



Legislation Text

File #: 15-0380, **Version:** 1

TITLE:

Update on Policing in Carrboro

PURPOSE: The purpose of this item is to provide an update on policing in Carrboro since the last community forum

DEPARTMENT: Police Department

CONTACT INFORMATION: Chief Walter Horton

INFORMATION: The Carrboro Police Department continues to be proactive in attempts to eliminate racial profiling and bias. Suggestions from the community and the Orange County Bias Free Policing Coalition to the Carrboro Police have been reviewed and will continue to be utilized in the future. Ideas and suggestions that are feasible and meet the needs of the community and the department will be implemented. Attached you will find a copy of the response (Attachment A) providing an update on what has already taken place.

Since our June 2015 response to the Orange County Bias Free Policing Coalition, we continue to move forward with implementation of ideas and suggestions presented. There has been more progress on items reported in June as well as new initiatives. It is imperative that we continue to build trust with the community we serve. Trust is the cornerstone on a positive relationship between communities and police.

Since the response, the Carrboro Police instituted a mandatory written consent to search form for vehicles, residences and other property. All officers seeking consent to search a person shall receive written consent from the individual operating or the owner of the vehicle. At the time of this memo, there have been no written consent searches since implementation on July 6, 2015.

In an effort to more efficiently track and monitor citizens' complaints, the police department recently purchased new software that allows complaints to be lodged and tracked against officers. With this system, we will be able to identify any trends in misconduct by an individual so the department can intervene according to policy, and then provide supplemental training and/or dismissal, if deemed necessary. In an effort to be more transparent, the number of complaints and their disposition will be compiled on a quarterly and annual basis made available on our website and annual report.

We continue to work on policy review. Some policies have been updated and others added, such as the Written Consent Policy and Bias Based Policing Policy. Once completed, all policies will be available online for citizens to review. However, operational procedures will not be shared online. Sharing of this sensitive information could compromise the safety of officers, citizens, and be detrimental to our ability to respond to

certain situations.

The department is continuing to deploy Mobile Video Recording (MVR) devices in all new cars purchased by the Town. Up to five more MVR systems will be purchased this fiscal year for deployment. Policy development continues for Body Worn Cameras (BWC). Cooperation with the NC ACLU, Carrboro Board of Alderman and police department has addressed many concerns ranging from privacy issues to retention of footage. We hope to have a final policy ready by the beginning of 2016 for the Board to approve a resolution for the use of BWC by the police department.

At our first community forum, James Williams, Lead Public Defender for Orange and Chatham Counties, presented a report which looked at traffic stops and searches completed by the Carrboro Police Department. The report was authored by Professor Frank Baumgartner of UNC. Professor Baumgartner analyzed traffic stop data from the period 2002-2013. This report found that there was a disparity between the number of black citizens who were stopped and searched as compared to white citizens. After reviewing the report, Carrboro Police staff noticed that there were some issues with the data used in the report. It was found that due to an error in the Records Management System software, the type of search reported to the state from the traffic stop report was potentially incorrect in many cases. Additionally, the amount of officers reported to have worked at Carrboro Police Department during this period was in error. Carrboro Police contracted Dr. Deborah Weisel of NCCU to review the report prepared by Professor Baumgartner and the data used in the report. Dr. Wiesel's review of the corrected data also concluded that a disparity existed, but smaller in number. We are trying to identify what factors cause the disparity and see if officer behavior contributes to this disparity.

In an effort to reduce the disparity, the Carrboro Police Department will change the focus of our traffic enforcement. Officers will shift enforcement priorities to those of moving violations, such as speeding, driving while impaired, and stop sign/light violations, which are major safety and quality of life concerns in Carrboro, instead of enforcing minor violations such as expired registration and turn signal violations. After all, Carrboro prides itself on being a pedestrian and bike-friendly community. The community should not be concerned, the Carrboro Police will never sacrifice the safety of the citizens, but we do feel that this new approach, which is being used in other communities, will address some of the disparity issues we are facing with our traffic stops. As we move forward with this new approach to enforcement, we will monitor for any unintentional consequences, such as an increase in traffic accidents, crime rates and any other concerns that may jeopardize the safety of the community. If this does occur, and we see an increase we will evaluate this strategy and adjust our priorities.

Most recently, the Carrboro Police hosted its first Citizen Police Academy (CPA) on October 24, 2015. Nine members of the community from various backgrounds participated in the pilot academy. The goal of the CPA is to provide participants with a chance to get an up close and personal look at the Carrboro Police Department and provide participants with a chance to learn the how-and-why behind policing. With feedback from participants, we hope to improve future classes. We are confident that this program will help foster greater understanding, cooperation, and communication between the police department and the greater community.

Law enforcement all over the country has faced major scrutiny about their decisions concerning the use of force and use of deadly force. Officers often have to make split-second decisions about appropriate use of force in

their jobs. Police administrators and the Town of Carrboro have the duty and responsibility to provide our officers with the best training available, to allow them to perform their job correctly. To provide this type of training to the police department, a Firearms Training Simulator (FATS) shall be purchased during FY2016-17. This simulator purchase will be made with Federal Asset Forfeiture funds, meaning it will be no cost to tax payers. This will allow officers to train in a replicated real-world environment on critical skills including threat-recognition and decision-making-under-stress.

As the Carrboro Police Department moves forward, there are several more items we hope to accomplish. We are working hard on working on new ideas to bring to the citizens of Carrboro to improve the relationships between the police department and members of the community. Some next steps include improving our data collection. With the recent forums, we have been asked to provide more data on our actions and present this to the public. We are in the process of identifying data in our Records Management System (RMS) that can provide insight in to our daily operations. Some of this information will include more details on our traffic stops, arrests, and use of force.

We are also looking at expanding our Community Policing efforts by hosting smaller community meetings within the Town. We currently break the Town up in to four patrol districts each includes various neighborhoods. While all citizens have the same concerns overall about safety, each community may have their own issues and concerns they want addressed. Meeting with each neighborhood will allow us to identify those concerns and work hand in hand with the individual communities to address their needs. Neighborhoods would include Broad and Lloyd, Collins Crossings, Lake Hogan Farms, Claremont, Lincoln Park, and Cates Farm among others.

In order to provide and expand services to the community, the police department is looking at staffing needs to meet these goals. We are looking at ways to add additional officers to provide more community outreach and programs that would be beneficial to the Town of Carrboro. We are also considering hiring a Police Analyst to capture and provide data to the community in quarterly and annual reports.

These actions we are taking are an ever evolving process, and will take time to accomplish. The members of the Carrboro Police Department are dedicated to continue to make our community safe and improve our partnership with the community

FISCAL & STAFF IMPACT: Fiscal and staff impacts, as yet undetermined in extent, can be anticipated from implementation of the goals and strategies.

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends the Board accept this report