



Vermont Department of State's Attorneys and Sheriffs

Memorandum

To: Senator Ruth Hardy, Chair, SGO

From: John Campbell, Executive Director

Date: 2/22/2023

Re: Best Practices for Vermont Sheriffs' Operations

The goals of any changes would be to ensure clear written policies, procedures and resource management plans that would engage best practices, ensure transparency and engage oversight from appropriate person(s) and entities.

1. Moonlighting Work: Submit a detailed written statement of proposed work to be performed to the State Auditor and State Ethics Commission for consideration of any potential conflicts of interest.
2. Whistleblower Protections: Ensure that statutory language protects employees of the Sheriff's department who bring forward to appropriate officials any misconduct or malfeasance on the part of the Sheriff or done on behalf of the Sheriff.
3. Residency: Require full-time Vermont residency for elected or appointed Sheriffs. Ensure that a Sheriff cannot regularly work from out of state location(s).
4. Pay: Implement statutory changes to ensure that Sheriffs' salaries are competitive with VSP Major's salaries at the top step of the pay plan. In terms of any additional money received, see #10.
5. Merit: Merit policy should state that a merit award is for excellent performance or service during the (State) fiscal year; or for work done on a special project/assignment that required additional time commitment, supervisory responsibility and/or work stress; or for exceptional service in the line of duty. It should be capped at a reasonable flat rate as a one-time bonus or, if employee is in a step system, one or two step increase. The policy should limit that amount of money in total that a Sheriff can award in any given year, and it should require that funding for merit awards is from the Sheriff's 5% of contracts.
6. Salary Adjustments: Salary adjustments for Sheriff's staff and for the Sheriffs themselves should be comparable to the State Executive branch adjustments unless otherwise provided for by any union contract covering employees.
7. Development of Sheriffs Qualifications: Recommend at a minimum Vermont certified level II or III. Require annual training on ethics, DEI, fiscal and personnel policies.
8. Public Records: Require mandatory public records training to Sheriffs by the Secretary of State, and a records policy approved by SoS, and each Sheriff appoint a staff member responsible for monitoring incoming requests.
9. Use of Leave: Establish a best practice that requires the Sheriffs to keep an accurate record (such as Outlook calendar or similar system) of their work and non-work time/vacation or personal leave time. Sick leave should be utilized for illness of the Sheriff or immediate family (as defined by the Executive branch contract).
10. 5% Contractual Fee: Develop a written plan on the 5% to be approved by XX and the Sheriffs (statutory) Executive Committee. FYI: Current statute appears to allow restrictions to be placed on this 5%. Recommend that Sheriffs be

authorized to utilize this funding up to a certain dollar amount each fiscal year to pay for their office cars, equipment, staff salary and merit adjustments, staff retirement and health care contributions, and for their own salary adjustment (up to \$XX dollars per year) and for their own retirement accounts (up to \$XX per year).

11. Internal Investigations: Compliance with Act 56. The Sheriffs' oversight would also come from any newly established Director and from their statutory Executive Committee.