

**NEW CASTLE COUNTY**  
TRANSITION 2017

Policing Transition Committee Report

January 18, 2017



# Policing Transition Committee Membership

Major Robert C. Becker, NCCPD, retired

Reverend Sandra Ben, Praying Ground Community Church

Daniel Bungy, Investigator, State of Delaware, retired

Grandville Brown, Director of Peer Re-Entry Service, Connections

Darryl Chambers, Doctoral Candidate, University of Delaware

Executive Director Christian Kervick, Delaware Criminal Justice Council

Lorie J. Miller, Chair, Friends of the Mounted Patrol, NCCPD

Rev. Dr. Donald Morton, Tabernacle Baptist Church

Chief Guy H. Sapp, Wilmington Department of Police, retired

Secretary Louis Schiliro, Homeland Security, State of Delaware, retired

James Spadola, Treasurer, Newark, Delaware F.O.P Lodge 4

Sergeant Renee C. Taschner, NCCPD, retired

Shawn Tucker, Esquire, partner Drinker Biddle

Corporal Michael Zielinski, NCCPD

Eugene Young, Advocacy Director, Delaware Center for Justice

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The Policing Transition Committee was charged with performing a SWOT analysis of the New Castle County Police Department. During the course of five two hour sessions and a public input meeting, we arrived at the following Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.

### **Strengths**

The NCCPD enjoys an excellent reputation due to a history of strong leadership, positive community relationships and the support of New Castle County Council. This combined with excellent partnerships with the community and other law enforcement entities across the State of Delaware has allowed the police department to enjoy an outstanding reputation among other law enforcement agencies throughout the state and nation.

The agency utilizes cutting edge technology to establish a proactive approach to policing. The Targeted Analytical Police System (TAPS) process allows for data driven personnel deployment and enforcement actions.

The ongoing emphasis on best practices training and internal focus groups maintains operational readiness and morale. This is further supported by a modern public safety facility and an ongoing commitment to a well maintained fleet.

Community policing has long been the cornerstone of the NCCPD. This philosophy has enabled the agency to retain well trained and experienced officers. This depth of experience creates a workforce that is sensitive to the needs of the community and judicious in the use of force. The community policing unit furthers this overall effort by engaging in and maintaining strong working relationships with citizen groups (stakeholders) across the county. In addition, the New Castle County Police Mounted Patrol Unit (MPU) provides a unique opportunity for community based policing by providing a highly visible and approachable police presences that can be utilized by other agencies and law enforcement entities when their specialized services are needed.

The NCCPD is recognized as a leader in best practices and progressive policies as evidenced by an on-going national review and inspection by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies. (CALEA) This is a continuous review, assessment and proof process that is validated by external auditors. The NCCPD has consistently achieved national accreditation and was honored in 2016 as a Meritorious Agency for achieving and maintaining CALEA accreditation standards for fifteen or more continuous accreditation years.

### **Weaknesses**

Despite the significant strengths of the department, there are identifiable weaknesses that should be addressed. The recruitment and retention of a diverse and representative workforce is critical to the agency's relationship with the communities it serves. This issue is obviously compounded by rigorous hiring criteria and the competition for qualified applicants with other law enforcement and private sector employers. The significant effort in this area should remain a priority going forward. As a final consideration, the skill set of a new generation of applicants is evolving from the traditional policing skill set. The need for strong interpersonal and wide ranging communication skills is critical for effective and empathetic

policing. In order to instill these skills in a “wired generation” post hiring development and training may be required. The emphasis on retention of qualified applicants from recruitment to graduation is critical in creating a department that reflects the community.

A general weakness of the criminal justice system as a whole is the lack of diversion programs as alternatives to arrest for minor drug or mental health issues. This problem extends beyond the jurisdiction of the NCCPD but options should be explored in conjunction with medical professionals, social service agencies and courts to better address this critical issue.

Another weakness is an inability to develop with other Law Enforcement agencies a formal and sustainable long term effort to reduce the gun violence in and around the City of Wilmington. Any future efforts should include programs to share intelligence, reduce gun trafficking, eliminate gang related activity and impact organized drug trafficking organizations. Previously there were governmental failures to implement multi-agency cooperation. There now exists a unique opportunity for a broad-based effort to reduce violent crime in Wilmington and restore a positive public image and make the city a safe home for its citizens, the business community and visitors.

Internally, the NCCPD faces several areas of concern which impact operational capacity as well as morale. Salary disparity affects the agency’s ability to recruit and retain the best officers. Qualified police candidates are highly sought after and starting pay rates are often a deciding factor in the choice of which agency to join. New Castle County must remain competitive in salary and benefits to attract and keep the best candidates available to serve all communities.

Another internal concern, though common across many government entities, is the issue of ongoing funding of police operations at the level of service the communities have come to expect. Long-term solutions to budgets and revenue are essential to avoid reductions in service and staffing.

### **Opportunities**

There are many opportunity vectors to pursue in the immediate future. One of the most broad and far reaching of these is the change of political leadership at the state, county and city level. The new governor, county executive and mayor of Wilmington seem to share a vision of cooperation in addressing law enforcement issues that are critical to the citizens of Delaware. This shared sense of urgency should facilitate much more inter-agency and inter-governmental collaboration in addressing criminal justice issues.

In light of the above-noted cooperative mindset now assuming office, there is a unique and important opportunity for governments to work together in new ways to achieve economies of scale in purchasing decisions as well as “force multiplier” effects through task forces, joint operations and shared assets.

The transition team discussed many opportunities to further enhance recruiting and diversity. Among these were utilizing the job fairs hosted by Delaware’s congressional delegation, increased utilization of social media in the hiring process and the development of a structured intern process. Opportunities to enhance diversity include increased utilization of the Police Athletic League (PAL) to build relationships and foster interest in law enforcement as

a career option. Similarly, increased outreach in schools and collaboration with faith-based institutions can increase visibility in the community and expose potential applicants to the mission of the agency.

While the NCCPD is a leading agency in law enforcement technology there is untapped potential within the existing technology. Appropriate staffing and training would enable the agency to exploit this resource more fully at little additional expense.

The current opioid addiction crisis requires that society as a whole becomes more engaged in prevention, intervention, treatment and rehabilitation. The NCCPD has made a strong start in this area with the Narcan program that issues this overdose reversing drug to patrol officers for immediate intervention. Similarly, the Hero Help program is a first step in getting those who want help connected to recovery service providers. Efforts should continue to identify and where possible adopt “best practices” being utilized by law enforcement and governing bodies throughout the country.

The concept of appropriate private-sector collaboration was brought up as a means to increase resources and minimize expenses. Teaming with reputable private entities can expedite training, expertise sharing and networking opportunities.

Finally, in an uncertain economic environment every opportunity must be explored to identify and develop grant-funding sources. Much of the success of the NCCPD has been based on technology funded by grant money. This track record of success makes NCCPD an attractive option for future grants.

### **Threats**

A very real and frequently overlooked threat is the possibility of the NCCPD (and 30+ other law enforcement agencies) losing our access to the pistol range located on Delaware National Guard property on Route 9. We have been using this site for decades as guests of the National Guard. The recent change in the command structure of the Delaware National Guard has left the police agency vulnerable and immediate outreach is recommended. Identification and development of a new range and driver training facility is a critical need for NCCPD and other agencies that use this facility.

Threats facing society in general have to be considered at the county level as well. Incidents such as a “lone wolf” gunman, a coordinated terror bombing or civil unrest would certainly impact all communities, and, therefore, the delivery of essential county services. In the event of a significant mass shooting event or large scale demonstrations how is the County prepared for continuity of public safety operations, ongoing community engagement, school collaboration efforts, etc.? Community engagement before a crisis is essential to develop the relationships that will help mitigate adverse outcomes for New Castle County.

A final consideration was given to ongoing budget pressures with regard to technology, programs and staffing levels. Four and eight year projections of budgetary impacts of existing programs and systems seems prudent.

This report is a high level analysis of the NCCPD and we wish to thank the police department administration and the Delaware Criminal Justice System for their assistance in

preparing this report. The provision of background materials was a significant aid in the process and those documents have been attached to the report in the appendix.