for inspection as Trostel did not have the key to open the enclosure. The physical evidence room (closet/shed) lies within the garage bay to the rear of the police station. It is a particleboard structure that is not secured with anything other than a regular door which could easily be defeated. Trostel suggested that he could open the door by shaking the doorknob hard.

There is no alarm on the structure, and the camera system does not cover it. The evidence room is also not climate controlled. Trostel asserted that some of the evidence and guns in the evidence room have corroded due to the exposure to extreme temperatures between winter and summer.

Recommendations- The evidence room and the security measures are grossly inadequate and should be improved immediately. Ideally, an electronic alarm monitoring system should be installed. This system would control and record access, who accessed the room, and when. In addition, a room entry log should be used. Anyone who entered the room, along with the evidence custodian, is accounted for at any given time.

Organizational Chart

The below organizational chart was developed based on my interviews with the officers, acting chief Trostle, and the Board members. I believe the additional floating/traffic officer could be used to fill gaps made by officers attending more frequent training courses (as recommended above) or extended officer absences due to injury or illness.

Chief

Squad 1

Sergeant

Officer

Officer

Officer

Detective

Squad 2

Sergeant

Officer

Officer

Officer

Detective

Officer (Traffic/Floater)

Civilian Administrative Assistant (Part or Full)

Conclusion

The Board of Supervisors has demonstrated its commitment to the Cumberland Township Police Department by requesting this assessment. The Department officers all participated with candor and eagerness. The Supervisors and Department employees are all committed to identifying the existing deficiencies within the Department and overcoming them. The Supervisors and Department have bought in to the assessment process, now they must buy-in to

implementing the recommendations. The focus must shift from prior leadership failures within the Department to improving the personnel and physical infrastructure of the Department. With elected officials and employees willing to tackle the challenges, the momentum of Department improvements realized over the last few months will serve as a springboard for a reinvigorated organization.