

**EMORANDUM****Police Department**

to: Mr. L. Kimball Payne, City Manager

from: Colonel Parks H. Snead, Chief of Police

date: 5-11-09

re: Information requested by Councilman Helgeson

Councilman Helgeson spoke with me on 5-7-09. During our conversation, he requested that I provide him with the following information.

FYI, and please forward this to Councilman Helgeson and to whomever else you deem appropriate.

**1. Information on how the 3% salary reduction affects entry-level LPD officer salary as compared with other regional law enforcement jurisdictions.**

Attachment A shows Lynchburg Police Department entry-level police officer salary (at 3% reduction) as compared with other Virginia law enforcement agencies. Chart 1 of Attachment A is sorted alphabetically by agency name. Chart 2 of Attachment A is sorted by agency entry level salary – highest to lowest.

(The control to toggle between the two charts is located at the bottom left of the spreadsheet.)

In synopsis, the current 3% salary reduction moves the LPD's entry-level recruit officer salary from \$30,617 to \$29,698. This places Lynchburg 15<sup>th</sup> of the 15 Virginia "First Cities" charted. More significantly, Lynchburg's starting officer salary is currently below regional competitors Amherst County, Bedford, Charlottesville, Danville, Martinsville, Roanoke, Salem, Staunton and Vinton. Further, Lynchburg's entry-level officer salary is now only \$84 above that of Bedford County, which offers a take-home vehicle incentive and the enhanced 1.85% VRS retirement multiplier.

- It should be noted that Lynchburg's entry-level recruit officer salary falls behind all but two of these other localities – Amherst County and Staunton – even at \$30,617. One area

of recruitment and retention concern is that the 3% pay reduction has exacerbated an already less-than-adequately-competitive regional pay situation.

- In a recent, informal survey of approximately twenty-five Virginia law enforcement agencies, we found no law enforcement agency facing a pay cut except for Winchester PD, which was expecting imposition of 3 furlough days.
- While law enforcement agencies in Northern Virginia have reportedly eliminated positions, that has not happened to date within this region. Both the Amherst County and Campbell County Sheriffs expected to have to lay off 4 or more positions during FY10, but have reported that availability of federal stimulus funding has made that action unnecessary.
- BWX Technologies Nuclear Fuel Division has been for some years our single greatest regional competitor for sworn officers – typically hiring experienced officers that the City of Lynchburg has paid to train. The BWXT security force is subsidized by federal funding, and its officers are highly paid by regional law enforcement standards. It is my understanding that BWXT officers received a 5% salary increase in January 09, and received an additional salary bonus in March 09.

On a related note, the LPD's ongoing campaign to promote local recruitment of officer candidates (and particularly of qualified minority candidates) has required an increase in funding allocated to advertising and promoting the LPD within the local job market. However, the current fiscal situation has resulted in the LPD's request for \$20,950 in funding allocated to FY10 recruitment and advertising being cut to \$5,000.

## **2. Information on officer staffing and retention in recent years, in light of the 5-7-09 News and Advance article *City police see surge in applications*.**

The LPD's recruitment and hiring office has noted a 135% increase in applications in the first quarter of 2009 as compared to the same time period in 2008. While the *News and Advance* article appears to credit this to the affects of recession-related private sector lay-offs, I believe that heightened applications are also a product of the intensive local recruitment efforts undertaken by the LPD throughout most of 2008.

In any case, an increase in the number of applications does not correlate to an increasing number of applicants qualified to serve as Lynchburg Police Officers.

- A significant portion of persons who apply for employment as LPD sworn officers never follow up on their applications. Of 30 applicants scheduled to take the most recent entry-level written test, 11 showed up at the test site.
- Approximately 20% of police officer applicants fail the initial written examination (a validated testing instrument that is closely monitored for any adverse impact).
- The LPD historically offers employment to 2-4% of those who apply for police officer positions.

Just as critically important as recruitment and hiring of qualified police officers is retaining those officers for useful careers of service to our community.

- Approximately 2 years' training and experience are required to develop a recruit into a generally competent police officer capable of working effectively without intensive supervision. Officers become increasingly valuable community resources as their experience and expertise increase. Police supervisors must have significant training and field experience in order to be viable in that role.
- Since January 1, 2007 we have had 33 police officers leave the LPD through retirement or resignation: this equates to losing 19.4% of our authorized workforce of 170 officers.
  - 2007: 12 resignations, 5 retirements (17 total)
  - 2008: 9 resignations, 5 retirements (14 total)
  - 2009 to date: 1 resignation, 1 retirement (2 total).
    - 2 are considering retirement
    - 2 have announced intent to resign in the near future
    - 6 have announced that they are actively seeking other employment
  - The LPD is currently carrying 3 vacant positions. However, daily availability of officer staffing is also affected by various other types of functional vacancies, to include recruit officers in basic training (4 currently) and officers on long-term military deployment (3 by June 09).
  - The result of these factors in ongoing combination is that LPD available officer staffing is typically 5-10% below our authorized staffing of 170.

Emergency Communications Center staffing is, and will be, similarly affected.

- The ECC is currently authorized 26 telecommunicator and telecommunications supervisor positions, and is currently carrying approximately 15.4% functional staffing vacancies:
  - 1 vacant telecommunicator position
  - 1 newly-hired telecommunicator who has not yet begun the 6 month training program required to dispatch independently
  - 1 telecommunicator in training
  - 1 telecommunicator on long-term administrative leave.
- Of 24 recent applicants for telecommunicator positions, 6 passed initial screening for further employment consideration.

Recruitment and retention of qualified officers and telecommunicators are significant operational concerns at present, and will remain so well into the future. The City's current fiscal situation – in particular the ongoing 3% employee pay reduction -- is being cited by police officers and telecommunicators as a factor in their leaving employment and in their seeking out other employment opportunities. It appears very likely that this situation is going to negatively impact the scope and the sustainability of our community policing efforts for an extended period of time.

### **3. General information on the state of the City regarding the prevalence of criminal activity.**

Calendar 2008 saw significant increases in both general criminal activity and in violent crime, with the result that our community is experiencing a criminal activity plateau that will remain a key public safety concern for the foreseeable future. From a multi-year perspective:

- “Group A” offenses (a nationwide category used to encompass the most serious types of persons and property crimes) were up 7% from calendar 2007 and were up almost 10% versus the average occurrence rate in Lynchburg over the prior ten years.

(“Group A Offenses” are defined as Abduction, Arson, Assault, Burglary/Breaking and Entering, Counterfeiting/Forgery, Property Damage/Vandalism, Drug Offenses, Embezzlement, Extortion, Fraud, Gambling, Homicide, Larceny, Motor Vehicle Theft, Pornography, Prostitution, Robbery, Forcible and Non-Forcible Sex Offenses, Stolen Property Offenses, Weapon Law Violations.)

- Violent crime was up 7.4% from 2007 and was up over 8% versus the average occurrence rate in Lynchburg over the prior ten years.

(“Violent Crime” is an LPD data category that includes homicide, rape, robbery, forcible sex and assault.)

From a monthly criminal occurrence perspective:

- Relatively high monthly criminal activity totals throughout 2008 spiked in October 08: we saw declining monthly criminal activity thereafter through February 2009.
- March 09 showed another criminal activity spike (169 violent crimes reported), which is consistent with historical experience: the seasonal onset of warm weather tends to bring on an increase in many types of criminal activity -- this of course in conjunction with other factors, many of which we can positively influence through a variety of police/ community actions. The quantity and the quality of the actions the LPD is able to foster within our community is contingent upon what resources we have to work with, and how we direct those resources.

The prevalence of organized criminal gangs within the City of Lynchburg remains an ongoing and unpredictable threat to public safety.

- We currently have as many as 16 active criminal enterprise gangs with as many as 300 active gang members in Lynchburg. These persons – acting individually and as members of these groups – can, and frequently do, foster serious crime sprees that are all the more alarming for their unpredictability.
- We have had 10 or more notable shooting incidents within the City since January: 4 of these incidents occurred within a 12 hour period. Criminal gang activity was the crucible for most of these crimes. We have been extremely lucky (and there is no other word for it) not to have had several people killed in these incidents.