Memorandum

To: Gary W. Jackson, City Manager Date: March 31, 2017

From: Tammy Hooper, Chief of Police

Subject: APD Multi-Year Work Plan - “Safer Together”

Review:

The City Council vision for Asheville, adopted in January 2016, seeks to continue to be a city where all people experience a high quality of life. To sustain that vision, it is important to acknowledge communities are complex and constantly-changing systems. The Asheville Police Department’s (Police Department) Multi-Year Work Plan known as “Safer Together”, lays out a strategic approach for supporting a basic community need, safety (Attachment A).

This core city government service is one part of a complex system. Investments in safety will complement city priorities in areas that address other basic needs; such as food security (food action plan), water (water utility) and shelter (affordable housing). These simultaneous investments in core basic needs will enhance our entire community, recognizing that attention must be given to each in order to sustain a high quality of life.

The Police Department’s Multi-Year Work Plan outlines the goals, objectives and action items intended to assist it in providing service to the community in pursuit of its vision which states, in part, the following:

The Asheville Police Department is committed to being the leading professional, progressive, and community focused police department in the State of North Carolina by promoting the highest standards of performance, best practices, and accountability that reflect our values and those of the community we serve.

As outlined below, the Police Department has submitted a maintenance budget for Fiscal Year 2018 which would continue the current level of response to demand for police services. In addition, this memo outlines the future funding implications associated with the implementation of the Multi-Year Work Plan.

Background:

Asheville, a community that is recognized as a great place to live based on its high quality of life and access to outdoor recreation and cultural resources, is described by Google’s Asheville Travel Guide as being “known for a vibrant arts scene and historic architecture…[T]he vast 19th-century Biltmore estate displays artwork by masters like Renoir. The Downtown Art District is filled with galleries and museums, and in the nearby River Arts District, former factory buildings house artists' studios.”

Based on the community’s quality of life and vitality, Asheville has realized significant growth in population, development and tourism over the past decade. During that time, the community’s residential population has grown to an estimated 90,000, while its daytime population is estimated at 161,000 (28,000 from tourism (18%), 44,000 from commuters (27%), 89,000 from residents (55%))[[1]](#footnote-1). From a development perspective, the Department of Planning and Urban Development lists 22 large scale development projects in the downtown area alone. Additional development and growth has and continues to occur throughout the community including but not limited to South Asheville and the River Arts District. In addition, according to the Tourism Development Authority approximately eight million people visited the community in 2009, rising to over ten million visitors by 2015.

There is no question that Asheville is a booming and vibrant place to live and be. At the same time, the draw of the community as a choice place to live, regional employment hub and tourism also presents challenges related to such growth. An example of the challenges presented by such growth is the impact on livability ratings. While Areavibes.com livability ratings for Asheville acknowledge the amenities and other community characteristics with an A+ rating, it rates the community with an F for crime. In doing so, it states in part that:

* for 2015 “the overall crime rate in Asheville is 90% higher than the national average,” and 75% higher than the rest of North Carolina; and
* “in Asheville you have a 1 in 19 chance of becoming a victim of any crime”; and
* gives Asheville very low ratings in terms of safety.
* Asheville has 2.9 police employees per 1,000 residents in comparison to 4.8 police employees per 1,000 residents across North Carolina.

It is important to recognize that Asheville is generally a safe community in which to live, work and play. At the same time, unless resources are provided to address the challenges that come with growth, the trends recognized by sources such as Areavibes.com could continue to negatively impact the perceived and real sense of the community.

*Workload*

Ultimately, the growth of the City has created a substantial increase in demand for services by all City departments, including the Police Department. Calls for service have increased by over 1,000 per year for the past eight years and are projected to continue at or above that rate with the city’s current planned growth.

Calls for service are only one of the measures of officer workload. In addition to calls for service, officers are expected to conduct traffic enforcement, foot and bike patrols, and employ community policing practices to improve trust, among a host of other duties. Although there has been substantial growth in officer workload, additional positions have not been added to the Police Department to address the growth in demand for police services.

Growth has and continues to occur across the Asheville community. While the level of service for Downtown is detailed below, it is important to acknowledge the growth and corresponding impacts in areas such as South Asheville (increased population and development from Biltmore Park to the Airport Road corridor) and West Asheville. In an effort to maintain and maximize the level of service and response times across the community, patrol districts were restructured in 2015 without the addition of personnel resources. Those efforts have resulted in limited success with the Department struggling to maintain current levels of service without modifying the type and timing of calls to which service can be provided.

*Downtown Level of Service*

In order to address the impact of growth in popularity and corresponding crime and nuisance issues, the Downtown Unit (DTU) was created in 2010 to supplement the beat officer assigned to handle the area and reduce the use of overtime to fill the service needs. The mission of the DTU is to employ community policing strategies and proactive enforcement to ensure a safe environment for downtown visitors, residents, and businesses. By early 2015, due to the increase in workload demands, the DTU was expanded to two shifts (each with six officers and a supervisor). In the second half of 2015, the DTU was expanded again to include a second night shift to increase the days of coverage. Formation and growth of the DTU was implemented without the addition of any new personnel resources within the Police Department. Instead, internal vacancies in Criminal Investigations, Drug Suppression, Traffic and other units have been left vacant to support the initiative. In addition to the beat officer and the DTU, four to six officers are hired back on overtime each day to address the level of activity and calls in the downtown.

In 2016, officers working in the area of the downtown handled approximately 21% of all calls for service in the City. In addition they spent more than 300 hours in community and downtown stakeholder meetings, made more than 14,000 contacts with downtown businesses, worked over 300 permitted special events, innumerable non-permitted free speech assemblies, and collected sock, food and toy donations to assist area homeless.

*Investments to maintain community-wide level of service*

While the Police Department has worked hard over the past decade to maintain current levels of service in a community experiencing community-wide growth without additional personnel resources, it has reached its limit of capacity to continue the current level of service to residents.

*Fiscal Year 2018 Continuation Budget Request*

In order to *maintain* the Police Department’s ability to handle the increasing demand for services in a manner that addresses crime, violence, and quality-of-life issues through modern, evidence based strategies integrated with the principles of community policing, additional sworn officers are needed in Fiscal Year 2018. In recent years, the Police Department - with support of city management, the community and City Council - has made great strides in moving the culture of policing in Asheville towards 21st century policing practices that employ the elements of procedural justice and ensure equitable, fair and impartial policing. In order to continue that momentum and move towards these common objectives, the Police Department has submitted a continuation budget request to the City Manager seeking the addition of 12 patrol officers, two sergeants and one lieutenant position for Fiscal Year 2018.

The addition of the requested positions will enable the Police Department to do the following:

* Restructure current patrol districts in a manner that evenly distributes the workload across the city and maintains or improves the current level of service and response times;
* Respond to the increasing demand for services across the community influenced by growth;
* Evolve the DTU into a fully functioning district which operates on a 24 hour/ 7 day a week basis expanding the area to include the rapidly growing South Slope and River Arts District. Due to the time required to hire and train a sufficient number of officers, the targeted date for implementation of the district is Fiscal Year 2020 (July 1, 2019). Efforts to enhance retention within the Police Department could speed up the targeted implementation date; and
* Continue to meet the increasing demand for services within the proposed area, reassign current district resources to better meet the growing needs of other areas of the City as described above and through the addition of a beat officer to the South Asheville area.

Without the investment of these resources, the Police Department will need to reallocate existing resources and prioritize calls for service. As a result, the Police Department’s capacity to conduct foot and bicycle patrols, increase citizen engagement, partner with community members and organizations, and mentor youth will be diminished and eventually prove impossible. Other proactive activities such as traffic enforcement and safety, preventative patrols, and community meetings would also have to be reconsidered.

*Fiscal Impact - Fiscal Year 2018*

The Police Department has worked with the City Manager’s Office and Finance Department to identify options to implement this continuation budget within the City’s Manager’s Recommended FY 2017-18 Budget which will be presented to City Council on May 9. As such, the following plan is proposed for consideration:

*Capital Impact - Fiscal Year 2018*

In the first year of the plan, the Police Department will need to purchase an additional eight (8) patrol vehicles at a cost of $384,000. Staff is recommending that this capital purchase be funded with an appropriation of fund balance.

*Operating Budget Impact - Fiscal Year 2018*

Personnel costs for the 12 patrol officers, two sergeants and one lieutenant position would be fundedat 50% in the first year of the plan at a cost of $469,000. Equipment and uniform costs are estimated at $98,000, for a total first year operating cost of $567,000.

*Future Investments - Police Department Multi-Year Plan*

In support of the Police Department’s Multi-Year Work Plan which is focused on moving the culture of policing in Asheville towards 21st Century policing practices through the employment of the elements of procedural justice and ensure equitable, fair and impartial policing, a chart listing anticipated investments beyond Fiscal Year 2018 is attached.

The Police Department appreciates the opportunity to continue to partner with the City Manager’s Office and City Council in implementing a work plan that continues to maximize the high quality of life that the Asheville community enjoys.

ATTACHMENTS:

A. Police Department Multi-Year Work Plan

B. Downtown District Four Year Investment Layout

C. Current and Proposed Allocation Maps

1. “The Economic Impact of Tourism in Buncombe, North Carolina, 2014 Analysis,” by Tourism Economics, June 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)