

July 19, 2011

Members of the Town Board
Town of North Castle
15 Bedford Road
Armonk, NY 10504

To the Town Board,

Recently, the North Castle Budget and Finance Advisory Task Force ("Task Force") received two reports evaluating staffing requirements and certain organizational functions of the North Castle Police Department ("NCPD"). These reports, summarized below, establish the foundation upon which the Task Force is developing its assessment of the cost effectiveness of the services the NCPD provides to the residents of North Castle. The reports contain important information on practices and procedures of the NCPD and comparable public safety departments that are helping guide the Task Force's analysis. Our objective is to incorporate the data and observations from those reports in to a set of recommendations that assist the Town Board in (a) establishing a level of police staffing and services consistent with the Town's needs and finances; and (b) building the 2012 budget and, importantly, a five year plan that enables North Castle to continuously improve its financial position.

The reports were commissioned independently in fall 2010 by the Task Force and Chief Robert D'Angelo of the NCPD. The review commissioned by the ICMA Center for Public Safety Management ("ICMA"), a private contractor that specializes in the evaluation of municipal agencies including public safety organizations. The review commissioned by the Chief was undertaken by the Office of Public Safety ("OPS") of the New York State Department of Criminal Justice Services, which administers mandated police training programs as well as initiatives developed to enhance the productivity and professionalism of law enforcement and public safety personnel in New York.

In the course of our work, we have come to appreciate the complexity of evaluating a public safety department such as the NCPD and the numerous logistical, legal, constitutional and community- driven requirements it must meet to maintain its accreditation and perform at the level of satisfaction sought by North Castle's residents. We also note that since January 2009, eight police officers have retired and there is a prospect of three additional retirements between now and mid-2012. Thus, we emphasize that the observations and conclusions contained in the ICMA and OPS reports must be viewed in the context of a changing personnel complement in the NCPD's officer ranks; and that the ultimate determination of size of the department cannot simply be a quantitative exercise; rather, it must be one that takes into consideration the safety of residents and officers as well as the type and level of services that will ensure that North Castle will remain a highly desirable place to live.

The initial findings of the reports and the preliminary recommendations of the Task Force are set forth below.

Staffing Levels

Budgeted expenditures for the NCPD in fiscal 2011 are approximately \$7.0 million, the vast majority of which is salary, benefit and overtime expense. Accordingly, the focal point of the ICMA and OPS evaluations was departmental staffing levels. Adjusted for announced retirements, at June 30, 2011 the NCPD had 30 uniformed officers in addition to 5 civilian employees. The uniformed officers break down as follows:

- 1 Chief
- 3 Lieutenants
- 6 Patrol Sergeants
- 1 Detective Sergeant
- 3 Detectives (one of whom is the DARE officer)
- 16 Patrol officers

For reference, the NCPD had 38 uniformed officers as of December 31, 2008, 35 as of December 31, 2009 and 34 as of December 31, 2010. Thus, a reduction of 8 uniformed officers already has occurred from a relatively recent peak.

In performing their staffing analyses, ICMA and OPS took into account the geography and population of North Castle, the calls for service from town residents, the performance of patrol and other duties typical of a department such as the NCPD, available patrol time per officer (i.e., net of training, vacations, sick days, etc.), terms of the NCPD collective bargaining agreement and State and County legislation relevant to staffing of public safety agencies.

Potential staffing modifications identified by one or both of the reports include:

1. Reduction in the number of patrol officers on the road from three to two on two of the three daily eight-hour tours (16:00 – 24:00 and 00:00 - 08:00) tours and scheduling three patrol officers on the 08:00 -- 16:00 tour. This adds up to 7 patrol officers (2+2+3) on the road daily, with three supervisory sergeants (also on the road) and three desk officers. Currently, due to manpower limitations, the department schedules two patrol officers for all three tours, indicating that the recommended reduction has already been more than achieved;
2. Use of civilian dispatchers in lieu of uniformed officers and a resulting elimination of the position of desk officer ;
3. Reduction, through attrition, in the number of lieutenants from 3 to 2;
4. Reduction in the number of patrol (i.e., supervisory) sergeants and, potentially, in the number of detectives, subject to a review of data that was unavailable at the time the reports were prepared;
5. Addition of certain duties and reports to enhance organizational efficiency. ICMA did not prepare, nor have we had the opportunity to compile, data that would allow for a determination of the extent to which the current departmental personnel could assume these duties or whether new hires would be required.

Neither report definitively sets forth a recommended staffing level for the NCPD. ICMA suggested reducing certain staffing levels and provided a framework for their determination which requires the collection and analysis of additional data – both of which represent top priorities of the Task Force in the coming weeks. Conversely, OPS adopted a formulaic approach by which it established that 13 patrol officers, and in certain instances 10, represented a *minimum* (emphasis added) pool of officers nominally available for patrol service. Both reports suggested that modifications to the Collective Bargaining Agreement should be explored to provide the department greater flexibility on staffing levels.

The Task Force believes that the announced and anticipated retirements are likely to have the effect of reducing the sergeant and patrol officer ranks to levels consistent with, or possibly below, the guidance provided by the ICMA and OPS reports. From a financial perspective, the reduction in salary and benefit expense from the retirement of the eight officers is approximately \$1.0 million per annum, some of which is reflected in 2011 expenditures. It would be incorrect, however, to view the full extent of these 'savings' as assured prior to considering whether *minimum staffing* represents a model appropriate for a community such as North Castle and whether the NCPD should adopt some or all of the organizational and reporting recommendations of the ICMA. Further, minimum staffing may not provide an adequate response for extraordinary events requiring surge staffing, such as weather-related and other emergencies. In those instances, a determination should be made whether overtime is a more effective means of addressing extraordinary peak needs versus maintaining additional personnel on a full-time basis. We note that with fewer officers, the pool available for overtime service would be smaller, resulting in less flexibility to contend with scheduled training and vacation time or sick days. A study of the NCPD's historical use of overtime and its application to future staffing needs is presently underway. Last, we note that the use of civilian dispatchers could result in savings available to increase the number of patrol officers providing such additional services. These are threshold issues for the Town Board and the NCPD to consider in the coming months.

We also understand that the anticipated retirements noted earlier, should they occur, may necessitate that the NCPD hire replacement patrol officers through transfers from other departments or putting one or more cadets through the Police Academy. Should that be necessary, the cost of the needed training and hiring may be offset by funding from a State of New York program for which North Castle has in prior years sought and received grants (but not used due to size of the department). North Castle has applied for such a grant in 2011 and anticipates learning shortly if it is to be received.

Training, Reporting and Communications

The ICMA report also addressed organizational issues including training, reporting, intra-departmental communications and community relations. The OPS report was limited to a review of departmental staffing levels.

For a discussion of ICMA's observations and recommendations in these areas, we refer you to its report. Importantly, ICMA concluded that the "NCPD is an effective organization, staffed by competent professionals who deliver a high level of public services." The critical question it raised and which should be reviewed further by the Town Board and Task Force is "... whether, in light of continued fiscal demands, the department has the capacity to closely monitor its operations to maximize organizational efficiency and effectiveness."

Next Steps

Under the auspices of the Supervisor, the Task Force and the NCPD are working collaboratively to address the issues identified in the ICMA and OPS reports. Our principal objective is to provide the Town Board with a set of recommendations that can be incorporated in to the Town's 2012 budget. We are also working to develop a program through which the Town Board and the NCPD can monitor and adjust staffing levels to the needs of the community and achieve continuous improvement in service levels, organizational efficiency and community relations.

Our next report to the Town Board is proposed for September upon compilation of the data and completion of the analyses set forth above. In the interim, we look forward to meeting with the Town Board to discuss the ICMA and OPS reports and observations of the Task Force as it completes its work in this area.

Our progress to date would not have been possible without the cooperation and support of Chief D'Angelo, his officers and staff. We note their professionalism and thank them for their assistance throughout this effort.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Task Force,

/s/ Alexander D. Greene /s/ David L. Grove

Alexander D. Greene
David L. Grove