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**DATE:** June 10, 2020  
**TO:** President Deppe & Members of the KPPCSD Board  
**FROM:** Steve Simpkins, KPD Interim Chief (October 2019 – May 2020)  
**SUBJECT:** **Exit Report – Kensington PD Interim Police Chief Assignment**

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At the request of the Board of Directors, I am submitting my exit report from my tenure as Interim Chief of Police for the Kensington Police Department.

Any exit report would be lacking without a profound thank you to the ever important “Three C’s” of police chief leadership; the Community, the City (Board of Directors & General Manager) and the Cops. In each category, everyone was welcoming and genuinely supportive:

- The community was very welcoming with a non-stop series of office and home visits with no shortage of feedback to offer.
- The Board of Directors was engaged and supportive in their role, providing funding for some much-needed infrastructure improvements and giving clear input from their constituents.
- The Kensington Police Officers’ Association (KPOA) was especially supportive and embraced new ideas and leadership direction without hesitation.

An important footnote to this report is that this Interim Chief assignment was the first time a chief was able to serve as just police chief and not also general manager. This important separation is and will continue to be vital to the success of the police department.

### **POLICE OPERATIONS**

In joining the KPD, my initial observations were that, quite frankly, the KPD was on “life support.” Morale was low, the infrastructure was in disarray, the physical plant was extremely cluttered, there were long overdue equipment replacement needs, and there was no coherent service strategy. There were also numerous misconceptions about the police department within the community, along with serious mistrust as a result of past problems. The KPD was in dire need of direction and a culture overhaul.

Some of the most critical issues that needed immediate attention included:

- Discipline system - The discipline system existing was akin to only having the option to go from 0-100 in every case – with no options in the middle – which had a detrimental impact on morale. The system was modified with the help of General Counsel and the KPOA to make it more effective, the equivalent to 0-25-50-75-100-125 instead of 0-100.
- Failing equipment - The failing equipment included a computer system that was soon to become unserviceable, no functional computers in the patrol cars and a looming mandatory upgrade to the patrol radios. The KPPCSD Board of Directors quickly supported each of these equipment changes along with the addition of body cameras.
- Service philosophy/strategy - A new service philosophy was also quickly adopted by the KPOA which was labeled as providing “world-class police work” with special attention to customer service, traffic safety and crime prevention as the three core elements. The initial change required a more philosophical level of intrinsic motivation, but future work with respect to service philosophy can be enhanced even further by including measurable outcomes.
- Physical plant - With the help of uniformed volunteers from the Sheriff’s Office, much work was done on the physical plant, especially in the form of digitizing files to clear up much needed space. These simple acts of cleaning helped to foster a culture of renewed organizational pride. An example of the change in atmosphere for the organization is the employee snack shack. There was a small desk area that had been cluttered with things that needed to be cleaned up and stored elsewhere. Once the area was cleaned up, the employee union took it upon themselves to create a “snack shack” where union purchased snacks are now kept for employees to use during their shifts. This minor change is symbolic of the bigger picture, renewed morale and organizational pride.
- Engaging the community – One important departmental overhaul strategy was to meet with as many residents and community groups as possible. These informal meetings were well received by both groups, as somewhat defined by the two types of yard signs prevalent in the community. The meetings culminated in the beginnings of a team that consists of members of both groups who are mutually invested in the future of police services in Kensington. This is a huge step forward for the community at large, and one to be built upon.

## **STAFFING SUGGESTIONS**

The following suggestions are made in the same order as a recent consulting report done for the KPD. The suggestions are simply that; they are not intended to be contradictory or indicative that the prior report is somehow incorrect. Professional observations will vary based upon individual careers and experiences and, just as KPD may benefit from my professional experience, it will also benefit from having another experienced professional, Interim Chief Walt Schuld, serving at the helm.

### **Staff Related (organizational structure & supervision)**

After seven months of observations, and conducting informal research through conversations

with a variety of small-town chiefs across the state, a suggested staffing model for Kensington includes ten officers as follows:

- Chief of Police
- Manager (title interchangeable but commonly referred to as Lieutenant or Captain)
- Two Sergeants
- Two Corporals
- Four patrol officers with one designated as the Detective as a collateral duty

This suggested staffing model would provide for supervision up to 21 hours per day (depending on exact shift hours) and provides an opportunity for growth with a defined career path – something many potential police applicants are seeking. None of the small police agencies with whom I spoke had 24-hour supervision, and many used a sole patrol officer during the early morning hours.

### Schedule

The suggested staffing model is shown below, using a 12-hour schedule for most employees, with a 4-10 (four days per week, ten hours per day) for the manager and supervisors, and with the Chief on a traditional 5-8 (five days per week, eight hours per day) schedule:

Chief of Police:        Monday – Friday                0800 – 1700

Manager:                Wednesday – Saturday        0700 – 1700

Patrol Team A:        Sunday – Monday – Tuesday and every other Wednesday  
Officer 1        0600 – 1800 \* Collateral duty as Detective  
Officer 2        1800 – 0600  
Sergeant 1        0600 – 1600 (Sunday – Wednesday)  
Corporal 1        1500 – 0300 (Sunday – Wednesday)

Patrol Team B:        Thursday – Friday – Saturday and every other Wednesday  
Officer 1        0600 – 1800 \* Collateral duty as Traffic Safety  
Officer 2        1800 – 0600  
Sergeant 1        0600 – 1600 (Wednesday - Saturday)  
Corporal 1        1500 – 0300 (Wednesday - Saturday)

### Detective Assignment

The department benefits by having an officer designated as a Detective. This does not mean that the officer assigned no longer works patrol, it is a collateral duty. Investigating cases and presenting them for prosecution at the District Attorney’s Office requires specialized training and experience. While any officer can be trained to eventually fulfill this role, it is important to have precise tracking on the cases reported to the department and the status of the follow-up investigation. For a small agency, having one person responsible for case filing and follow-up investigation to felony cases is vital. Lower level cases and all misdemeanors can be followed up on by any patrol officer. The officer who is designated as a Detective would still spend time in the field conducting patrol.

## Role of Manager

The manager rank in this suggested model is optional based on fiscal sustainability. When possible, it can be beneficial for an agency to have a person designated as the “number two” who can act as the chief during absences and can serve as the manager of all police department operations. A manager typically oversees critical functions such as policy manual development, hiring processes, recruiting, payroll and other such managerial functions. This person ideally becomes the next chief of police as management training/experience is a must for a future chief. All of these duties *can* be handled by the Chief of Police, but typically the chief is needed in other areas such as building relationships with the community and the Board of Directors, along with providing overall vision and mission focus for the organization.

## Other Staffing Suggestions

In such a small agency, having four people to be designated as a sergeant to provide supervision is not necessary. Corporals are also considered supervisors in police agencies. Having two sergeants and two corporals provides the District with nearly 24 hours of supervision but also gives a defined career path for employees – a win-win.

## Reserve Officer Program

The reserve (un-paid officers) program is an excellent tool for augmenting staff positions and provides an opportunity to get a closer look at future officers. The reserve officer program could be expanded to as many reserves as can fit within the physical space, subject to budgetary limitations. At the moment there is one person in the background process to be a reserve and recruiting efforts should continue for more.

A VIP (Volunteer in Policing) program is another very beneficial plan for KPD's future. An announcement for applicants was posted in the most recent Outlook and Officer Brad Harms will be running the VIP program once the COVID situation allows the ability to do so; KPD has already received some interest from residents. VIPs can be used for all types of community policing efforts such as Traffic Safety and Crime Prevention. VIPs become ambassadors within the community and are a force-multiplier.

## **OTHER OBSERVATIONS REGARDING POLICE OPERATIONS AND STAFFING**

### Contract Services

Contracting for services is an important consideration. The District successfully contracts with the City of Albany for dispatch services, and the dispatching services provided by Albany are excellent. The initial growing pains have transitioned into a well-oiled machine that provides great service to residents and the officers. Chief Geissberger has demonstrated clear support for the community and a commitment to an excellent working relationship that goes well beyond just dispatching services.

KPD has also recently contracted with the Sheriff's Office for leadership. Other considerations for use of contracts could include Internal Affairs, Major Crimes, and Property/Evidence storage.

Recruitment can be handled internally and has been done successfully recently as evidenced

by the hiring of Officer Harms.

### Training

A review of KPD training records by a retired Sheriff's Office Captain and by P.O.S.T. (state regulatory commission for peace officer training standards) showed that KPD officers met or exceeded the state training standards. KPD does remarkably well in sending officers to training classes and regularly obtains state reimbursement for training. KPD would benefit from conducting in-house training for high-risk/low-frequency events that aren't typically covered outside of academy training such as bank robbery response and felony vehicle stops. This training could be done by officers within KPD and would be well received by the staff.

### Hiring of the Chief of Police

At this point the future Chief of Police for Kensington should be someone who has prior command experience. Until such time when there is less community concern over the police department, the District and the community do not need to shoulder the burden of also training a person how to be a police chief. The learning curve for a police chief is steep; the District and community would benefit from a person who may need to learn the Kensington community, but does not need to learn how to command. Running a police department is a complex operation requiring executive leadership training and experience. It is extraordinarily difficult to place anyone in any chief position without prior management experience or specialized training. Going back to the "Three Cs," a successful police chief builds a condition of trust between the community, the elected oversight, and the police officers. Without all three the chief cannot be successful and the police department will fail!

### Body Worn Cameras

A Body Worn Camera (BWC) system was implemented in March 2020 thanks to the support of the KPPCSD Board of Directors. The system is functioning very well and should be reviewed for expansion soon. At the time of initial purchase, seven cameras were obtained, with the Chief and Captain sharing a camera. In retrospect, a camera is needed for each person, to include future reserve officers. As new officers are hired and the staffing levels increase, a camera should be assigned to each person.

### Tasers

Tasers are an important consideration for the future. Tasers are a law enforcement tool that should be considered as potentially lifesaving equipment; to limit an option for non-lethal use of force in today's litigious world is unwise. Tasers can be utilized in many situations in which now the KPD only has a firearm as an option. If one only has a hammer for every situation, they will be stuck using a hammer when only a flyswatter may be needed

### Hiring/Background Investigations

The KPD now has two options for the background process associated with hiring officers that ends up with a more expedited completion with a marginal increase in cost. The last two backgrounds were completed in approximately two months from start to finish which is an exemplary standard.

## Salary Levels

The KPD and KPPCSD recently entered into an agreement which made salaries more competitive, with the exception of the Chief of Police salary. In order to attract a well-trained police executive, the compensation level for police chief should be considered for an increase.

## Strategic Planning

A strategic plan for KPD is a project well worthy of undertaking. A high-functioning police organization has a clear vision and measurable outcomes. As part of a goal-setting process, the Chief of Police should consider input from police employees, KPPCSD Board and the community. Goals should include incorporating defined outcomes and metrics.

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On behalf of Sheriff David Livingston, thank you for the opportunity to have served the Kensington community and the warm welcome and strong support given to the Sheriff's Office. If we can be of any assistance in the future, please feel free to reach out. Best wishes for the future of fiscally sustainable and dependable policing in Kensington!