



STATE OF VERMONT
Capitol Police Department

Memorandum

To: Representative Mitzi Johnson, Chair
Joint Legislative Management Committee

From: Chief Matthew Romei
Capitol Police Department

Re: Committee Work

Date: 30 October 2019

I would like to take an opportunity to provide some revised thoughts on the questions posed by the Committee and additionally ask that the Committee spend some time looking at some Capitol Police-specific topics.

Structural Issues

When I first testified in front of the Committee, I stated that I had no great opinion as to the structural question posed. After some time listening to various testimonies and watching the Committee's progress, I would like to offer an idea for the structural renovation of the Branch Staff. I suggest that the "shared services" of the branch be co-located under one umbrella. Currently, they are split between the Sergeant at Arms and Legislative Council. The hybrid option I would offer has the JLMC Committee functioning as the Executive Director with the Sergeant at Arms as a point person or advisor.

In the attached diagram, you will also see pink blocks connected by dotted lines. These are the "policy" or "strategic direction" committees. What I envision would be a committee setting global direction for those departments. Meeting regularly, these committees would be the directional navigation for the departments. The department heads would take that strategic direction and answer to JLMC for approval as far as budgets, personnel matters, etc.

An issue I see crop up regularly is failure to coordinate. Perhaps this could be resolved with weekly/biweekly department heads meetings. There is very little that happens in this branch that doesn't affect or require IT and/or Capitol Police services. Many of the last-minute issues that come up could be handled much smoother were there coordination.

One risk of the JLMC is that you may find yourself down in the weeds. I think that you need to trust your managers and department heads and intentionally stay at the 30,000-foot level. You have a great team of professionals, subject matter experts in their respective fields, and they need the room to work, and the confidence of the JLMC to do their jobs well without

micromanagement. Pulling from the Incident Command System world, the Committee should be directly supervising between three and seven managers, with the optimum number being five. That doesn't mean you can't get the next level down to come in front of you, but most of your work should be through those office heads plus Human Resources.

One specific box I would like to address is the Human Resources box. Immediately prior to taking this position, I worked in the HR department for the City of Birmingham, Alabama. The City had approximately 4,500 employees. The way I see an HR department beneficial here is as an advisory and service department. Consistent hiring and evaluation processes need to be developed. A consistent pay plan should be established. Let the HR Manager do that and bring it to the JLMC for endorsement. If you hire a highly qualified candidate, there should be very little the JLMC would have to do to modify the plans. A quality HR advisor is invaluable to a manager – keeping that manager out of trouble and making things fair and equitable for all employees.

Capitol Police

I found myself hearing very familiar statements in your discussion with the IT Department. There are currently 12 committees and six offices that believe they have some bite at the apple concerning the Capitol Police. I am not a politician, never have been. But I find myself trying to navigate very choppy political waters to get answers to questions. It would be much more efficient to have a directional committee and a funding committee as I referenced earlier. I proffered the Capitol Complex Security Advisory Committee as possibly the policy committee, since everything that happens from a security and law enforcement perspective in the Complex and the region affects us. You cannot ignore the greater complex and region and effectively protect the State House and Legislature. It is also not unusual to see a Legislative Branch-owned department with complex-wide obligations such as ours. If this committee needs to be restructured, this would be a good time to talk about it, as the Committee is up for renewal or sunseting.

As you heard from Officer Quesnel's testimony, we are suffering from staffing, compensation, and space issues. We are well below Vermont and National Averages for Law Enforcement per population served. Based on those numbers we should have between seven and 11 full-time officers, plus adequate supervisors and support staff. We currently have four full-time officers. This also takes into account a working Chief, where most staff accounting does not. What that means is if one person is out at training, on vacation, or off sick, we lose 25% of our staffing. If one is out at training and then another is sick, now we are down 50%.

We have very little capacity to absorb issues of daily life, such as a child being sick. Our part-time officers all have daytime jobs, and it is extremely difficult to find daytime available part-time officers. Demands for our service have steadily increased and show no signs of slowing down. All our personnel have "additional duties as assigned" where in most agencies, a dedicated officer or civilian staff takes on those roles. All of these "additional duties" take officers away from our regular duties. We have no administrative support.

We have almost no ability to send officers to training during the Legislative Session, which is when the vast majority of mandatory training is offered. With our current staff, we are lacking several specific topic trainers, such as defensive tactics, which leaves us to rely on other agencies, and having to meet their schedules.

There is a space study underway, and I expect to spend some time with that vendor. I think that previous testimony has made clear the urgent need. There is a thought that we 'have to be in the State House.' To be clear, no matter where our offices lie, we will always have a presence in the State House. What we are missing right now is a "safe space" for an officer to take a break, eat lunch, or even work on projects or paperwork. No matter where we land, we will maintain a desk and several standing posts in the State House.

When the Committee is ready to address the compensation issue, I would like to come back and have a frank discussion on that topic. If the Committee were to wave a wand and tell me to hire four officers today, I don't believe I could fill the slots. We have no capacity to train a new officer. Since we cannot train a new officer, we are left to recruit from experienced, trained officers. That means we must get to a better place with our compensation package and workplace experience. There are certainly benefits to working here, but we are not in a good place from a recruiting and retention standpoint.

Another topic briefly brought up is that of At-will employment. Capitol Police Officers are the only officers in the state that do not have job protection. 24 V.S.A. § 1931-1933 describes the statutory protection given to municipal officers, that should be afforded to Capitol Police.

The final pain point I would bring is the one surrounding budgeting. However, I would prefer to address that topic in confidence, as it involves several personnel matters.

I am at the Committee's service should you wish to further discuss any of these items. I look forward to the Committee's continued work.

Policy/
Strategic Direction/
Mission

JLMC

HR Department

Sergeant at
Arms

Benefits &
Compensation

Joint Fiscal
Office

Legislative
Council

IT

Legislative
Operations

Capitol Police

Senate Secretary

House Clerk

Joint Fiscal
Committee

Legal

LITOC

JLMC

Capitol Complex
Security

Senate Rules

House Rules

Drafting

