

Ms. Wrask: The Sheriffs Association, the Vermont Associations of Chiefs of Police, the Vermont Police Association, the Executive Director of the VCJTC, a representative of the VLCT, and DPS met on November 30 and provide the following recommendations (in red) regarding the five law enforcement issues/recommendations identified by the Senate Government Operations Committee.

1.) Training

- Require the Criminal Justice Training Council (Council) to:
 - Replace some of the overnight training requirements at the Police Academy with (non-overnight) training that is available in other areas of the State; and
 - Create block steps to enable Level II certified officers to become Level III certified, without needing to restart the certification process.

The Vermont Criminal Justice Training Council is mandated by statute to establish rules with respect to training and certification of law enforcement officers, including but not limited to the following: the minimum courses of study; minimum basic training for law enforcement officers in each level of law enforcement officer certification; and the categories or classifications of advanced in-service training programs and minimum courses of study with respect to those categories or classifications. The two issues identified above fall squarely within the VCJTC statutory mandate. Thus, these recommendations should be referred to the VCJTC for its review and consideration. In fact, these issues have already been a topic of discussion among VCJTC members and it is anticipated that further action will be taken on these issues in the coming year.

- Prohibit the Council from reserving spots for the Vermont State Police at the Police Academy so that Academy spots are on a first-come, first-served basis.

The above-referenced law enforcement agencies do not support this recommendation. The VCJTC is capable of handling a class of 48 recruits, which fully meets the statewide demand for new police officers. The VCJTC currently limits class size due to insufficient staffing. Moreover, mandating allocation of seats on first-come, first served basis may have the untended effect of allowing the Vermont State Police to fill more seat than its current allotment.

- Makeup of the Council.

The makeup of the Council has served the people of Vermont and the law enforcement community effectively and well for many years. If any change to the makeup of the Council is being considered it should be to add as permanent members a representative from the Vermont Chiefs of Police Association and the Vermont Sheriffs Association. This would reduce the number of at-large appointments from 5 to 3. Expansion of the number of Council members is not necessary or recommended.

2.) Recruitment/Retention

- Establish a “poaching fee,” so that if one law enforcement agency within the State hires another agency’s officer within two years of the officer becoming certified, the hiring agency would be required to reimburse the original agency for the cost of the officer’s training and certification.

- Require that all law enforcement officers in the State be on the same retirement plan (but not health benefits) as State officers, which requires retirement at age 55. This requirement would need to be phased in to address any conflicts with existing collective bargaining agreements.

The above-referenced law enforcement agencies oppose the establishment of a so-called “poaching fee.” The constitutionality of such a fee is questionable, it creates unnecessary animosity among law enforcement, and usurps hiring decisions properly made at the agency level. The more effective way to deal with this issue, and one law enforcement may support, is a “leveling of the playing field,” with respect to compensation, including retirement benefits.

3.) Administration

- By [X future] date, require all VT law enforcement agencies to use a compatible data collection source that communicates and shares criminal justice data.

While it is not entirely clear what is meant by this recommendation, to the extent it contemplates a single statewide Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) and/or Record Management System (RMS), the above-referenced law enforcement agencies oppose this recommendation. Each law enforcement agency is in the best position to know its needs and requirements for a CAD/RMS system. The rationale behind a legislatively mandated single system is unclear and potentially misguided.

Starting July 1, 2018, prohibit the Vermont State Police (VSP) from entering into any new contracts with towns, and prohibit VSP from renewing any existing town contracts. Define VSP duties as 1) major crimes; 2) highway patrol; and 3) special investigations.

The above-referenced law enforcement agencies oppose this recommendation. A town should have the flexibility to contract with whichever law enforcement agency it believes will provide the appropriate and best service to its town. To the extent this recommendation seeks to limit the Vermont State Police’s ability to provide law enforcement services to the 251 towns it currently serves throughout Vermont thereby forcing towns to establish or fund their own law enforcement agency, then this recommendation should make this goal clearer.

- Require each town plan to address public safety coverage.

It is not clear what this recommendation is intended to address.

4.) Coverage

- Require each VSP barracks to submit to the non-police department towns within the barracks area quarterly reports that describe the nature of crimes alleged to have been committed in those towns. The reports shall not provide any personally identifying info.

This information is already available through the Vermont State Police website and Crimereports.com

- Create a Task Force that, during Adjournment 2018, would recommend how towns can increase access to law enforcement services.

The above-referenced law enforcement agencies recommend that this issue be referred to the Law Enforcement Advisory Board. The creation of another legislatively created task force is unnecessary and a potential waste of state resources.

5.) 911 Call-Taking (PSAPs) and Dispatch

- Repeal DPS' requirement to continue to perform 911 call-taking set forth in [2016, No. 118, Sec. 3](#) and prohibit DPS from performing 911 call-taking. The existing two DPS PSAPs would instead be administered by [entities TBD].

The above-referenced law enforcement agencies oppose this recommendation. DPS plays a critical role in the Vermont's 911 call taking and handles the largest volume of 911 calls in the state. Moreover, one of DPS primary function is to respond to emergencies throughout the state and it would be incongruous for the State's Department of Public Safety not to be part of the 911 system. Again, it is not clear how this recommendation furthers an important public policy goal.

- Provide a total grant amount of \$[X] that would be divvied up and made available to regional planning commission to help towns plan for regional police, fire, and EMS dispatch services.

This recommendation warrants further study. Addressing how towns plan for dispatching, the costs and inequities associated therewith, and how best to address future dispatching needs statewide warrants full consideration.