

**COBB COUNTY
POLICE DEPARTMENT
IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

OVERVIEW

This plan is designed to meet the goal of having the Cobb County Police Department fully staffed with personnel, vehicles, and equipment by January 1, 2017. The safety of our officers and the citizens of Cobb County is the driving force behind this plan.

The recruitment, hiring, training, and retention of well qualified and experienced personnel are crucial to providing the high level of police services the citizens of Cobb County have come to expect. The Cobb County Police Department has always had a reputation of being the best and this plan will help us maintain that status.

A list of critical issues currently facing the Police Department and a plan to address them has been developed. These issues relate to Staffing, Compensation/Benefits, Technology and Equipment, Leadership/Management, Facility Needs, and upgrades to current Data Analysis.

This list was devised after reviewing memos and request from former Public Safety Director Forsythe, meeting with Cobb County Police Command Staff, several police officers and FOP members, a thorough review of the survey sent to Cobb County Police officers, and extensive discussions with the County Manager and Board of Commissioners.

This plan includes recent internal policy and operational changes already underway that pertain to the recruitment and hiring of qualified police officers personnel. It also includes a plan to complete the transition to safer and more efficient ten-hour shifts, the replacement of older police vehicles, the purchase of additional police vehicles to meet current needs at the precincts, and the phased implementation of an assigned vehicle program.

This plan also includes providing shift differential pay to adequately compensate public safety employees who work non-traditional shifts, educational incentive pay, and purchasing and issuing additional equipment to enhance officer safety and response to critical incidents.

Finally the plan addresses the future restructure of command personnel at the precinct level to improve oversight and management of personnel and operations, an upgrade to data analysis equipment and personnel to enhance allocation of resources, and facility upgrades included in the 2016 SPLOST.

STAFFING ISSUES

An analysis of our staffing including current and anticipated vacancies through the end of 2016 indicates that we will need to hire approximately 232 officers by January 2017 in order for the Cobb County Police Department to be fully staffed. These projections are based on current attrition levels.

Four key components, Recruiting, Hiring, Training, and Retention, have been identified as contributors to the current staffing issue. The information below details efforts already underway to improve the productivity and efficiency of our recruiting, hiring, and training efforts.

It also includes the implementation of specific measures aimed at increasing retention of well trained and experienced officers.

Recruiting/Hiring

Several key modifications have already been implemented to improve the recruiting and hiring process. The process is constantly evaluated for improvement.

- The number of officers assigned to the Recruiting and Hiring division of the Internal Affairs Unit was doubled. This will ensure that more applications can be processed while decreasing wait time for candidates.
- Internal Affairs increased its presence at Job Fairs and Military Career Fairs. Approximately 20 events have been attended to date. Off Duty officers from the field are supplementing the recruiters to add diversity to the recruiting efforts and to decrease time away from processing applications and conducting background checks.
- Internal Affairs increased its advertising efforts to include a radio ad, posting job openings in multiple online venues, regional police academies, and colleges across the United States. Billboard advertisements are being developed at this time.
- The police applications and background investigation process was updated to streamline the process. An additional polygrapher was added to the vendor list to decrease appointment wait times.
- Additional administrative personnel were added to the unit to allow recruiters to focus on background investigations, candidate interviews, and attendance at recruiting events.
- Upgrades have been ordered to the Applicant Tracking Module in the Records Management System to allow email notifications to rejected applicants in lieu of traditional mail.

Training

Due to the changes implemented in the recruiting and hiring process, more recruits are being hired. The need was identified to increase the number of academies being offered each year by the Cobb County Department of Public Safety Training Center. A thorough review was conducted of the training currently being offered to new recruits and several familiarization and noncritical topics

were reduced or shifted from Mandate Training to Field and Annual Training. The total time for each Mandate class is now approximately 20 weeks, allowing for additional training cycles without sacrificing the superior level of training that Cobb County is known for.

Beginning October 13, 2014, Mandate classes will be held in October, January, April, and July of each year until vacancies have been filled. Previously, classes were only offered twice per year in January and June/July.

Funds have been approved in the amount of \$135,000 each year from the FY 15/16 General Fund for anticipated overtime costs associated with an increased number of academies.

A Lateral Entry Training Program was reinstated to attract Georgia POST certified officers and transition them more quickly into the field through a streamlined process.

Retention

Retention continues to be extremely problematic with officers leaving the department at nearly the exact rate that new ones are being hired. The following measures have been approved to address retention:

- **Assigned Vehicle Program**

While the primary purpose of the assigned vehicle program is to improve the overall efficiency of the department, a secondary benefit is derived through improved retention. The implementation of this program will place our agency in a better position to compete with area jurisdictions.

The program will be administered through an application process that considers years of service, disciplinary history, driving ability, and residency. Although full implementation will take several years, the goal is to begin the expansion of the assigned car program by March, 2015 through use of existing cars.

Approximately 230 additional vehicles are needed to implement an assigned vehicle program department wide.

Funds have been approved in the amount of \$ 12,312,000 pending 2016 SPLOST approval. If SPLOST fails then the program will take longer to implement, but will remain part of the plan.

- **Shift Differential**

Providing 24-hour public safety requires employees to work non-traditional hours. These shifts cause personnel to work less desirable, more dangerous hours, and often take a tremendous toll on family life. Beginning fiscal year 2015, Shift Differential Pay will be implemented at the rate of \$.50 cents/hour for officers working Evening Shift and \$1.00/hour for officers working Midnight Shift.

Funds will be approved in the amount of \$1,300.000 from the FY 15/16 General Fund for anticipated costs. [Total cost applies to Police, Sheriff, E-911, and Animal Control]

- **Educational Incentive Pay**

Educational incentive pay is a standard incentive in police departments across metro Atlanta. As a means to encourage and reward those employees who attain a college education and to attract qualified and professional applicants, incentive pay, if supported in the Class and Pay study, will be initiated. Specifics of that program are dependent upon the outcome of the study.

If approved, needed funds are presently estimated in the amount of \$1,800,000 and will be approved from the FY 16 General Fund for anticipated costs. [Total cost applies to Police, Sheriff, E-911, Fire and Animal Control]

- **10 hour Shifts**

Ten hour shifts are designed to increase the overall efficiency of the department. The current 8 hour shifts do not allow for adequate staffing levels during high-demand periods. The primary concern is for the safety of Cobb's officers and citizens during these times, due to the lack of available manpower.

Problems exist during shift changes three (3) times each day at each of the four (4) separate precincts. During shift change, very few officers are left in the field. The response time to calls for police service during this period is extended because oncoming officers must wait for outgoing officers to return to the precinct and hand off the police vehicle and equipment.

During these time frames, the availability of officers to respond to calls for police service or provide backup is limited or non-existent. This creates a potentially unsafe environment in the event a dangerous incident occurs that requires an immediate response.

The citizens of Cobb County have the expectation that police services will be provided in a safe and timely manner at all times of the day. It is our intent to implement a shift schedule to the remaining precincts which will increase the manpower available for response to calls for service while improving the overall safety of our citizens and officers.

The 10 hour shift schedule is designed to reduce this problem considerably by creating personnel overlap allowing officers to remain in the field for emergencies at all times. This results in enhanced officer and citizen safety. The 4 day / 10 hour shift also offers the officers more time to recuperate; especially ones assigned to non traditional shifts, and results in reduced overtime.

As staffing goals are met, the 10 hours shift schedule will be expanded to Precinct 3, 1, 4, and 5 in that order.

County management has committed to adding an additional 40 positions to ensure staffing levels are adequate to achieve ten hour shifts at all precincts. The goal is to have staffing and equipment in place for implementation at Precincts 3 and 1 by the end of 2016.

Funds will be approved in the amount of \$3,020,850.00 for anticipated costs associated with adding personnel from the FY 16 budget.

COMPENSATION/BENEFITS

Cobb employees received a 3% pay increase in 2013 and a 3% merit increase in 2014. The County has not increased employee health insurance premium costs over the last three years. A Health Clinic was created that is open to all employees and their dependents at no cost to the employee.

Although a 3% increase is proposed for the 2015 budget, a Pay and Compensation study is currently budgeted and in process. The study will evaluate positions within Cobb County and make recommendations to the Board of Commissioners related to retirement, medical benefits, and pay.

The study is scheduled to be completed in 2015 at which time the Board will consider recommendations including Educational Pay incentives, retention merits, parody concerns, and other pay incentives.

EQUIPMENT/TECHNOLOGY

▪ **Patrol Rifles, Ballistic Plate Carriers, and Helmets**

To further enhance officer safety, patrol rifles have been purchased and are in the process of being delivered to all police officers. These Smith and Wesson MP 15 rifles were ordered to replace the previous Vietnam era M-16, bringing the police weapons up to date. Each officer will also be issued newly purchased ballistic plate carriers and helmets to provide additional protection during certain types of emergency situations.

Over \$700,000 was spent for the patrol rifles and an additional \$230,000 for the ballistic plate carriers and helmets.

▪ **Patrol Car Replacement**

As part of the ongoing effort to address police efficiency and retention issues, police vehicles are being ordered to replace those that could not be replaced in previous budgets due to the economic downturn. Sixty seven patrol cars have been ordered and are being outfitted and deployed to the precincts. An additional 39 vehicles have been approved as part of the normal 2014 replacement schedule which will return the police fleet to its original number.

Once this is accomplished 15 additional cars will be ordered in 2015 to reduce wait times and assist in the transition to ten-hour shifts at Precincts 3 and 1. These vehicles will be in addition to the normal replacement schedule of approximately 40 vehicles per year.

Funds will be approved in the amount of \$2,223,000 for 39 vehicles. An additional \$900,000 will be approved for anticipated costs associated with adding 15 additional vehicles.

▪ **Laptops and Cellular Telephones for Detectives**

To improve operational efficiency for police detectives, laptop computers will be phased in as older desk tops are replaced. This will allow detectives to enter data and information at the crime scene versus returning to the office and composing reports from handwritten notes.

Investigators currently are using personal cell phones to conduct investigations which require them to provide their personal number to suspects and informants, posing a considerable safety concern.

Funds have been approved in the amount of \$64,800.00 from the FY 15/16 General Fund for anticipated costs associated with providing county issued cell phones to investigators.

- **Predictive Policing**

Emerging technologies are being considered to increase the operational efficiency of the department and ensure the safety of our offices and citizens. These technologies aid officers in the field utilizing a number of variables and algorithms to “predict” areas more prone to criminal activity in order to direct patrols and potentially impact crime rates.

- **Automatic License Plate Recognition**

Funding has been approved in the FY14 budget to purchase Automatic License Plate Recognition systems, commonly known as tag readers. These systems read and analyze thousands of tags per hour and then compare the information against existing “hot lists” to include wanted persons and stolen cars.

LEADERSHIP/MANAGEMENT

In an effort to improve the overall management and oversight of daily operations the rank of Major will be reinstated at all precincts. To accomplish this, an additional three Captains positions have been approved to replace positions that are currently under filling the position of Police Major.

To enhance communication throughout the police department, a quarterly newsletter, a monthly information update video, and two employee Q and A forums will be implemented each year. The Department of Public Safety will also provide all Key Managerial personnel with two annual Leadership forums.

Funding has been approved in the FY15/16 budget for additional personnel mentioned above and for one Administrative positions for Internal Affairs, one Public Service Tech II for Central Records, one part-time Finance Analyst for Police HQ, one Senior Crime Scene Tech and one Crime Analyst Coordinator that are currently under filled with Police Officer II positions.

FACILITIES

Internal Affairs

In order to accommodate the additional personnel assigned to the Recruiting/Hiring function of the police department, existing personnel had to be located to other areas of the county including space loaned by Cobb Superior Court and Cobb Fire Headquarters. Currently the Internal Affairs Unit is being housed at four separate locations. An existing county facility has been identified to relocate the unit to one central location.

Funding in the amount of \$300,000 for construction and \$100,000 for furnishings to complete this project has been approved from the FY 14 Surplus with work to begin immediately.

Police Headquarters/Evidence Facility/Precincts

Plans for improvements and upgrades to these facilities are detailed under the 2016 SPLOST section.

DATA ANALYSIS

The need was identified to better measure and integrate data across all departments within Public Safety including Police, Fire, 911, and Animal Control in order to accurately and objectively determine and allocate resources.

To assist with this void, a Data Analysis Group was formed within Cobb Fire over the last several months and approximately \$20,000 worth of equipment has been purchased. This equipment will allow the group to consolidate information from various databases utilized throughout the DPS departments and allow them to gather and analyze data in order to form reasonable and objective recommendations and evaluations of implemented solutions.

This will continue to assist the police department in obtaining objective data and analysis on the following issues:

- Number and types of police calls for service
- Crime stats and trends, response times
- Number of open beats
- Call hold times
- Detective case loads
- Call processing times for 911
- Number of arrests/citations
- Number of special teams call-outs
- Hiring and retention data
- Number of applicants
- Number of applicants hired/rejected
- Applicant rejection reasons
- Percentage of new hires successfully completing training
- Percent of officers leaving the department/reasons
- Number of lateral officers hired
- Other information as needed

Equipment was purchased in FY14 and additional personnel have been approved for FY15/16 for a Program Analyst II in Fire to work on this project.

2016 SPLOST PUBLIC SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS

The 2016 SPLOST Tier 1 Police Department projects have been carefully selected to have the greatest impact on our ability to continue to provide excellent police services to the citizens of Cobb.

▪ Police Headquarters/Evidence Unit

Built in 1974, the current facility is approximately 15,000 square feet and houses a staff of 84 sworn and non-sworn employees. It also houses the main office of the Evidence Unit

located in the basement and more than half of this facility houses the E-911 Emergency Communications Bureau, added in 1999. To meet current needs, holding cells and closets have been converted to office spaces for personnel.

The evidence unit has outgrown and evidence is currently being housed in offsite rental storage units. Investigators and citizens are required to visit multiple locations to obtain reports and retrieve property. Due to a lack of space, multiple police specialty units and divisions are located at sites throughout the county which significantly reduces coordination, efficiency, oversight, and management ability.

Funding has been allocated for anticipated cost to rebuild an adequate Police Headquarters/Evidence Unit in the amount of \$16,000,000 pending the approval of the 2016 SPLOST.

- **Public Safety Training Center.**

The existing facility was constructed when Cobb Public Safety was roughly half its current size. The facility is just less than 30,000 square feet including all classrooms, offices, and the outdoor shooting range. The outdoor range, utilized on a daily basis, frequently generates noise complaints by area residents.

Classroom facilities are inadequate for the number of public safety students. Seven shower/bathroom facilities are available for use by more than 70 students and instructors. This problem will be further exacerbated with the implementation of additional police academies. Increased personnel and an increase in annual recertification hours require an expanded and upgraded facility. This improvement was part of the Citizen Oversight Committee recommendations.

Funding in the amount of \$ 23,300,000 has been allocated for anticipated costs associated with building an adequate shared public safety training center with enclosed shooting range pending the approval of the 2016 SPLOST.

- **Precinct Repairs/Upgrades**

Of the five existing precincts, two are 25 years old. Three are in need of significant repair, replacement and upgrade due to frequent roof leaks, inadequate and unsanitary restrooms and flooring.

There is inadequate space for current employees and insufficient locker storage for issued equipment.

Funding in the amount of \$2,250,000 has been allocated for anticipated costs associated with repair, replacement and upgrade of police precincts pending the approval of the 2016 SPLOST.

- **Crime Scene Processing Equipment**

Currently, two crime scene vans are inoperable and due to age and mileage (250,000 miles) are past their practical life. These are specialized pieces of equipment that are critical in preparing an effective case and successfully prosecuting offenders. The addition of these

vans and equipment enhances our ability to process and preserve evidence in accordance with accepted standards and legal expectations.

Funding in the amount of \$102,113 has been allocated for anticipated costs associated with purchasing and equipping crime scene vehicles and equipment pending the approval of the 2016 SPLOST.

- **Precinct 6**

The addition of a sixth precinct is being planned for the northeast area of the county to better allocate personnel and resources and to provide a facility closer to the citizens living in that area.

Funding in the amount of \$ 6,000,000 has been allocated for anticipated costs associated with building Precinct 6 pending the approval of the 2016 SPLOST.