



BURLINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

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Community Policing Re-Assessment Report & Short-term Strategic Plan April 7, 2009

Introduction

The Burlington Police Department has provided law enforcement services to the Queen City since 1865. Since 1999 we have operated using community policing as our primary methodology. Described succinctly, community policing is a model of community safety in which all members of a community play a role in ensuring a safe, healthy, and self-reliant city.

The role of the police department, in addition to providing emergency response and criminal investigation (key parts of traditional policing), is to foster and facilitate community engagement and partnerships, and to be a foundational player in problem solving initiatives community-wide.

As we entered 2009 and approached the ten-year anniversary of our contemporary community policing efforts, we sought to assess what strategies have been successful, which required improvement, and what the future held for Burlington's community policing efforts. To that end, with the assistance of an Advisory Board made up of seven representatives from around the City, we designed a community engagement process that was deployed in January and February of 2009.

The primary goals of this process were three-fold:

1. Discussing the future of policing with a sizable number of Burlington residents and businesses.
2. Working from a list of ideas about future partnerships, initiatives, and programs we sought to gain the community's assistance in refining and prioritizing these ideas.
3. Working from the discussions and the ideas presented, we solicited new ideas from throughout the Burlington community.

The Community-Wide Re-Assessment Process

A citizen Advisory Board, made up of representatives of our five policing districts, plus a UVM Student Government Representative and a Member at Large, worked with Department staff to craft an engagement process. A synopsis of events, including key Advisory Board Meetings, is attached. We used a variety of strategies to obtain meaningful feedback during this process, including public forums, focus groups, and surveys.

The community and the media were invited to a public kickoff event. We gave a presentation of the re-assessment process and the community was asked to comment on the process. An outline of the process was also placed on our website. The comment period for feedback regarding the process remained open until the first week of January, when the survey was deployed and community forums were scheduled.

Our Americorps worker assigned to the project distributed informational postings about the process, the survey, and the community forum schedule throughout the City at a myriad of locations.

We deployed the survey online via our website and made it available in print at a variety of locations, including the City Clerk's Office, the Fletcher Free Library, Burlington Electric, and the Police Station.

Open community forums were held at three locations within the City, including the Burlington Police Station, the Heineburg Community Center, and the Greek Orthodox Church. Each site was selected for its geography and use as a community-gathering place for other events.

In addition to the community forums, which were open for all to attend, focus groups designed to solicit feedback from underserved populations and organizations with unique insight into public safety matters were held. The focus groups included meetings with representatives from our youth community via a focus group held at Burlington High School, RU12 – the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and questioning community, the Association of Africans Living in Vermont, the Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program, representatives from key service agencies and non-profit organizations, and the Burlington Business Association.

In addition to standard media coverage and publicity from the kickoff, events, and distribution of flyers, the Chief of Police and members of the Advisory Board appeared on a variety of public access television programming to describe the process and solicit feedback and participation.

The process concluded on March 10, 2009 after flyers regarding the survey were distributed on Town Meeting Day (March 3, 2009). At that time 461 people had completed the survey and another 200 had participated via the community forums and focus groups.

In addition to the community responses and participation, a parallel process was completed seeking feedback from each employee of the Department. This process was two-fold. First, every member of the Department participated in a focus group of sorts, led by the Chief of Police, during our annual training cycle. Ideas and thoughts were synthesized and a second survey was created, utilizing some of the questions asked of the public and some questions, which allowed department members to prioritize the ideas that had been generated during the open discussion. An additional 122 responses were generated as a result of this process.

That brought the total number of respondents in the process, in its entirety, to over 720.

Community-Wide Survey Results

Hand written surveys were entered into the online system to combine with the surveys submitted by respondents via the website. The hand-written surveys were entered in their entirety and without edits by our Americorps worker. No data in any survey was edited or modified in any way with the exception of answers to free form questions that indicated “no” or “N/A.” These were redacted in order to allow the system to accurately count how many respondents answered each question.

On the pages that follow you will find tables indicating the aggregate response to the questions posed to the community-wide survey.

At the conclusion of questions 1 through 4 there was a free form option to enter “other” comments in the final field. While there was no specific pattern to the “other” qualitative data that was collected from these comments, with the advisory board we pulled out several key themes that reinforced the results noted in the quantitative survey data. Highlights of those responses are set forth below.

Highlights of “Other” Responses

Question 1 (Neighborhood concerns) and Question 2 (City-wide concerns) “Other” Responses were highlighted by comments regarding:

- Requests for increased foot patrols by officers
- Requests for enhanced traffic safety initiatives targeting speeding, stop sign violations, and dangerous bicycle operation
- Requests for enhanced response to graffiti with 5 comments noting anti-Semitic graffiti
- Requests for general assistance controlling “teen” behavior
- A few requests for enforcement of fireworks noise during non-holiday times
- A few requests for additional enforcement of dogs off leashes

Question 3 (What would you like the Department to do more of?) “Other” Responses were highlighted by comments regarding:

- Requests for enhanced traffic safety initiatives targeting pedestrians, dangerous bicycle operation, and general traffic safety
- A few requests for officers to make a more concerted effort to “smile and wave” at passersby when citizens wave to them AND for more prompt return phone calls from officers
- A few requests for increases in noise enforcement
- A few requests for decreases in noise enforcement

Question 4 (Use of technology) “Other” Responses were highlighted by comments regarding:

- A few requests for more use of the “Front Porch Forum” to communicate with the public
- A few requests to ban cell phone use by officers while driving or working

In addition to the formatted questions, two free-form narrative questions were asked of respondents. The first related to ways they saw to enhance the relationship and partnership between the police department and the community. The second was an open-ended question simply asking whether respondents had anything else they wanted to tell us about the Burlington Police Department. Again, there were no clear patterns that emerged from the free form questions. Many responses reinforced some of the quantitative data that was provided by those responding to the survey.

Free Form Narrative Responses

Question 6 (Ways to build community relationships) free form responses (227 respondents – 49% - of 461 total gave a response) were highlighted by comments regarding:

- Many responses mirrored the free form responses to questions 1 through 4 highlighted by
 - Requests for officers to spend more time on foot and in direct connection with residents and neighborhoods and more visibility – some respondents noted that they were cognizant of resource constraints
- Requests for better follow-up and more contact after a complaint has been made
- A few responses indicating that respondents felt the department was not interested enough in low level quality of life issues
- A few responses indicating that respondents felt the department was too interested in low level quality of life issues
- A few responses (both in this question and others) indicating a desire for more cultural sensitivity and competency on the part of the community and officers and more targeted enforcement of hate and bias motivated events

Question 7 (Anything else you wish to tell us) free form responses (165 respondents – 36% - of 461 total gave a response) were highlighted by comments regarding:

- There were a host of responses (more than 80 between question 6 and 7 but primarily for question 7) indicating that respondents were generally satisfied with, appreciated the service of, noted that staff were friendly and professional, or noted that they were “proud of” the work that the Department has done and continues to do
- Several responses noting that respondents were happy to have been asked for feedback
- Most other feedback mirrored the responses in questions 1 through 4 and 6.

Within the free-form responses were a few specific suggestions including:

- Sponsoring “walk to school days” when officers would walk to school with students
- Creating an ordinance or rule making it mandatory that landlords post the city noise ordinance in their buildings

Focus Group and Community Forum Results

Information gathered from the community forums and focus groups could not be incorporated into the quantitative data collected through the surveys. However, every participant of every community forum and focus group was provided access to the survey and encouraged to complete a survey. By and large, the information gathered mirrored the responses provided in the survey.

A total of 7.3 percent of all respondents (31 respondents) identified themselves as other than Caucasian. In addition, we received feedback from approximately 70 individuals through focus groups with the Association of Africans Living in Vermont and the Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program. Somewhere between 10.6 percent and 15.28 percent of the total persons involved in the feedback process were persons of color. Some number of participants may have completed both a survey and participated in a community forum or focus group.

Interpreting the Survey Data

Questions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6 asked respondents to prioritize their level of concern or level of interest in the listed items. On the scale, a 1 represents a low priority or interest and a 5 represents a high priority or interest. The numbers adjacent to each option, within the column, represents the number of respondents that answered with that prioritization.

The column adjacent to 5, labeled “**4+5**,” represents the number of survey responses when respondents indicating a 4 or 5 are added together.

The “**count**” **column** represents the number of people who answered the question.

The “**%4/5**” **column** represents the percentage of respondents that ranked that response a 4 or 5. The “**rank**” **column** is the rank that response got within that question.

Questions 5, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16 are generally self-explanatory. It should be noted that not all respondents answered all questions, so the aggregate number of respondents noted for each question will not total the 461 total responses to the survey.

Community-Wide Responses

Q1. Level of concern - neighborhood	1	2	3	4	5	4 & 5	% 4 & 5	Rank	Count
Theft	29	109	127	103	76	179	40.32%	1	444
Drug Sales	102	87	84	70	103	173	38.79%	2	446
Drug Use	103	89	86	74	93	167	37.53%	3	445
Traffic Safety	71	104	106	86	78	164	36.85%	4	445
Domestic/Intimate Partner Violence	105	106	79	82	77	159	35.41%	5	449
Graffiti	97	106	93	78	73	151	33.78%	6	447
Personal Safety / Violent Crimes	86	137	75	81	66	147	33.03%	7	445
Juvenile Issues	87	98	112	92	52	144	32.65%	8	441
Quality of Life Issues	102	100	96	87	57	144	32.58%	9	442
Noise	111	112	90	76	52	128	29.02%	10	441
Vandalism (other than graffiti)	90	117	98	62	59	121	28.40%	11	426
Condition of Property & Buildings	104	113	109	82	39	121	27.07%	12	447
Parking Issues	122	101	110	60	48	108	24.49%	13	441

Q2. Level of concern – City-wide	1	2	3	4	5	4+5	%4/5	Rank	Count
Drug Sales	36	42	96	115	143	258	59.72%	1	432
Drug Use	49	51	92	114	128	242	55.76%	2	434
Graffiti	49	70	102	103	111	214	49.20%	3	435
Domestic/Intimate Partner Violence	33	69	119	102	110	212	48.96%	4	433
Personal Safety / Violent Crimes	35	86	111	101	101	202	46.54%	5	434
Theft	19	73	144	113	81	194	45.12%	6	430
Juvenile Issues	33	72	140	119	68	187	43.29%	7	432
Traffic Safety	41	90	117	94	88	182	42.33%	8	430
Parking Issues	58	88	114	99	69	168	39.25%	9	428
Quality of Life Issues	49	82	140	97	62	159	36.98%	10	430
Condition of Property & Buildings	38	114	127	100	51	151	35.12%	11	430
Vandalism (other than graffiti)	56	93	120	80	61	141	34.39%	12	410
Noise	70	94	131	86	48	134	31.24%	13	429

Q3. What would you like to see the Department do more of?	1	2	3	4	5	4+5	%4/5	Rank	Count
Assign officers as neighborhood or street liaisons	30	32	79	158	146	304	68.31%	1	445
Use of mental health, substance abuse, and social work practitioners	32	42	85	135	151	286	64.27%	2	445
Increased use of foot and bicycle patrols in neighborhoods	34	42	84	137	146	283	63.88%	3	443
Create a response team of officers to tackle emerging issues	34	54	108	148	97	245	55.56%	4	441
Use community service officers	40	64	102	136	98	234	53.18%	5	440
Use of a regular problem properties workgroup	47	56	103	152	79	231	52.86%	6	437
Re-create a neighborhood watch or citizen crime observer program	49	66	116	113	95	208	47.38%	7	439
Re-establish a Police Activity League to enhance youth outreach	56	66	122	109	85	194	44.29%	8	438
Expand the use of the Volunteers in Police Program	47	76	132	95	85	180	41.38%	9	435
Additional multi-cultural outreach activities	69	69	119	103	76	179	41.06%	10	436
Create advisory boards for crime prevention & community policing issues	58	84	147	91	54	145	33.41%	11	434
Increased Traffic Enforcement Activity	86	87	123	63	78	141	32.27%	12	437
Community Safety Presentations	97	125	127	50	27	77	18.08%	13	426

Q4. In what way(s) would you like to see technology used ?	1	2	3	4	5	4+5	%4/5	Rank	Count
Ability to see more information about (police responses) online	32	34	96	117	153	270	62.50%	1	432
Ability to report low-level crimes online	54	47	102	118	105	223	52.35%	2	426
Information distributed via e-mail distribution groups	63	47	96	111	114	225	52.20%	3	431
Ability to provide crime tips online	51	43	121	105	111	216	50.12%	4	431
More information distributed via the website	53	68	119	95	95	190	44.19%	5	430
Ability to communicate via a forum or blog on the BPD website	73	61	107	99	89	188	43.82%	6	429

Information distributed via cell phone messaging systems	178	91	76	44	37	81	19.01%	7	426
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Q5. Have you called the Burlington Police for assistance?

Yes	62.5%	282
No	37.5%	169

Q6. If Yes - please rate the response that you received

	1	2	3	4	5	4+5	%4/5	Count
Initial Call / communication was professional and helpful	20	22	60	77	103	180	63.83%	282
Officer was professional and helpful	24	17	37	73	126	199	71.84%	277
Follow-up after report	76	50	49	31	59	90	33.96%	265

Q9. Are you a Burlington Resident?

Yes	82.9%	382
No	17.1%	79

Q10. If so, for how long?

Less than 5 years	33.5%	124
6 to 10 years	21.4%	79
11 to 15 years	8.9%	33
16 to 20 years	6.5%	24
More than 20 years	29.7%	110

Q11. Do you work in Burlington?

Yes	72.5%	313
No	27.5%	119

Q12. If so, for how long?

Less than 5 years	39.1%	124
6 to 10 years	20.5%	65
11 to 15 years	12.0%	38
16 to 20 years	6.9%	22
20+ years	21.5%	68

Q13. Have you ever been the victim of a crime reported to BPD?

Yes	38.0%	163
No	62.0%	266

Q14. Have you ever been arrested or questioned as a suspect in a crime by police in Burlington?

Yes	3.3%	14
No	96.7%	410

Q15. Gender

Female	55.5%	236
Male	44.2%	188
Transgendered	0.2%	1

Q16. Race

African or African American	2.1%	9
Asian	1.2%	5
Caucasian/White	92.6%	390
Hispanic	0.5%	2
Other (please specify)	3.6%	15

Department Internal Responses

Q1. Please prioritize the following issues based on your professional perspective:

	1	2	3	4	5	4+5	%
Drug Sales	2	7	20	41	52	93	76.23%
Drug Use	2	8	23	44	45	89	72.95%
Personal Safety / Violent Crimes	3	20	22	36	41	77	63.11%

Domestic/Intimate Partner Violence	7	16	43	27	29	56	45.90%
Graffiti	3	17	52	33	17	50	40.98%
Theft	6	11	56	36	13	49	40.16%
Traffic Safety	7	21	46	33	15	48	39.34%
Quality of Life Issues	9	32	45	28	8	36	29.51%
Vandalism (other than graffiti)	9	24	58	21	10	31	25.41%
Juvenile Issues	4	29	61	21	7	28	22.95%
Condition of Property & Buildings	10	30	54	23	5	28	22.95%
Noise	17	47	42	6	10	16	13.11%
Parking Issues	32	46	31	9	4	13	10.66%
Comments	4						

Q2. Using the following examples please tell us what would you like to see the Department do more of?

	1	2	3	4	5	4+5	%
Use of mental health, substance abuse, and social work practitioners	3	8	20	44	47	91	74.59%
Use community service officers for low level complaints	7	13	22	40	40	80	65.57%
Increased use of foot and bicycle patrols in neighborhoods	1	11	44	44	22	66	54.10%
Create a response team of officers to tackle emerging issues in neighborhoods	5	22	34	39	22	61	50.00%
Re-establish a Police Athletic or Activity League to enhance youth outreach	7	20	42	42	11	53	43.44%
Increased Traffic Enforcement Activity	3	20	48	31	20	51	41.80%
Use of a regular problem properties workgroup	9	20	46	38	9	47	38.52%
Assign officers as neighborhood or street liaisons	13	24	47	29	9	38	31.15%
Expand the use of the Volunteers in Police Program	10	26	51	30	5	35	28.69%
Re-create a neighborhood watch or citizen crime observer program	13	24	52	28	5	33	27.05%
Additional multi-cultural outreach activities	24	40	41	14	3	17	13.93%
Community Safety Presentations	13	47	46	14	2	16	13.11%
Create advisory boards for crime prevention & community policing issues	16	39	52	14	1	15	12.30%
Comments	6						

Q3. In what way(s) would you like to see technology or the Internet used by the police department?

	1	2	3	4	5	4+5	%
Ability to report low-level crimes online	8	17	24	36	37	73	59.84%
Ability to provide crime tips online	4	14	36	42	26	68	55.74%
Ability to see more information about activity in neighborhoods online	8	12	44	36	22	58	47.54%
More information distributed via the website	6	18	51	37	10	47	38.52%
Information distributed via e-mail distribution groups	6	18	54	35	9	44	36.07%
Ability to communicate via a community forum or blog on the BPD website	16	34	39	23	10	33	27.05%
Information distributed via cell phone messaging systems	38	40	29	11	4	15	12.30%
Comments	9						

Short-Term Strategic Planning

This section of the report will detail preliminary plans for short-term strategies in response to the results of this process and the Department's ongoing assessment of need and resource prioritization. It is important to note that these are preliminary plans and outlines and our strategic plans will be constantly assessed based on ongoing employee and community feedback as well as response and complaint based analysis that occurs regularly. Only the top issues identified are addressed in this preliminary report.

The key areas that have been identified below do not exist alone and cannot, in most cases, be addressed separately from one and other. Rather, a variety of strategies must weave together to create a policing methodology that addresses the key issues within the community. The following outline and narratives detail our short term plans for the next 12 to 30 months.

Key Issues & Community Priorities Identified – City-Wide

Domestic & Intimate Partner Violence & Personal Safety & Violent Crime

Domestic and intimate partner violence has been and will remain a priority. Our investigative and response-based methodology is well developed. We will continue to look for ways to improve our current strategies.

Continuing our partnerships with advocacy groups such as Women Helping Battered Women and the Women's Rape Crisis Center, the best solutions to domestic and intimate partner violence continue to be efforts to increase reporting by survivors while maintaining robust investigation and prosecution. A continued emphasis on the strategies (including heavy emphasis on education and prevention) that have proven effective to date is in order.

Among our newer outreach and educational strategies is an approach in which we take every opportunity to send a message to men and boys that physical, sexual, and emotional abuse of women is unacceptable. We have taken and will continue to take every opportunity to ensure that message resonates throughout the community, with men in leadership and other prominent roles and as the spokesperson.

Graffiti

In an effort to ensure that we are taking every possible step in graffiti enforcement and remediation we have begun to adopt a comprehensive graffiti strategy in partnership with a variety of City and other resources. Below is an outline of many of those efforts, including Department responsibilities, outlined first.

1. Effective immediately and until further notice, with the concurrence of the State's Attorney's Office, we will no longer utilize regular citations for graffiti cases. For all cases rising to the level of a felony or for which ANY exception to Rule 3 exists, the defendant shall be lodged. For any case in which lodging is not possible, a flash citation shall be used. *Overtime is authorized* as needed to complete investigations and case paperwork.
2. Ordinance tickets may be used in addition to but not in lieu of arrest in graffiti cases until further notice. Our position is that the civil penalty is designed to assist in remediation and cover the extensive investigative cost impacts of these crimes while, at this stage in the evolution of the problem; criminal prosecution is necessary unless extreme mitigating

circumstances exist.

3. A cover sheet with specific requests related to conditions of release and case outcome has been developed for use. This cover sheet is available in the BPD Forms Directory and is titled "Graffiti Case Cover Memo." It shall be attached to every graffiti Court case.
4. Also effective immediately, the Department is offering what we describe publicly as "substantial rewards" for information leading to the **arrest** (not conviction) of persons involved in graffiti vandalism. Officers are encouraged to utilize this resource to procure information on these cases. If individuals provide such information and a reward is warranted, please notify the Office of the Chief as soon as possible.
5. March 16, 2009 efforts to remove as much graffiti as quickly as possible began. Residents and business owners can contact the Graffiti Removal Team at 865-7548 or graffiti@bpdvt.org to get assistance in removing graffiti. Officers can utilize those contact methods to forward graffiti remediation requests. Please note that this phone number and e-mail address should only be used for removal or volunteer contact NOT for reporting new vandalism or other crime. Also, anyone interested in being placed on a contact list to volunteer for graffiti removal may also contact staff at that number or via that e-mail address.
6. Anyone experiencing graffiti vandalism is urged to report it to Burlington Police at (802) 658-2700.
7. Beginning immediately, by order of the Mayor, all City Departments have been directed to remove graffiti on their property or area of responsibility within 72 hours of its discovery.
8. Beginning shortly, graffiti removal kits, purchased through a partnership with the Department and the Queen City Police Foundation will be available for distribution to victims of graffiti crime and volunteers working in graffiti remediation efforts.

Theft/Property Crime

The department will continue to disseminate robust information about crime trends and prevention strategies. Prevention of property crime is the most critical factor in our community-wide efforts. Information is critical to prevention efforts. As an example, in the spring of 2009 we will be distributing informational leaflets on the windshields of vehicles after a cursory assessment of the risk of larceny from that car (i.e., doors visibly unlocked, items of value in plain view, etc.). In April of 2009 we will be distributing information on where to obtain safety information through water and electrical bills sent citywide.

Our website has been redesigned to provide more robust resources regarding property and other crime prevention. Pamphlets and presentations are available online and in print. We will continue to utilize our Public Information Officer to send out regular crime prevention updates and information.

Among the new initiatives in this realm, several items will be detailed later in this report. They include utilizing technology to relay crime report and prevention information to the public directly; plans to provide access to crime mapping data online; and plans to allow incidents of crime and crime tips to be reported online.

In addition to our prevention and education efforts, also detailed below is a pilot project for a Street Crimes Unit/Rapid Response Team designed in an effort to quickly deploy investigative resources to “hot spots” of emerging issues of crime and disorder, including property crime, on a week to week basis.

Traffic Safety

Our traffic safety strategies have been undergoing significant revision since the fall of 2008. Led by Lt. William Ward and a Safe Streets Coalition led by Chapin Spencer and guided by the participation of a variety of stakeholders, a multi-faceted strategy has been developed for deployment in the spring of 2009. That strategy includes, but is not limited to:

- An wide-ranging educational campaign for drivers, bicyclists, pedestrians, and others encouraging shared use of our streets and roadways
- An aggressive driving reporting line to encourage low level follow-up calls to drivers reportedly driving aggressively
- A stepped-up, City-wide, enforcement campaign
- Improvements to crash data reporting to better track pedestrian and bicycle accidents
- Additional traffic safety training for police officers

Drug Strategy

In response to drug crime, in 2009 our patrol and investigative (detective) priorities will continue to be led by drug investigation and interdiction. Additional staffing assignments will be made to our drug unit. We continue to work collaboratively with all law enforcement agencies in Chittenden County on the drug problem, highlighted by the assignment of a Detective to the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Task Force.

A prescription drug repository (drug turn in) program has been developed that allows citizen’s to turn in unused prescription medication to the Department to prevent its misuse.

In addition, in the spring of 2009 we will be piloting a new initiative, tentatively titled the Street Crimes Unit (SCU). A cornerstone of the Unit’s activities and assignments will be the interdiction into street level drug dealing and drug use. Many of the Unit’s secondary activities will also have a direct impact on drugs in our community. Additional detail regarding this initiative is available in the following section of this report.

Department Operations – Priorities

Assignment of officers as street or neighborhood liaisons

One of the concepts of notable interest to survey respondents was the idea of assigning specific liaison officers to neighborhoods or organizations. We believe, based on small scale pilot projects taken on by officers in recent months, that this idea has significant merit. During the summer of 2009 we will look for opportunities to do more pilot projects for these types of assignments and look to create more formal outlines and parameters to guide these kinds of relationships. By the middle of 2010 we hope to have enough information from the pilot projects to engage in a more robust discussion of the future of these types of assignments.

Increased use of foot and bicycle patrols

During the spring, summer, and fall seasons (staffing permitting) we make concerted efforts to assign officers to walking posts and bicycle patrols. Call volumes driven by good weather and increasingly active community activities often impact our ability to deliver these important face-to-face contacts with residents and businesses. In 2009 we will be testing a variety of methods

and approaches in an effort to make these types of patrols more viable and frequent. Among the key initiatives is the response team concept described below.

Creation of a response team of officers to tackle emerging issues

In addition, in the spring of 2009 we will be piloting a new initiative, tentatively titled the Street Crimes Unit (SCU). A cornerstone of the Unit's activities and assignments will be the interdiction into street level drug dealing and drug use. Many of the Unit's secondary activities will also have a direct impact on drugs in our community.

The SCU is a rapid response team that will exist to address emerging trends and needs on a week-to-week basis, creating flexible and dynamic response, intervention, and prevention strategies to mitigate crime and disorder on our streets and in our neighborhoods and downtown. The critical weekly tasks to be handled by the SCU include but are not limited to:

- Street level drug interdiction
- Foot and bicycle patrols in selected neighborhoods
- Noise and ordinance enforcement
- Property crime interdiction including burglary, vandalism, and theft
- Targeted patrols on the Church Street Marketplace and City Hall Park
- Uniformed and plain clothes assignments
- Proactive involvement with youth

Officers assigned to the SCU will use a variety of approaches to address these issues with a strong emphasis on face-to-face contacts with members of the community as well as persons engaged in suspicious, disorderly, or criminal activity.

The primary objective of the Street Crimes Unit is to be an added resource for the community and the Department to respond in a flexible and targeted way to emerging or known issues and to deploy resources in a manner that is unpredictable to persons engaged in crime and disorder.

Use of community service officers for low-level complaints

Beginning in the spring of 2009 we will pilot a project utilizing Community Service Officers to handle low-level complaints.

The Community Service Officer will be tasked specifically with the responsibility to perform a variety of fieldwork in support of the police operation and functions. The host of responsibilities can be lower level priorities for a police operation, but very important to the community we serve. With the creation of this position, there is a shift in priority where the request for service is raised to a higher level thereby answering the needs of the community more effectively and efficiently.

The position also relieves sworn officers of tasks that are not directly related to law enforcement but fall under the public safety umbrella. It will allow our sworn staff to focus on the reduction of crime and disorder. During this pilot project the Community Service Officer will handle a variety of complaints and issues including found/lost property, VIN verifications, animal complaints in the absence of the Animal Control Officer, parking issues, low level ordinance violations, and other events that do not require a sworn police officer.

Use of mental health, substance abuse, and social work practitioners in first response

Throughout Vermont, services available to persons suffering mental illness, personality or other disorders, underlying substance abuse problems, or in need of life skills typically connected with social work assistance, have eroded in recent years. Driven partially by efforts to de-institutionalize persons with disabilities, and more prominently by reductions in funding for State programs and State funded initiatives the cost and demand for services that this population requires day-to-day has been shifted to municipal governments and local services. Many of the individuals in need of these services are living on their own, but not without daily assistance from organizations that were never designed to help them manage their day-to-day lives.

Today, significant law enforcement, emergency medical and fire service, and hospital emergency department resources are utilized to assist individuals who suffer from mental illness or underlying substance abuse problems in our community. Each day, emergency responders are called away from their primary tasks to handle a plethora of complaints from a small cross-section of the community.

More importantly, as services for those with mental illness, personality disorder, or substance abuse problems have both eroded and become more difficult to access, the criminal justice system has become the surrogate for the absence of a meaningful and robust mental health system. Each day we are often faced with choices about whether to leave a person with an underlying problem without services or to arrest them for crimes they commit that are causally linked to their disorder in an effort to get them services via Court imposed mandates.

Since 2001, a Street Outreach Team of mental health practitioners, targeting our inner city and Marketplace District has operated in Burlington. This team, now comprised of 3.5 full-time personnel, provides services to persons living with mental illness and personality or other disorders who frequent the central business district of the City. Their response to and proactive relationships with persons in need of services has had a substantially positive impact on the amount of crime and disorder occurring in the downtown as well as a commensurate reduction in the need for police and emergency medical intervention with this population.

The goals of this project are to expand the scope of the Street Outreach Team by deploying a new practitioner, well versed in mental health, substance abuse, and social work disciplines, to respond City-wide. As with the current Street Outreach Model, the target population is largely made up of individuals who are “service resistant” and are not taking advantage of community-based services that might otherwise be available to them. The primary goals and objectives are as follows:

- Expand the program to cover the entire City by adding a full-time practitioner
- Identify the primary service users and key citizens in need of services who would be characterized as part of the service resistant population
- Provide early intervention into the crisis calls placed by these individuals (often to 911 or other emergency lines) by directing the practitioner to the call with the emergency responders or, in some cases, in lieu of the emergency responders
- Reduce the amount of crime and disorder in our neighborhoods that is caused by neighborhood strife caused by or anti-social behavior demonstrated by this service resistant population
- Reduce the number of referrals of this service resistant population to prosecutors and Courts

- Provide active case management for and proactive daily contact with individuals identified as key resource users in an effort to mitigate the number of emergency and other calls for service that they place
- Track reductions in calls for service and Court referrals

Reinstitution of the Police Athletic/Activity League

As we are well aware, youth are our most important resource. Ensuring that youth have productive and meaningful activities to participate in during after school time, on weekends, and during school breaks is essential to their success. It is also important in mitigating issues that can occur when they are trying to fill idle time. Burlington has a variety of activities for youth via the School and Parks Departments, Boys & Girls Club, as well as the Sarah Holbrook and King Street Youth Centers. Even with these programs and activities there are many youth that are not reached. The re-invigoration of the historic “Police Athletic League,” now titled “Police *Activity* League,” will work in conjunction with the existing programs to develop and deploy additional initiatives, guided by police officers, to offer youth constructive after school activities. In addition to participating in events and activities, youth will receive incentives to participate in the programs through the distribution of items such as t-shirts and other memorabilia. Other incentives will be created via raffle prizes that will be available by virtue of regular attendance. The Department plans to begin this initiative with a pilot project during the later part (April through June) of the 2009 school year and continue developing the activities through the summer of 2009 for full implementation during the 2009-2010 school year.

The Police Activity League is a program to supplement the existing after school offerings to provide productive and meaningful activities for youth during times that are traditionally sedentary or idle.

Increase the number of follow-ups or call backs to complainants

One of the key things identified not only by respondents but also by Department leaders, as a weak point in our current service model is follow-up after calls for service. Historic policing structures are designed primarily for a one-way flow of information to officers and investigators, with few mechanisms for getting information back to complainants. In recent years we have made significant progress in keeping complainants informed of the progress or outcome of their complaint by using victim advocates, Volunteers in Police Service (VIP) doing callbacks on quality of life complaints, and most recently via the Parallel Justice Program to support victims of crime. Over the next 18 to 24 months we hope to expand the VIP program to provide follow-up calls to a greater cross-section of persons reporting events to the Department. A future long-term goal may be to provide a call back for almost every call that comes in to the Department. At present call volumes, that would require more than 40,000 additional follow-up calls per year. Future success in achieving that goal will be directly related to our ability to recruit qualified volunteers for the VIP program and ensure that program has a coordinator that can devote adequate time and resources to the efforts of that group.

Use of Technology – Priorities

While we will continue to look for ways to leverage technology, our plans in the three top areas prioritized during this process are outlined below:

Ability to see crime reports online

In April of 2009, with the hope that this initiative will be supported by Federal funding through Justice Assistance grants, we will go to bid on a system that will allow residents, business and interested persons to view information about crime occurring on a street or in a neighborhood online with full mapping capabilities that the public has become accustomed to. Our hope is to

deploy a system by early 2010.

Ability to report low-level crime and provide crime tips online

In April of 2009, with the hope that this initiative will be supported by Federal funding through Justice Assistance grants, we will go to bid on a system that will allow individuals and business to provide the department crime tips and reports of low level crime (that does not require active investigation) online. This system would also allow for crime reports to be taken in a variety of languages in addition to English. Our hope is to deploy a system by early 2010.

Information distributed via e-mail groups

Beginning in April 2009 we will start to study the options for distributing information about crime and safety related matters citywide and within neighborhoods utilizing e-mail groups. Our hope is to have a system in place to be deployed by the fall of 2009.

Other initiatives being deployed or under development

We would be remiss if we did not take this opportunity to list the other initiatives that have been deployed in recent months, those that will be deployed this year, and those in development at this time. They provide additional insight into the incredible work that is being done each day by the men and women of the Burlington Police Department in service to the City. While not described in detail, a brief synopsis is given, followed by a status/date. This list represents a **small snapshot** of the initiatives we are actively involved in.

- Enhanced strategies to deal with disorder in City Hall Park
- Evolving strategies to police the Church Street Marketplace
- Parallel Justice Project – in partnership with the Community Justice Center, providing support and resources to survivors of all types of crime even if not prosecuted – active
- Uncommon Alliance – continued participation in this important group working to mitigate the impact of bias – active
- Recruitment & Retention of exceptional staff – one of our key ongoing priorities
- Electronic Arrest Warrant Project (Vermont Electronic Warrant System, or VEWS) – rollout in 2009
- Regional Communications – combining communications centers with other public safety entities for efficiency and better productivity – preliminary discussion phase
- Stable budget growth – as we have demonstrated over the past three years, quality policing can be deployed with stable and moderate budgetary impact
- Coordination and supervision of the Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations
- Coordination and supervision of the Vermont Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force
- Partnerships to deliver Cabaret safety training to Burlington’s licensed bars
- Continuation of our noise and quality life education and enforcement initiatives
- Participation on a wide variety of community events and meetings (currently numbering more than 50 regular meetings, groups, and events)
- Expansion of our Volunteers in Police Service program, currently doing call backs to complainants in quality of life complaints
- Enhancement of our relationships with our increasingly diverse community through dialogue, and meetings or events with organizations like VT Refugee Resettlement, the Association of Africans Living in Vermont, and others
- Development of a Citizen Observer Program (a new and less time intensive version of Neighborhood Watch) – for development during the winter of 2009-2010
- Realignment of Department-wide rules and policy to become a more mission and value

Conclusion

The plans outlined here should not be construed to diminish our commitment to existing programs or initiatives that have been examples of our success during the first 10 years of community policing. As important, the initiatives outlined in this plan all weave together to help free the time and resources of our staff to provide better, more targeted, service to the community.

For all of the strategies we have outlined, we must regularly assess their progress and effectiveness and make adjustments as necessary. This engagement process has provided the Department and the community with meaningful information to help build our short and longer-term policing strategies. Beyond the primary areas of concern and interest for which short-term strategies have been outlined here, longer-term strategies for other areas of interest will be developed for future deployment.

As we move forward we will strive to create meaningful mechanisms to continually receive feedback both from our policing professionals and the community as a whole. We will continue to work each day to ensure that Burlington remains one of the safest, most livable and vibrant communities in the nation.



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Community Policing Re-Assessment Report & Short-term Strategic Plan – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY April 7, 2009

Based on survey responses the following items were of most concern to respondents:

- Drug Sales
- Drug Use
- Graffiti
- Domestic/Intimate Partner Violence
- Personal Safety/Violent Crimes
- Theft

Respondents were most interested in:

General

- Assigning officers as street or neighborhood liaisons
- Use of mental health, substance abuse, and social work practitioners to supplement police response
- Increased use of foot and bicycle patrols
- Creation of a response team of officers to handle emerging issues
- Use of Community Service Officers

Technology

- Ability to see information about police responses online
- Ability to report low-level crimes online
- Information distributed by e-mail
- Ability to report crime tips online

Some of Our Initial Strategies Include:

- Ongoing educational and enforcement efforts in the areas of domestic/intimate partner violence and personal safety/violent crime (2009)
- Comprehensive graffiti enforcement and remediation plans (March 2009)
- Enhanced distribution of theft/property crime prevention information (April 2009)
- A robust traffic safety educational and enforcement campaign beginning in May 2009 in partnership with the Safe Streets Collaborative (May 2009)
- Deployment of a new “Street Crimes Unit” to provide rapid, flexible response to emerging issues of crime and disorder (May 2009)
- Use of a Community Service Officer to handle low level service complaints and responses

(May 2009)

- Increased use of foot and bicycle patrols to the greatest extent staffing and call volumes allow (Summer 2009)
- Use of a Mental Health/Substance Abuse/Social Work practitioner in first response and ongoing management of repetitive issues in the community (Summer 2009)
- Re-Institution of the Police Activity (formerly Athletic) League to create more connections to youth (2009)
- Deploy technology to allow low level crime and incidents AND crime tips to be reported online (2009-2010)
- Deploy technology to allow residents, businesses, and stakeholders to view activity on their street or in their neighborhood online (2009-2010)
- Deploy technology to allow the Department to communicate via e-mail distribution groups to interested persons and businesses (2009-2010)
- Work on a pilot project to assign officers as street or neighborhood liaisons (2010)
- Work to increase the number of call back to complainants and citizens reporting crime, disorder, and quality of life issues (2010)