

**Organizational Assessment**  
**of the**  
**Farmville Police Department**

**April 28, 2009**

**Submitted by:**

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I want to thank Town Manager Gerald Spates, Clerk of Council Lisa Hricko, and Police Captain Wade Stimpson for their cooperation and assistance in this project. They were instrumental in ensuring that this assessment could be conducted in a timely and productive manner.

Their support of this effort to enhance the effectiveness and professionalism of the Farmville Police Department is greatly appreciated.

*Gregg E. Jarvies*

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## FORWARD

When an organizational assessment is requested by a governmental entity it is often due to concerns about efficiency and/or effectiveness of the organization. It is therefore likely that the assessment report will focus more on deficiencies and areas needing improvement than on areas of good, professional performance.

This report contains findings and analyses that point out significant deficiencies in the Farmville Police Department. They are in the report either because they were identified by participants as areas negatively affecting the overall performance of the agency or because, in the author's expert opinion, they are issues that are inhibiting the department from being the professional and progressive police agency the residents of Farmville deserve.

In the midst of what might be construed by some to be a negative portrait of the Farmville Police Department it is important for the readers to remember that the vast majority of the town and police department staff are dedicated, eager, loyal, and committed public servants who want the department to progress, modernize and become the best police agency possible. Without these dedicated individuals most of the changes and recommendations included in this report could not, and would not, be made.

It is important for readers to understand that this assessment resulted from a three-day visit to Farmville and interactions with approximately 200 people. It is impossible to identify and assess all issues or propose recommendations for all facets of a community's police department in that time period. However, it is also important to understand that it is the responsibility of the contractor to conduct the most thorough assessment possible within the constraints of the contract, to provide thorough and honest feedback, and make recommendations based on his law enforcement experiences. It is the opinion of this author that the following report meets these criteria and expectations.

*Note: The use of the male pronoun when referring to police officers in this report is for the sake of convenience and consistency and is not in any way intended to ignore the presence or importance of females within the ranks of the Farmville Police Department.*



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Between April 1 and April 3, 2009 the Contractor conducted thirty face-to-face interviews, met with over 150 students of Longwood University and conducted eight brief interviews with people randomly selected while walking through the business district of Farmville. Based on these interviews, a review of fourteen surveys completed by members of the police department, and a comprehensive review of the department's policies and procedures manual, I offer the following observations and conclusions.

The Farmville Police Department is staffed with dedicated employees who enjoy close working relationships and have a strong allegiance to the Town of Farmville, its police department and the department's commanders. It is a department that prides itself on its record of keeping major crime rates low. The department has a mix of senior and relatively young officers, many of whom are natives of the area and value working for their hometown agency. Turnover has been low and there is no indication that this will change.

Despite the best intentions of many of the agency's employees, the Farmville Police Department lacks sufficient and critically needed direction, guidance and accountability. The agency does not have a mission statement or a values statement for direction. It operates under a haphazard system of command and control without structure and consistency. Policies and procedures are antiquated. Organizational systems are more informal than formal. Accountability for performance is often lacking or is provided intermittently based on personal preferences or individual relationships.

Advanced training opportunities are rare and there is neither a formal career progression system nor a formal promotion process in place. Employees are not evaluated through any performance evaluation system.

Decisions regarding operational priorities and expectations are based on individual knowledge and preferences rather than on empirical and historical data.

There are no formal outreach efforts to the community, especially Longwood University. In fact, the relationship between police and students is adversarial. Community-oriented policing is not a priority in the Farmville Police Department.

Among the employees there is, without exception, great admiration for the chief of police. Not one of the fourteen employees interviewed for this assessment expressed anything but fondness for Chief Dunnavant. However, there is also a practically unanimous consensus from those employees that the lines of communication and authority within the department are unclear and confusing. It is believed by the employees, citizens and justice officials interviewed that many of the critical decisions, policies and protocols are developed and delivered by the town manager, not the chief of police. Indeed, except for membership in the Virginia Retirement System, the lack of clear lines of command and communication and related issues of political interference were the most often mentioned reasons for the low morale among employees. While claims of

political interference are not uncommon in public service organizations, the level of purported interference revealed in this assessment appears to be significant.

The Farmville Police Department has a strong foundation upon which to progress. Many of the employees are eager to grow and improve. Most offered suggestions regarding how the agency can become the professional agency the community deserves. Change needs to come to the Farmville Police Department. Some of the changes recommended herein will be difficult, a few may be costly. However, if the department does not change the town faces a strong likelihood of increased liability exposure, internal turmoil and a future where the reputation of its police department will be mediocrity, not professionalism.

From the moment the Contractor first drove down Main Street it was clear that the Town of Farmville prides itself on its welcoming atmosphere, clean streets and reputation as a place where people will want to visit and live. A police department is often a community's most public representation of its values and ideals. For the Farmville Police Department to attain that status it must modernize its operations; enhance and codify its management systems; establish processes to enhance outreach to stakeholders; and clearly delineate lines of authority, responsibility and communications. Most importantly, the Farmville Police Department must revamp its perspectives on the role of a police agency in modern society, specifically in Farmville, Virginia.

## **ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this document is to report on the findings of an organizational assessment of the Farmville Police Department and to provide recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness of the department's organization, operations, and service to stakeholders in the Farmville community.

### **Background**

On March 4, 2009 the Town of Farmville, under signature of Town Manager Gerald Spates, entered into a contact with the author of this report (hereinafter referred to as the Contractor). The contract and performance proposal agreed to by all parties authorized the Contractor to "design, conduct and deliver to the Town an assessment of the Farmville Police Department." The Contractor agreed to:

1. Gather pertinent information about the department through interviews, surveys, document reviews, and other methods of data collection;
2. Report on the findings; and
3. Provide recommendations on how the department can maintain its positive attributes while enhancing areas determined to be less than adequate.

### **Scope**

During the March 4 meeting the Contractor asked the mayor, town council and town manager for guidance on the breadth of the assessment desired. The Contractor was instructed not to limit the scope of the assessment but rather to "let the investigation take you where it takes you."

The Contractor focused his assessment on three principal areas:

1. Current status of organization, including operations, policy and procedures, internal communications, training and support, and personnel issues (including morale).
2. Relationships and outreach between the organization and its stakeholders, including citizens, merchants, Longwood University staff and students, and other law enforcement agencies.
3. The short and long-term future of the department, including its readiness and ability to serve as a professional, 21st century police agency in the Town of Farmville, the counties of Prince Edward and Cumberland, and the Commonwealth of Virginia.

## **Methodology**

It was the Contractor's intent to gather information from a wide variety of stakeholders. With the assistance of Town staff, the Contractor identified more than a dozen individuals who he believed would have direct knowledge about the department, its history, its performance and/or its level of service. These individuals included members of the local judicial system, local law enforcement agency leaders, merchants and business leaders, and university staff and students. Also, the Contractor met with the town manager, other town staff, and members of the Farmville Police Department. Finally, the Contractor conducted "on the street interviews" with randomly selected citizens in the business district. Appendix B contains a list of those interviewed.

Information was gathered from stakeholders through face-to-face interviews, telephone and e-mail interviews, surveys distributed to all department employees (see Appendix C) and a forum with over 150 students from Longwood University.

Documents such as the department's policy manual, organizational chart, FY 2008-09 budget and the town's employee handbook were reviewed.

## FINDINGS, ANALYSIS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### I. ORGANIZATIONAL SYSTEMS

#### A. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES - The department's policies and procedures manual is incomplete, out of date, and poorly constructed.

##### Findings:

- There is no mission statement or set of values included in the manual and apparently they do not exist in any format within the police department. Even the law enforcement code of ethics is last among the fifty-nine rules of conduct.
- The Use of Force Policy requires that officers report the use of force only when such use "results in or is alleged to have resulted in injury or death." Therefore, according to the policy, the use of pepper spray does not need to be reported. Likewise, strong hand tactics used by officers that do not result in injury do not need to be reported. The policy does not stipulate how serious uses of force will be investigated or whether they will be investigated at all.
- When asked for an accounting of the number of use of force reports filed by officers, a senior agency representative responded that he was "unaware of any use of force reports ever being submitted."
- The Pursuit Policy does not limit the circumstances under which an officer may conduct a high-speed pursuit. Many progressive pursuit policies limit pursuits to occurrences involving serious injury or death, violent crime (homicide, rape, kidnapping, armed robbery), or when the escape of a violator presents the threat of imminent injury or death. The Farmville policy does little other than leave the decision to pursue up to the judgment of the officer.
- There are no policies regarding the tracking of confidential funds managed by narcotics officers and doled out to informants. According to the department's budget, several thousands of dollars are available for garnering information. No policy exists for managing that money, ensuring that the money is being spent as intended, or protecting narcotics officers from claims that the money is being misappropriated.
- The Citizen Complaint Policy appears to have been copied from another agency's policy or a model policy. It mentions an Internal Affairs Section which does not exist in the Farmville Police Department. It appears that the chief has complete discretion regarding whether an investigation into a complaint is initiated and whether records of complaints are maintained. The component of the policy entitled "How a Citizen Makes a Complaint" contradicts the rest of the policy. There are no stipulations in the policy about having an outside investigative authority (e.g. Virginia State Police) investigate serious acts of misconduct.

- When the department was asked for an accounting of the number of citizen complaints filed against the agency a senior agency representative responded: "we have no way of determining these numbers." When asked about the disposition of citizen complaints that had been filed against the agency the same representative responded: "we cannot determine these numbers."
- The Firearms Policy does not include stipulations pertaining to the use of the weapon, including the use of warning shots, shooting at or from moving vehicles etc.
- The policy manual is unorganized and poorly constructed. It should be organized in a way that attention is brought to the most critical policies. The fact that the department's Firearms Policy follows the Floral and Canteen Fund Policy indicates that the present manual is in need of revision.

### **Analysis:**

Without a vision statement a department has no way to know what its goals are, where it is heading, whether it has improved, or whether it is meeting the expectations of the citizens. Without a values statement, how can employees perform in a consistent and appropriate manner?

The department's lack of a current, legal set of policies and procedures leaves the department and Town susceptible to liability and financial catastrophe. It also leaves the citizens of Farmville susceptible to unfair, inequitable and potentially illegal treatment by officers of the department.

Without current and legal policies and procedures it is almost impossible for officers to know what is expected of them, how they are supposed to behave and what consequences will be faced if they fail to act appropriately. Officers are essentially free to act as they wish and conduct their business as they choose. It is difficult for command personnel to hold employees accountable when no standards exist. Officers who choose to police based on their personal ideals and values may feel free to violate the law and people's rights while feeling safe from repercussions.

When officers were asked about the out-of-date policies they typically responded "we have informal policies" or "we have new policies but they're not in writing." Unwritten or informal policies lead to poor control, poor behavior, and a lack of discipline and oversight. They also lead to inconsistencies in performance, behavior and accountability, allowing each unit and supervisor to operate in their own vacuum.

This lack of consistency is occurring in the Farmville Police Department. When asked about performance expectations and standards the majority of officers indicated that they "do what they're told" by their supervisor and that the standards and expectations are different for every shift, depending on the supervisor. Discipline is applied inconsistently and unfairly, dependent on the management and leadership styles of various supervisors

and the personal relationships that exist (or don't exist) between the officers and supervisors.

**Recommendations:**

**1. Conduct a comprehensive overhaul of the department's rules and regulations manual beginning with the development and implementation of a vision statement and set of values to guide performance and behavior.**

This project should be conducted with the assistance of a professional law enforcement organization, such as the Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police (VACP) or the Small Agency Section of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP). Virginia is fortunate to have many outstanding police chiefs who are active participants in both of these organizations. Dana Schrad, Executive Director of the VACP, has connections to both statewide and national resources.

These policy revisions are a priority and should be done without delay. The cost of doing so may be significant, but the cost of doing nothing could be enormous to the town's reputation and financial health.

**2. The town and police department should strongly consider seeking statewide accreditation.**

Statewide accreditation would provide a firm foundation on which to develop a professional law enforcement agency. It would increase the pride, confidence, and support that citizens and employees have in the agency as well as help ensure that the department remains current with the laws, policies, practices, training requirements, and performance standards expected of professional police agencies.

Statewide accreditation is less expensive and somewhat less cumbersome than national accreditation and can be accomplished with in-state resources. Dana Schrad at the VACP is an excellent contact to initiate the process.

**B. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE - The organizational structure of the agency provides for inconsistent lines of communication, poor oversight and accountability, and a lack of supervisory control.**

**Findings:**

- When originally asked for a copy of the department's organizational chart it became apparent that one did not exist. One was prepared after my request was made to the department. The chart developed was not an accurate depiction of the actual chain of command of the agency. The department's only civilian employee was not even listed on the chart.

- The organizational chart indicates that the department's lieutenant commands the patrol division and that all sergeants report to him. However, the lieutenant works primarily weekdays 7:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. No command officer is present when the majority of officers are on the street during the busiest parts of the work day and night. When asked about the lieutenant's position, it was explained that "in theory, the lieutenant is in charge of the patrol units (but) in practice the chief is really in control."
- In interviews, officers expressed that they are unsure to whom they report, who supervises them, or who has ultimate command responsibilities. According to statements by officers, several months ago a list was distributed which assigned officers to a particular supervisor. This was apparently intended to mitigate concerns about ineffective lines of communication and supervision. However, many patrol officers reported that they rarely see the supervisor to whom they were assigned and that their supervisor often did not work the same work schedule or even with the same work unit as the people they were supposed to oversee.
- There does not appear to be an allegiance to a formal chain of command. Officers were very direct - and in some cases unapologetic - in asserting that they do not always follow the chain of command when communicating work related issues. More than a few officers stated that they had bypassed supervisors and command personnel in their chain of command to communicate agency-related information directly to the chief or in some cases directly to the town manager or elected officials. Likewise, it is clear that orders, directives, and commands from the top of the organization do not always flow downward through a formal organizational structure.

### **Analysis:**

An organizational chart is an agency's primary roadmap to illustrate the reporting lines of communication and command. Having an incorrect roadmap is as bad, and sometimes worse, than not having one at all.

Employees need to know to whom they report, who they can go to for guidance and support, who will discipline them if they perform poorly, and who is ultimately responsible for the operation of the work unit and the department. There must be order and consistency of expectations for a police agency to maintain control. Order and control is provided through clear and understandable lines of command and communication. Officers must be confident that they receive clear information through consistent lines of communication. They must also know that their performance will be observed and evaluated in an equally consistent manner. This is not occurring in the Farmville Police Department.

No police agency can effectively serve its stakeholders - including its employees - if it is not protected from outside interference. A chain of command must exist, it must be codified through an organizational chart and it must be followed. If the chief is at the top

of the chain of command he should make the decisions affecting the operation of his department (in collaboration and with guidance from the town manager).

While it is important to recognize the very critical role of the town manager and town council in the delivery of town services, their input into the day-to-day operations of the police department should go through the proper channels to the police chief.

Likewise, employees of the agency must refrain from going outside of the chain of command when communicating agency-related business and must adhere to the chain of command.

### **Recommendations:**

#### **1. An organizational chart that accurately reflects the current command structure must be developed.**

Names should be attached to each position on the chart, making clear the lines of accountability and responsibility for each employee of the department. A directive should be issued along with the organizational chart stipulating that official communications will flow up and down through the chain of command without deviation, unless otherwise directed by the chief of police. Consequences for failing to adhere to this directive should be made clear.

#### **2. Processes and systems should be put in place to minimize and ultimately eliminate interference in running the day-to-day operations of the Department.**

There is nothing more important for a community than ensuring that its police department understands and adheres to the values and expectations of the community. Members of the town council are elected by the citizens to represent them. They should ensure that the voices of the citizens are heard by the chief of police and police department employees. However, decisions regarding personnel, enforcement strategies, operational priorities etc. should be the purview of the police chief. Input should be relayed from council members to the town manager and then through the chief to the men and women of the agency. Likewise, elected officials and the manager should take measures to ensure that upwards communication from the department flows through the proper channels.

#### **3. A review of the current organizational design of the department is needed.**

This assessment focused only on the organizational structure from a systems perspective. However, it appears that the right people may not be in the right positions. The rank structure might not be consistent with the level of responsibilities held by each person within each rank. The span of control for the two division command officers (the captain and lieutenant) may need to be equalized. For example, under the current structure, the captain supervises four or five investigators, the chief supervises approximately eighteen patrol personnel, and it is unclear who or what falls under the purview of the lieutenant.

An outside professional organization such as VACP, a private consultant, or even a current police chief with the necessary experience and expertise could conduct this project. The fact that the department is relatively small would likely keep the cost of such a project to a minimum.

**C. PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT - Internal processes are not in place to ensure for the efficient and effective delivery of services, the professional growth of the department and its members, or the ability to evaluate the effectiveness of the department in meeting the expectations of the community.**

**Findings:**

- There is no planning component in the department. Staff meetings with supervisory and command personnel to discuss goals, objectives, progress or results are held infrequently or not at all.
- Personnel performance evaluations have not been done in years. Officers report that they do not participate in face-to-face performance reviews with their supervisors. No standards exist to evaluate the performance of officers, either positive or negative.
- There are no policies governing the career progression of employees, including training opportunities, assignments, and promotion. According to officers, such decisions are based on seniority, personal relationships, and easily measurable standards such as the number of traffic arrests. Without a formal performance evaluation system there are few means to track and reward the quality of an officer's performance and/or his commitment to excellent service.
- Training opportunities are minimal and efforts to secure quality training are limited. New supervisors receive only basic supervisory training. Most training is operational in scope. Few of the officers interviewed had ever received or had the opportunity to attend training in leadership and management, community-oriented policing, mentoring and coaching, or incident command. None of the four most senior officers, including two with over twenty-five years of experience, have attended a command school (even though two of the best are located in Virginia and one of these is operated by the Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police).
- Officers report that daily patrol assignments are not based on empirical data or historical reports, but rather on what might have taken place the previous twenty-four hours, or information provided by investigators. Many officers stated that time not spent answering calls is often unstructured and the decision as to how to fill this undirected time is often left to their discretion.
- Though an Incident Based Reporting (IBR) system is in place, many non-criminal incidents (nuisances, noise complaints) must be researched by going through reams of paper reports. There is no computerized checks and balances system in place to ensure

that all incidents are accompanied by a report or that all required reports are actually written.

### **Analysis:**

The success of an agency and its level of professionalism cannot be evaluated without goals and objectives, systems for measuring productivity, standards established to guide performance, mechanisms for improvement, and processes to gather and analyze the critical information. These do not exist in the Farmville Police Department.

Many of the officers interviewed had never undergone a formal performance evaluation system. When asked how they measured their own performance, a standard reply was "we get the job done" or "we don't have any unsolved major crimes." Most stated that their performance evaluations consisted mostly of negative feedback when they "screwed up" with little in the way of positive feedback. There are few letters of commendation. Those who are rewarded are often the officers who produced the biggest numbers - making the most arrests or issuing the most traffic citations. This is fairly typical in organizations that do not have modern records keeping systems or performance evaluation mechanisms. After all, it is much easier to track numbers and count pieces of paper than it is to collect information on a myriad of topics from a variety of sources.

Professional police agencies of today focus less on quantitative results and more on the quality of service and the level at which that service meets the expectations of its stakeholders. There is no evidence that this occurs in Farmville.

Incentives such as training, promotions, and assignments to positions of higher authority and responsibility should be earned, not doled out based on personal relationships, political connections, high numbers of arrests, or seniority. Though factors such as seniority and productivity should be considered, they should not stand alone. Experience has shown that years of service or the ability to issue high numbers of traffic tickets are not true indicators of success. Processes that provide a comprehensive review of an employee's skills, knowledge and abilities produce much better indicators of future success.

Training and learning are critical to the growth and professionalism of any police agency. The Farmville Police Department does not appear to place a high value on training. Officers may attend schools that are offered in the area but rarely have a chance to attend training outside of the region. Advanced training opportunities in leadership and management are practically non-existent. Such training can enhance the capabilities of the officers and enable in-house candidates to advance within the agency. Training should not be focused only on what is needed today. It should include what will be needed by the officers and the agency in the future.

A discussion with the executive director of the Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police revealed that members of the Farmville Police Department have not been regular

participants in training opportunities in Virginia. Efforts to involve the department in progressive training and accreditation opportunities have not been successful.

The department has made strides in the area of computerized management of data with its Incident Based Reporting system. However, criminal activities make up a small component of an officer's workday. Assuming an officer handles three criminal complaints per ten-hour day, how are the officer's activities and productivity tracked the rest of the time? In the absence of such tracking systems, how can the agency know if it is using its time and resources effectively and efficiently?

### **Recommendations:**

#### **1. The department needs to develop and implement a performance evaluation system.**

This is a lengthy and somewhat costly process but one that is absolutely necessary. If performance cannot be measured through a fair and consistent process, how can anyone be held accountable for his behavior? If standards and benchmarks aren't established, how does an officer or agency know if they are doing the best that they can do? Officer morale and productivity will improve if officers have confidence that they will be measured against standards and not against their peers. Also, performance will improve if officers believe that those who produce a higher quality of work will be recognized for their achievement.

The development of a performance evaluation system should be a cooperative and collaborative effort among the department, local criminal justice associations, and experienced command-level officers from other police agencies.

#### **2. The department must establish a system of fair and performance-based promotional processes.**

Many progressive police agencies utilize standardized tests and/or assessment centers for selecting candidates for promotion. Assessment centers utilize police professionals from outside agencies to evaluate candidates' performances on standardized exercises against an established set of behavioral dimensions. These processes are not expensive. Centers developed and administered by someone experienced in assessment centers have been judged by the courts to be relevant and valid measures of future performance.

#### **3. Training and career development must become a critical component of the department's mission. The training budget must be increased.**

The employee is the most critical resource any organization has. That resource must be groomed and developed for future growth opportunities. The department should establish a career progression system that plots a career track for every officer. Each officer should participate in his career development and be held accountable for maintaining the highest levels of training and education.

All supervisors should attend leadership and management training beyond the basic first-line supervision school. The department should reach out to criminal justice training centers, local colleges and universities, larger police agencies, local, county and university agencies, and the private sector to expand training opportunities for its employees.

The Department's 2008-2009 training budget is \$2,000 which equates to approximately \$80 per year per officer. The coffee and supplies budget is \$1,000. The budget for professional dues and association membership is \$10,000. Clearly the budget is not in sync with the needs of the department. The training budget, at a minimum, should be doubled for basic training needs. Money from grant sources or other revenue streams available to the department should be earmarked to allow at least one officer per year to attend advanced leadership training.

**4. The department needs to move toward a fully-automated, computerized records management system.**

The Incident Based Reporting system is a good start. However, records of all activities need to be captured, stored and easily retrievable. This is not an inexpensive proposition but grant funds are available. There are methods in which multiple agencies can partner and share networked systems to reduce acquisition and maintenance costs. In the meantime the department needs to develop a more effective in-house data collection and retrieval system.

## II. ACCOUNTABILITY AND CONTROL

### A. SUPERVISION AND DISCIPLINE – The department lacks internal accountability and oversight processes, leading to poor supervision of officers, unregulated behavior, increased civil liability potential, and questionable enforcement tactics.

#### Findings:

- There is a lack of oversight, control and accountability in the Farmville Police Department. The agency's disciplinary policy is vague and buried in the Rules of Conduct rather than existing as a stand-alone policy. Nowhere in the procedures manual are the consequences of poor or inappropriate behavior enumerated. Employee interviews indicated that decisions regarding discipline are not based on policy or historical practice but on the preferences, personal relationships and discretion of supervisors.
- There is a Citizen Complaint Policy in the procedures manual but it appears to have been "borrowed" from another agency and not developed specifically for the Farmville Police Department. The policy mentions an Internal Affairs Section which, according to officers, does not exist within the department. The majority of officers interviewed for this assessment indicated that many citizen complaints are swept under the carpet or never make it to the chief's attention and are never recorded. These allegations were supported by the testimony of several Longwood University students who had filed, or attempted to file, complaints with the Farmville Police Department. No record of these complaints exists.
- At least two well-known serious incidents involving allegations of criminal conduct were never reported through the chain of command and were never investigated in accordance with the policies of the department.
- Officers report that they are supervised by sergeants for whom they rarely work and who they often do not see during their ten-hour tour of duty. No officers above the rank of corporal work between the hours of 3:00 A.M. and 7:00 A.M.
- If an officer uses force against a person he is not required by policy to report such force unless it results in serious injury or death. There is no mechanism to track officers who have a propensity to use excessive or unnecessary force. No reports of use of force by officers are on record in the department.

#### Analysis:

The department's organizational structure is not adequate to effectively monitor the performance of officers in the field. Supervision during certain hours of the work day is non-existent. Officers are supervised by sergeants who may not work alongside them.

There are no policies or procedures that require recording, monitoring or responding to inappropriate behavior by officers or supervisors. This lack of oversight, standards, and benchmarks encourages an attitude among a few officers in the department that they can operate with impunity and without fear of consequences.

*Contractor's note: This attitude was not held by the majority of officers interviewed. Rather they felt that something needs to be done to stop those few officers. However they did not expect that anything would happen.*

A police agency that does not police itself will ultimately be policed by the courts and liability attorneys. The Farmville Police Department has many fine officers who are frustrated by the behavior of a few. They are frustrated that despite vast knowledge of inappropriate and perhaps illegal activity, these few officers are allowed to continue operating without fear of consequences. This feeling was shared by local defense attorneys, university officials, university students, and law enforcement officials from other jurisdictions.

If this behavior is allowed to continue unchecked it could lead to serious consequences and significant civil liability for the officers, the agency, and the town. Someone within the town administration, the department, or the local criminal justice community must address this inappropriate behavior. The evidence exists and to date nothing has been done.

### **Recommendations:**

#### **1. Comprehensive and enforceable investigation and disciplinary policies specific to the Farmville Police Department must be developed.**

Investigation and disciplinary policies should spell out expectations of performance, how alleged violations will be investigated, the rights of employees under investigation, levels of violations that would be addressed, and levels of punishment that may be assessed against a violator.

Model policies are available through professional organizations. The International Association of Chiefs of Police has policies that could be adapted for local use. Several model policies are available on the website of the Virginia Association of Chief of Police. Of course, it will be of no value to have up-to-date policies if the department's administration is not committed to enacting strict oversight protocols. A culture must be created that discourages inappropriate behavior, promotes ethical standards, and rewards positive behavior. All violations of the mission and values of the department, infringement on the rights of law and persons, and illegal activity must be punished.

#### **2. A transparent complaint system must be established.**

Stakeholders must have complete confidence that its police department is willing to maintain the highest levels of integrity and professionalism and is committed to ensuring

that employees who violate these high standards will face consequences through a fair and transparent process.

Citizens must be allowed to meet with a supervisor to file a complaint and all complaints must be recorded. A copy of the complaint must be provided to the complaining party. All complaints, whether sustained or not, must be filed with the chief of police. To do otherwise would create loopholes that could allow frequent violators to escape detection.

An early warning system should be established as a part of this complaint system. An officer who has multiple complaints lodged against him, sustained or not, would undergo an internal evaluation process to determine whether that officer should be disciplined, undergo retraining, and/or be more closely supervised.

**3. A redesign of supervisors' duties and assignments must be done to enhance oversight in the field.**

There are a number of disconnects in the area of supervision. The four or five person investigations unit is commanded by a captain, while the much larger patrol unit has no command officer. The lieutenant in charge of the patrol unit (as noted on the organizational chart) works 7:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. on weekdays. Sergeants do not work between 3:00 A.M. and 7:00 A.M. One would expect that with higher rank comes additional responsibility. That does not seem to be the actual situation in the Farmville Police Department.

Schedules need to be changed and/or assignments revamped to enhance the level of supervisory coverage in the field. Supervisors need to be held accountable by command officers for the behavior of their subordinates and the command officers need to be held accountable by the Chief. Systems need to be implemented that would require regular field evaluation reports of all officers, documenting their strengths and deficiencies. Supervisors should receive additional training in coaching and mentoring. They should be alert for negative tendencies of officers that could expose the town to increased liability.

For the purposes of direct supervision and control, officers must be supervised by the sergeants for whom they work on a daily basis.

**4. The department's Use of Force policy needs to be re-written.**

The current Use of Force policy is not sufficiently restrictive. Not requiring officers to report uses of force other than those resulting in serious injury or death allows loopholes and unreported uses of force that may have been inappropriate and/or excessive. A more restrictive policy also provides protection for officers who may face unfounded complaints.

Any use of force, beyond the use of hard hand controls, must be documented and reviewed by command level personnel. A permanent tracking system of all use of force reports must be established.

**B. SETTING OF OPERATIONAL PRIORITIES - Methodologies for the establishment of departmental priorities, officer assignments and accountability are informal and haphazard.**

**Findings:**

- Decisions about where and how officers should focus their time and energy seem to be based more on personal preferences and gut feelings than on data. Likewise, there is no mechanism to evaluate whether the work product of the officers results in any positive benefits for the community.
- The department has a reputation for being "traffic happy." However no one in the agency was able to produce records indicating how the sites for traffic enforcement are chosen or whether the enforcement is intended to enhance traffic safety. Instead, it appears that the choice of enforcement locations is left to the discretion of the officers. Based on the statements of several officers, many officers enforce traffic where they can write the most tickets (whether or not the location is actually a high risk site). As discussed earlier, in the absence of a performance evaluation system, officers who produce high numbers (no matter the quality of the charge) are looked upon favorably by department command staff.
- The department also has a reputation for the use of heavy-handed tactics in the enforcement of alcohol violations. Again, no data is available that supported the contention that such aggressive enforcement is needed. Nor could anyone provide any documentation that the enforcement mitigates the problem of underage alcohol possession.
- When officers were asked how they determine how their work day will be spent they typically responded in one of three ways.

*"We follow-up on what happened on the previous shift."*

*"We respond to complaints from citizens, the town manager or the council."*

*"We do whatever we want to do."*

**Analysis:**

Progressive police agencies do things because they *should* do them, not because they *can* do them. For example, the fact that the law allows officers to pursue vehicles at high rates of speed does not necessarily mean that the department should allow officers to do so without restriction. Also, the fact that the law allows officers to use force does not give officers an unlimited license to do so. Modern police agencies seek out and listen to the

expectations of the community, use their in-house expertise to evaluate community needs, and determine a course of action that will meet those needs and expectations.

Professional police agencies do not send officers into the field without guidance and oversight. They first take the following steps:

- determine their mission with the input of stakeholders
- evaluate the alternatives to accomplish the mission
- set performance standards consistent with the values of the community
- establish protocols for reaching objectives
- act on those objectives
- measure results
- evaluate outcomes
- start the process all over again.

It does not appear that Farmville Police Department has any method for establishing priorities and assigning resources to address those priorities. If priorities do exist, no one in the department was able to describe them with any clarity.

This structural failure has resulted in a negative image for the department in the community, with university stakeholders, and with criminal justice agencies. It has also had an impact on the morale of many of the officers who have expressed a desire to work for a professional organization.

Three glaring examples of this negative image came to light during the assessment. The first involves one particular officer and his DUI enforcement techniques. Numerous statements from multiple sources stipulated that this officer "stalks" two particular bars. The officer circles the block watching patrons leave and then follows the vehicles until he can find some reason to stop the vehicles and administer an alcohol or sobriety check. Reasons often given for the stop include flickering tail lights, dim license plate light, or an air freshener on the mirror restricting vision. These stops are probably legal, but do they meet the ethical standards expected by the department? That is a decision for the Chief and citizens to make. Are these tactics representative of a progressive, professional police officer? Based on thirty-two years of law enforcement experience, the Contractor would have to say no.

*Contractor's Note: 2007-2008 statistics provided by the Virginia State Police show that the rate of DUI arrests (not convictions) per capita in Farmville is three times higher than Williamsburg, five times higher than Virginia Beach, seven times higher than Charlottesville and Roanoke, and twelve times higher than Norfolk.*

Enforcement of intoxicated driving laws is critical for a safe society. The Farmville Police Department would be shirking its duty if it neglected to monitor the streets for impaired drivers. However, stopping cars at random (or at the very least for pre-textual reasons) in attempt to find a drunk driver is not appropriate behavior for a police officer. Yet the department has full knowledge of these tactics and condones them.

The second example involves weekly alcohol patrols. Virginia has a law prohibiting the underage possession of alcohol following consumption. The Farmville Police Department aggressively enforces this law. This is within the purview of the agency and, as with DUI, the law should be enforced. However, the results of the assessment make it clear that the means utilized by some (not many) officers to enforce this law border on harassment.

*Contractor's Note: Statistics pertaining to charges of underage possession of alcohol for Virginia cities were not made available to the Contractor. However, for comparison purposes, the Town of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, home to the University of North Carolina and its 24,000 students, issued citations for underage alcohol offenses at a per capita rate of 1:314 (one citation for every 314 residents). Farmville's per capita rate was 1:35 - nine times higher. Using student population figures, the Chapel Hill rate was one citation for every 174 students. Farmville's rate was one citation for every 24 students.*

Numerous statements were made by officers, local attorneys, university staff and students that alluded to enforcement techniques that are professionally inappropriate and would not be allowed by most modern and progressive police organizations. Reports of officers following pedestrians until they "stumble" or "yell loudly" or "cross against a light" were commonplace. Even more concerning are reports that certain officers routinely stop cars they know contain a designated driver for the purpose of having passengers tested for prior alcohol consumption.

*Contractor's Note: 2007-2008 statistics provided by the Virginia State Police show that the per capita rate of arrest (not conviction) for Drunk in Public offenses in Farmville is two times higher than Charlottesville, three times higher than Williamsburg and Alexandria, four times higher than Newport News and Norfolk, and five times higher than Richmond.*

The third example involves two incidents presented during separate interviews with two different individuals. In the first situation a citizen related a story where she was driving her son's vehicle after he had left for military service (her son apparently had previous encounters with Farmville officers). The citizen stated she was pulled over by a Farmville officer. When she asked why she had been pulled over the officer allegedly replied, "I thought it was your son driving." No violation was noted by the officer and no citation was issued. In the second incident a Longwood University professor was stopped on Main Street near Third Avenue. When he asked the officer why he was stopped the officer replied, "I saw the parking permit and thought you were a student." According to the professor, the officer then wished him a good evening and walked away.

Anyone with experience in law enforcement understands that many complaints filed against police officers have little merit and are filed by an individual seeking retribution for having been arrested or cited. However, experienced command officers also know that "where there's smoke there's likely fire" and that numerous complaints against the same individuals or about the same tactics should raise a warning flag that intervention is

needed. It is apparent that there is a problem in the department with a few officers who use enforcement tactics that border on harassment and illegality.

Furthermore, one must ask why certain incidents and classes of individuals are so often targeted? Is it a public safety issue? Has there been an outcry from the community about individuals who have consumed beer walking along the streets of Farmville? If students are truly making an effort to remain safe by using a designated driver, why is the department not working with them to ensure safe transportation rather than finding reasons to stop and cite them? What public safety threat do they pose?

Noise and nuisance violations must be enforced. Individuals who are drunk and disruptive and those who are walking or driving while intoxicated should be stopped and charged. Individuals who fail to adhere to the basic standards of behavior in a community should be cautioned, cited or charged. However, progressive police agencies temper the enforcement of the law with compassion, common sense and cooperation. Officers who continue to pursue minor violations of the law purely for the purposes of inflating their "numbers" must be controlled by those in command.

### **Recommendations:**

#### **1. Establish standards and practices that set operational priorities for patrols and enforcement.**

Command officers should regularly (at least once a month) set priorities for day-to-day operations. These priorities should be based on the following assessments:

- What are the community needs?
- What have citizens asked of the police department?
- What crime trends have been detected?
- How can we best use our resources?

A modern system to track data is necessary to capture relevant information. Officers must seek input from community stakeholders through downtown and neighborhood foot patrols, community forums, citizen surveys, the formation of community watch groups, etc. How productivity and success are measured must be changed, requiring more oversight by supervisors and less reliance on the number of arrests and citations. A regular re-evaluation of priorities is required. Command officers must continually ask:

- Why are we doing what we do?
- What are we accomplishing?
- Who is benefitting from our service?
- Are we providing fair and equitable service to all?
- Are we basing our operational decisions only on our needs or together with those of the community?

- Are we trying to improve relationships with all of our stakeholders or only with those who we believe support us?

## **2. Establish a set of values by which all officers will conduct their business.**

Establish an atmosphere of cooperation and collaboration within the department. Look to establish positive relationships with stakeholders rather than looking for ways to further adversarial relationships. Do not allow attitudes of "they get what they deserve," or "they ask for it," or "if it's legal, there's no problem" as were heard from officers interviewed. Ensure that the department adopts values that demand a respect for individual rights and the rights of law and that promote the respectful and ethical treatment of all.

## **3. Enforce the newly created values and standards.**

All the words in the world are worthless unless they are enacted by the members of the organization and supported by employees, command staff, town management and elected officials. Employees who act in accordance with the Farmville Police Department's values and standards should be rewarded. Those who violate them should be disciplined.

## **4. Use grant money to purchase cameras for the patrol vehicles.**

The 2008-09 FY budget indicates \$36,400 for in-car cameras. They are needed. Officers who work in agencies where cameras are used often state that cameras protect them much more often than implicate them. Cameras sometime capture poor behavior by officers but more often capture evidence of illegal behavior by offenders. They strengthen courtroom testimony and make convictions easier. In-car cameras should not be used in place of supervisory oversight but should serve as a useful, effective and complementary tool.

### III. COMMUNITY RELATIONS

#### **Findings:**

- The department does not promote the need for officers to interact with the community stakeholders in order to establish positive working relationships. When asked, employees reported a variety of opinions on whether the residents of Farmville recognize, understand and/or appreciate the work being done by the agency. Many expressed an "us against them" mentality or a belief that the residents "don't care about us unless they need us."
- Results from the random interviews conducted with residents in the business district indicate that many do not know a great deal about the agency or its officers. A standard response was, "as far as I know they're doing a good job." It was clear that the department does not promote itself or the services it provides to the community.
- No effort has been made in the recent past to evaluate whether the department's priorities match those of the community. Neighborhood forums, citizen satisfaction surveys, and positive media outreach are practically non-existent.
- The police department's homepage on the town's website contains only the building address. Every other town department's home page contains contact information.

#### **Analysis:**

Progressive police agencies understand the importance of partnering with their stakeholders. They cannot provide effective police services if they do not understand what the community expects of them. They cannot know whether they are successful without feedback. Progressive agencies understand that most unsolicited feedback will be negative, typically in the form of citizen complaints. This negative contact reinforces some officers' opinions that the citizens "just don't understand," or reinforces the "us against them" mindset. If the Farmville Police Department would put forth an effort to seek input from the community and then put forth an equally intense effort to seek feedback after services are delivered, it may discover that citizens appreciate their efforts. The department may also learn that citizens want to work with officers to make Farmville even safer.

Based on interview results, Farmville officers do not understand the concepts of community-based policing. Whether through a lack of training, a lack of leadership or the belief police officers and statute books have all the answers to societal ills, most officers do not appear to value community outreach. The majority of the officers indicated that community policing is the responsibility of one particular officer in the department and "he doesn't do much of it." Community policing is not viewed as a function of all employees.

#### **Recommendations:**

- 1. Train employees in the concepts of community-oriented policing.**

Officers need to understand the importance of interacting with citizens, merchants, students and all other members of the community. They must understand that community-oriented policing does not consist of specific programs, such as Community Watch, but is a philosophy that guides every operation of the department. This philosophy must be understood, practiced, and constantly reinforced. It must start at the very top of the command structure.

Training in community policing is available throughout Virginia and grant money is available to pay for the training.

## **2. Establish systems to enhance community partnerships.**

The leadership of the agency must promote community partnerships. The chief and his staff must be visible, accessible and interested. They must demonstrate to their subordinates the importance of reaching out to stakeholders rather than waiting for the stakeholders to come to them.

All officers must be assigned the responsibility to reach out to residents. Strategies such as foot patrols, citizen feedback surveys, neighborhood forums, well-being checks on elderly residents or a visit to a school or summer camp are just some of the ways to accomplish this outreach.

Efforts to interact with the public can also be served through use of the media. Despite opinions to the contrary, local media often are on the lookout for positive news. The department should reach out to the media when promoting its outreach programs. It should provide the media with personal interest stories (i.e. an officer who has a particular hobby, or has won an award from their church, or who has an interesting family history). It is well known within police circles that establishing on-going working relationships with the media during good times usually helps when the Department must deal with the media in times of crisis.

The Department could create a speakers bureau and have a cadre of officers who would be willing to go out to civic organizations, nursing homes, schools, the university, or the Chamber of Commerce to promote the department and its programs.

## **3. Prioritize officer assignments to reinforce the department's commitment to the importance of quality-based policing.**

The assessment reveals that the lack of a records management system and the lack of a performance-based evaluation system has led to an atmosphere of "what can be measured is what counts." In other words, it is easy to reward people who produce quantifiable results because it is easy to add up the numbers. What is more challenging, but more important for modern police leaders, is determining which employees are providing the highest quality of service.

Quantity and quality do go hand in hand. An officer interested in traffic enforcement can still do what he enjoys. However, that officer should be evaluated not just on the number of citations issued but on the quality of the interaction and the impact on public safety. An officer who issues thirty tickets a day to cars rolling through stop signs at three MPH should not be rewarded. On the other hand, the officer who issues only three tickets a day to motorists who speed recklessly through the same stop sign should not be reprimanded for "not producing." An officer who works speed enforcement on a side street where no safety hazard exists and issues numerous tickets should not be rewarded. Instead he should be directed to a location where data indicates a safety hazard exists, even though he may write just one or two tickets a shift.

The Farmville Police Department needs to learn to attack the underlying problem rather than the symptoms of the problem. If the community is concerned about underage consumption of alcohol, charging persons who are walking home after consuming alcohol does not address the cause of the problem. Neither does stopping vehicles with designated drivers just for the purposes of testing passengers for alcohol consumption. These are reactive enforcement techniques which may result in high productivity numbers but do not have a significant impact on the problem. A more productive approach would be to focus on the source of the alcohol. Where and how are the underage individuals getting alcohol? The department could work with local ABC officials to conduct sting operations at local stores. Similar operations at the local bars would mitigate the serving of alcohol to minors. These could be more effective approaches to solving the problem.

## IV. UNIVERSITY RELATIONS

### **Findings:**

- Relationships between the police department and Longwood University can best be described as adversarial. From the first visit to Farmville where the Contractor met with the manager and council to the last interview conducted with the Dean of Students, it was clear that the Town-Gown relationship is tenuous at best.
- Interactions between the Farmville Police Department and Longwood University students seem to be dominated by encounters related to enforcement and many are not positive in nature.
- There is clear evidence that a few Farmville police officers target Longwood University students and other young adults and do so using questionable enforcement techniques.
- There appears to be little effort by the department to reach out to the university in order to promote a positive and productive relationship. Officers do not hold forums with students. They do not speak at new student orientation meetings to explain local laws and ordinances, enforcement protocols, crime prevention, or personal safety. Officers do not attend job fairs to recruit Longwood graduates for positions within the department. No internships exist for university students interested in a career in criminal justice.
- There are many opportunities for the Farmville and the Longwood University Police Departments to interact. The two departments could partner on training, communications technology, regional funding grants, joint foot patrols, etc. Yet few of these have been attempted and the relationship between the two departments can best be described as cordial yet distant. In times of crisis, as witnessed at Virginia Tech just two years ago, local police agencies will be expected by their constituencies to work together in an effective coordinated effort. This can only be accomplished if those agencies train together, have common goals and interests, and desire to work together. The town's police department must want to be an equal partner in such an effort and it appears the interest is not there.

### **Analysis:**

At a forum attended by over 150 University students, story after story was told about questionable practices by Farmville officers. Complaints were heard from over thirty students who spoke during the forum. The complaints pertained to pre-textual traffic stops and questionable searches of packages, backpacks and bedrooms. Students also described harassment of pedestrians by officers following them for blocks waiting for them to commit some act that would give the officers cause to detain them and test them for alcohol.

Of course, the students are not blameless. Many of them did consume alcohol while under age and/or created other nuisances. However, if it is assumed that only twenty percent of

the speakers are to be believed (*Contractor's Note: the previous statement is not in any way intended to call into question the veracity of those who spoke at the forum*) it is clear that a few Farmville officers (but not many) are overstepping their legal authority, or at the very least acting in an unprofessional and unethical manner.

These few officers and the department environment that allows their behavior to go unchecked must stop. Laws can be enforced and violators charged without resorting to legal shortcuts or outright violations of civil rights. Even fellow officers admitted during interviews that these few officers give the rest of the department a bad reputation and are making it hard for positive relationships with students to occur.

Unfortunately the assessment revealed few examples of collaboration between the Farmville Police Department and Longwood University. It is not uncommon for relationships between young adults and police officers to be tenuous, particularly in college towns. On the other hand, it is equally uncommon not to be able to find some success stories in the building of bridges between these two groups. Because of the unique problems faced by police agencies in college towns, such agencies typically put forth extra effort to mitigate problems between students and the police before they occur and focus on problem-solving opportunities unrelated to, and complementary to, enforcement.

The town, police department and university must collaborate to work with the student body. They must educate students, encourage appropriate safe behavior, and when necessary enforce the law. The university is the largest single component of stakeholders in the town. It only makes sense that the town, particularly the police department, would seek ways to partner with these stakeholders.

### **Recommendations:**

#### **1. Cease enforcement operations that single out Longwood University students.**

This recommendation is not intended to eliminate the enforcement of alcohol violations in Farmville or the enforcement of laws being violated by university students. What is intended is a change in the manner in which operations are developed that are clearly meant to target areas and offenses in which the students and other young adults are clearly going to be disproportionately charged and/or arrested. If underage alcohol is a problem, concentrate efforts not just on student violators but also on establishments where persons under twenty-one get their alcohol. Increase enforcement operations at bars and hold business operators responsible for their contribution to the problem.

Promote non-biased, balanced enforcement methods. An officer who sits outside a bar and waits for underage people who have consumed alcohol to leave, knowing that these same individuals are being served illegally in the bar, is exhibiting a practice of targeted enforcement that is unfair and professionally inappropriate.

#### **2. Establish programs to enhance collaborative partnerships with the university.**

The police department should create internship opportunities for Longwood University students. Officers should participate in new student orientation seminars, providing an opportunity for developing a foundation of trust and cooperation among students, staff and the police department. Department representatives should participate in job fairs and recruiting opportunities, particularly in the criminal justice program. Regularly scheduled problem-solving sessions with student and staff representatives should be held to discuss issues and develop joint resolutions. The department should establish a ride-a-long program so students could experience the day-to-day operation of the department. Finally the town should seek tuition assistance opportunities from the university to assist department employees in attending Longwood University.

None of these programs and ideas would cost a great deal of money. They require only that the department lets the students know that it wants to become a partner rather than remain an adversary.

### **3. Promote regional partnerships among local criminal justice agencies.**

To provide for the highest levels of safety and security for the residents of Farmville, all law enforcement organizations must work together. Joint training, partnerships in regional grant opportunities, regular meetings with command personnel from all agencies, establishing shared communication capabilities, and joint foot patrols in the areas adjoining the campus are some of the many ways in which the Farmville Police Department can enhance its standing within the town and among surrounding law enforcement agencies.

The Department cannot operate in a vacuum. The success of the joint narcotics task force is an example. Many of those interviewed during the assessment spoke highly of the work done by the Farmville investigators who participate in the task force. Other similar opportunities are available if the department reaches out to other agencies, allocates necessary resources, and improves the relationships among agency leaders.

### **4. Treat the university as an equal partner.**

The population of Farmville is 6,800. Enrollment at Longwood University is 4,700. Longwood University and the Town of Farmville must be equal partners in the community. The students are residents who contribute significantly to the Town and to its tax base (including the meals tax). The adversarial relationship between the police department and the students must improve and there is absolutely no reason that it cannot.

If the department truly wants to be considered a progressive agency it must serve all residents fairly and equitably. Police department leaders should seek out their counterparts in college communities such as Blacksburg, Charlottesville, and Williamsburg to evaluate how those communities deal with Town-Gown issues. Also, administrators should consider looking at places like Chapel Hill, North Carolina (the University of North Carolina), South Bend, Indiana (Notre Dame), and College Park, Maryland (University of Maryland). While the campuses and communities may be larger and have different issues, all college communities deal with the co-existence of students and full-time residents. Alcohol, noise,

drugs, parties, nuisances, and traffic disruption are not unique to Farmville and Longwood University. Many of communities mentioned work closely with their university partners to promote a healthy, vibrant and safe environment. Farmville should do the same.

## V. ANCILLARY ISSUES

### A. Appointment of the Chief of Police

Many of the employees interviewed expressed concern for the manner in which the position of chief of police is appointed.

In most council-manager local governments the chief reports directly to the town manager. Most of these chiefs have employee rights and protections similar to those enjoyed by all other employees. These protections provide the chief with the freedom and flexibility to use his professional skills, knowledge and experience to manage a department without fear of political interference or favoritism. In Farmville, it is reported that the Chief of Police is appointed on a year to year basis and has few protections afforded most government employees.

It is difficult enough to run a police department without feeling that one's job is always on the line. Even most city managers have some type of performance agreement providing protection or, at the very least, a severance package. A year to year agreement would appear to be an indication that the town management does not have confidence in the chief and/or is unwilling to allow the chief complete control of his department.

When the town needs to recruit a new chief, and if it chooses to recruit external candidates, it will be difficult to find a quality chief who is willing to work on a year to year appointment.

**Recommendation: Establish a fixed year service contract (no less than three years) for the position of chief of police or allow the chief to serve as any other employee with all the protections and rights afforded those employees.**

### B. Membership in the Virginia Retirement System

Without exception, when asked what they would change if they were chief for a day employees responded, "Change the retirement system." Clearly this is not a decision that can be made quickly or without actuarial study. However, when an issue has one hundred percent support within an organization and is mentioned as the number one reason for low morale, it bears review.

The fixed pensions of government employees in the Virginia Retirement System were not significantly impacted in the current economic downturn. Two employees of the police department who had been contemplating retirement stated in their interviews that they cannot retire because of significant stock market losses. Officers who may be thinking of coming to the Farmville Police Department will factor into their decisions whether it is worth joining an agency that does not participate in the VRS. Not participating in the system could have a negative impact on officer recruitment and retention.

**Recommendation: Re-evaluate the town's position with regard to membership in the Virginia Retirement System.**

### **C. Police Vehicles**

Officers derisively refer to their patrol vehicles as the "rainbow fleet." Patrol vehicles observed by the Contractor were painted red, gold, white, blue and burgundy. Police vehicles, second perhaps only to the uniform, should be a source of pride for officers. Many officers spoke of the embarrassment of having mismatched cars.

The FY 2008-09 budget allocates \$40,000 for auto maintenance, \$4,300 for "other" maintenance, and \$71,447 for indirect expenses. Perhaps a few thousand dollars can be spent to paint the primary patrol vehicles the same color. It would be a fairly simple and relatively inexpensive action that would instill pride in the officers who drive the vehicles.

**Recommendation: Spend the necessary resources to paint the primary patrol vehicles in a paint scheme/color selected by the patrol officers.**

## CONCLUSION

The Farmville Police Department is an organization in need of an overhaul. It is a department that in many ways has failed to keep up with the practices and principles of modern policing.

The agency is housed in a new facility and has made strides toward the computerization of its records keeping system. The department has a low turnover rate and a great majority of the employees enjoy working for the organization. The Farmville Police Department is small enough to promote a family atmosphere and financially healthy enough to allow officers to have take home vehicles. The narcotics task force is highly regarded by law enforcement leaders throughout the region.

With a few exceptions the men and women of the department are dedicated to the community and the organization. Ironically, though most officers said that they enjoy working for Farmville, they also admit that morale is low. While at least two senior officers noted during their interviews that the department was "perfect" and that they "wouldn't change a thing," the remaining agency members indicated that significant change is needed.

It is promising that the agency has officers who want to be part of the change. Some of these officers may not currently be in positions within the agency where they can readily help make these changes. They need to be identified, placed in positions of authority and responsibility through a fair and open system, and allowed to participate in the change process. Those few officers who are in positions where they could inhibit change may have to be re-assigned.

Elected officials and management of the town must desire the change to occur. They must allow the change without unnecessary political interference. Council members and the town manager will be major players in the determination of the mission and values of the agency. They are obligated to ensure that the "new" Farmville Police Department is developed in such a way that it meets the expectations of its stakeholders, including the university. However, once the right people are in place within the agency and the impediments to change have been removed, these officials must step aside (maintaining appropriate oversight) and let those who have been charged with running the department do so.

Making the needed changes will be challenging and will not happen overnight. To be effective, all stakeholders must be invited to be a part of the change process. Positive change will bring a sense of honor, pride, professionalism, and integrity to the agency and its employees. All that is needed now is an investment of desire and effort, and the willingness to make tough decisions.

**SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

The recommendations proposed in the assessment report are listed below. No attempt has been made to prioritize them. However, it is strongly encouraged that those related to values, standards and oversight be given primary consideration.

- Conduct a comprehensive overhaul of the department's rules and regulations manual, beginning with the development and implementation of a vision statement and a set of values to guide performance and behavior.
- Consider seeking statewide accreditation.
- Develop an organizational chart that accurately reflects the current command structure.
- Put processes and systems in place to minimize and ultimately eliminate interference in running the day-to-day operations of the department.
- Review the current organizational design of the department.
- Develop and implement a performance evaluation system.
- Establish a performance-based promotional process.
- Make training and career development a critical component of the department's mission. The training budget must be increased.
- Move toward a fully-automated, computerized records management system.
- Develop comprehensive and enforceable investigation and disciplinary policies specific to the Farmville Police Department.
- Establish a legitimate, transparent complaint system.
- Undertake re-assignment of supervisor's duties and assignments in order to enhance oversight in the field.
- Rewrite the Use of Force policy.
- Establish standards and practices that set operational priorities for patrols and enforcement.
- Establish a set of values by which all officers will conduct their business.

- Enforce the newly created values and standards.
- Purchase cameras for the patrol vehicles using grant funds.
- Train employees in the concepts of community-oriented policing.
- Establish systems to enhance community partnerships.
- Prioritize officer assignments to reinforce the department's commitment to quality-based policing.
- Cease enforcement operations that single out Longwood University students.
- Establish programs to enhance collaborative partnerships with the university.
- Promote regional partnerships among local criminal justice agencies.
- Treat the university as an equal partner.
- Establish a fixed year service contract (no less than three years) for the position of chief of police or allow the chief to serve as any other employee with all the protections and employee rights afforded those employees.
- Re-evaluate the town's position regarding membership in the Virginia Retirement System.
- Paint the primary patrol vehicles with a paint scheme/color selected by the patrol officers.

**PERSONS INTERVIEWED**

Robert Beach, Longwood University Police Chief  
Jill Dickerson, Attorney-at-Law  
Stuart Dunnavant, Farmville Police Chief  
James Ennis, Commonwealth Attorney  
James Ghee, Attorney-at-Law  
Travis Harris, Prince Edward County Sheriff  
Darrell Hodges, Cumberland County Sheriff  
Lisa Hricko, Farmville Clerk of Council  
Angela Jackson, Longwood University Assistant Director of Off-Campus Housing  
Kenneth Perkins, Longwood University Executive Assistant to the President  
Tim Pierson, Longwood University Dean of Students  
N. Laurence Robertson, Longwood University Executive Director-Residential Life  
Dana Schrad, Executive Director of Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police  
Gerald Spates, Farmville Town Manager  
Wade Stimpson, Farmville Police Captain  
David Whitus, Farmville Council Member  
Wanda Whitus, Chamber of Commerce President

Thirteen Farmville officers participated in individual interviews.

Two Farmville officers participated in e-mail interviews.

Fourteen Farmville PD employees submitted surveys.

Over 150 Longwood University students participated in a university forum.

Two Longwood University students and one university staff member participated in e-mail or phone interviews.

Eight randomly selected individuals were interviewed on Main Street.

**FARMVILLE POLICE DEPARTMENT ASSESSMENT  
STAKEHOLDER SURVEY**

(Please use additional sheets of paper if necessary)

How long have you been a member of the Farmville Police Department?

\_\_\_ 0-3 Years

\_\_\_ 4-7 Years

\_\_\_ 8-15 Years

\_\_\_ 16+ Years

How many other law enforcement agencies have you been employed by in your professional career?

What lead you to apply for a position in the Farmville Police Department?

In looking back over your career with the Department have the reasons for joining the Department been fulfilled? (Explain if necessary)

List the top three things you like about the Farmville Police Department?

In what areas could the Department improve?

What specific recommendations do you have that would make the Farmville Police Department a better agency?

Without naming names, what are the best qualities possessed by the command and supervisory staff of the Department?

Again without naming names, what leadership attributes among the agency's command and supervisory staff could use some improvement?

What do you think the community's impression of the Department is? What could the Department do to improve its image in the community?

If you were chief for one day, what one thing would you do that would make the Farmville Police Department a better law enforcement agency?

Is there anything else you would like to share?

NOTE: In an effort to assure you that your comments will remain confidential I have not asked for your name, rank, position or other identifying characteristics. Unless you choose to do otherwise, please return this survey directly to me while I am in Farmville or mail the survey to me at the address below. If you'd like to meet to discuss your opinions in private please contact me via e-mail and we can make arrangements to speak during my visit.

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