



City of Cambridge Police Department

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Police Commissioner

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

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March 11, 1999

Harold F. Murphy
Superintendent

Mr. Robert W. Healy
City Manager

David J. Degou
Superintendent

subject: City Council Order #33, dated 2/1/99

Michael D. Giacoppo
Deputy Superintendent

Sir:

Yvonne M. Hall
Deputy Superintendent

In July of 1995, the state's on-line Warrant Management System (WMS) was established. Prior to this, police departments received warrants from various courts before attempting service. The warrants were difficult to store and, most often, unmanageable in terms of search and cross-reference. The actual warrants were, at times, recalled by the issuing court and not available to the police officers for reference. The WMS enabled police departments, through the teletype system and the dispatcher, instant access to warrants on-line without having the actual paper warrant available.

Thomas F. O'Connor
Deputy Superintendent

Gloria A. Pimentel
Deputy Superintendent

Lieutenant Steven Williams
Community Relations

After the establishment of the WMS, the Cambridge Police Department back entered into the system approximately 10,000 "legacy" warrants during the calendar years 1996 and 1997. These "legacy" warrants were all of the active Cambridge Police warrants issued prior to July of 1995. This allowed all law enforcement agencies immediate access to all active Cambridge Police warrants.

Raymond T. Santilli
*Planning, Budget
& Personnel*

Officer Frank Pasquarello
Public Information Officer

In late 1997, arrangements were made with the state for Cambridge to download into its computer aided dispatch (CAD) system all active Cambridge warrants on a nightly basis. This allowed Cambridge to extract various fields from the database and to customize more flexible and needed searches on the WMS.

As of the end of February, a total of 7,652 active Cambridge Police warrants were in the WMS. Of these, 2,221 were felony warrants and 5,431 were misdemeanor warrants. In calendar year 1998, 747 new warrants from Cambridge Police were entered into WMS.

Of the active Cambridge Police warrants, a total of 2,109 warrants list the subject as living in Cambridge. In calendar year 1998, 1,664 warrants were issued statewide for Cambridge residents. Of these, only 687 remain active as 977 warrants were cleared by various agencies and methods. In 1998, a total of 1,611 warrants in WMS for Cambridge residents were cleared statewide.

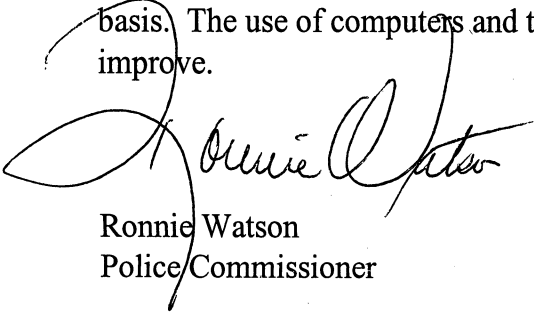
In January of 1999, the Massachusetts Senate Committee on Post Audit and Oversight, chaired by State Senator Cheryl Jacques, issued a comprehensive report entitled "Warranting Improvement: Reforming the Arrest Warrant Management System." The report highlighted a number of deficiencies, findings and recommendations.

The Cambridge Police Department has, within the past several years, already addressed a number of concerns listed in the report and enacted many pro-active measures to improve the service of active warrants. Following are some highlights of the report as well as the measures enacted by the Cambridge Police Department.

- "Most police departments lack the resources to field their own warrant apprehension teams."
 - The Cambridge Police Department has a dedicated Warrant Apprehension Unit consisting of two detectives supervised by a sergeant. In addition, all uniformed officers and detectives are provided specific warrant listings and information enabling them to also be informed as they perform their normal duties.
- "Warrant management is more passive, in some respects, than before the creation of WMS. Active warrant practices, such as mailing notification letters to people who are issued an arrest warrant for a misdemeanor, have been dropped." - The Cambridge Police's Warrant Apprehension Unit sends approximately 1,200 warrant notification letters a year. These notification letters are for warrants for dog violations, public health violations, probation violations and any other crimes that warrant such notification. Each letter is a reminder to the defendant that a court action is active and they have the opportunity to clear the warrant or be subject to arrest.
- "There are hundreds of thousands of so-called "legacy" warrants in boxes and file cabinets in police departments and courts across the state . . ." - As stated previously, approximately 10,000 "legacy" warrants (active Cambridge Police warrants prior to July, 1995) were back entered into WMS during 1996 and 1997.
- "WMS does not help police prioritize who to apprehend." - Although this is an accurate statement, the Cambridge Police Department has taken the initiative to prioritize warrant service. Listings with specific information are issued by specific category (i.e., recently issued felony warrants, felony warrants for a specific neighborhood, etc.) to both uniformed officers and detectives. The Investigation Section is also responsible for planning specific warrant sweeps in a particular area of the city on a regular basis.

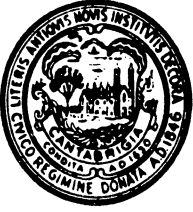
- "Police and courts lack the resources needed to use WMS to its full capacity. Less than 10% of State Police traffic stops actually result in warrant inquiries because State Police cruisers lack on-board laptop computers . . ." - Currently 14 of the 24 marked Cambridge Police vehicles are equipped with laptop computers. Within the next 45 days, all marked vehicles will be so equipped and will have full and complete instant search capabilities on WMS.
- "The (State Police) should develop an on-going program to train local police departments in the techniques of successful warrant execution." - The Cambridge Police Department has already initiated a number of successful warrant executions over the past several years. For the past two fiscal years and also for FY00, warrant service is a specific performance measure for the Police Department.
- "WMS should be programmed to help police prioritize who to apprehend first by highlighting people with multiple warrants and those wanted for serious felonies." - With the nightly downloaded of the WMS database into the CAD system, the Cambridge Police Department is able to search, list, and prioritize warrants based on a number of variable and factors.
- "Set a goal to have a laptop computer in every police cruiser in the Commonwealth by January 1, 2002." - The Cambridge Police Department will meet this requirement by the spring of 1999.

The Cambridge Police Department actively attempts to execute and serve warrants on a timely basis. The use of computers and technology is aiding in this endeavor and will continue to improve.



Ronnie Watson
Police Commissioner

cc., Superintendent Harold Murphy, Operations Division
Superintendent David Degou, Support Services Division



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20.

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
ROBERT W. HEALY
City Manager

RICHARD C. ROSSI
Deputy City Manager

March 15, 1999

To The Honorable, The City council:

Please find attached a response to Awaiting Report Item No. 99-28, regarding a report on the number of outstanding warrants that exist at the Police Department, received from Police Commissioner Ronnie Watson.

Very truly yours,

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mec
Attachment

Consent Agenda #20

S-1645

Relative to AR #99-28, regarding
a report on the number of
outstanding warrants that exist
at the Police Department.

In City Council March 15, 1999

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