

City of Cambridge

The Public Safety Committee held a public hearing on Wednesday, September 30, 1992, at 5:30 p.m. in the Sullivan Chamber. Present at the hearing were Councillor Jonathan S. Myers, Chair of the Committee, Councillor Edward N. Cyr, Councillor Timothy J. Toomey, Jr., and City Clerk Margaret Drury.

Councillor Myers convened the hearing at 5:40 p.m. and explained that the purpose of the hearing was to review a presentation by the Police Commissioner on the following issues:

1. City Wide crime statistics.
2. Plans to hire additional patrol officers.
3. Discussion of police visibility, park and walk and walking patrols.

The first item considered was plans to hire additional patrol officers. Commissioner Perry Anderson presented information regarding the current force levels. As of July 1, 1989, Cambridge had a total of 280 police officers on its force. As of July 1, 1992, the budgeted staffing level was 271 police officers. Currently there are 250 officers on staff, with 9 of those on extended absences due to sickness and injury. Thus actual current police staff level is 241. He noted that at the time of the last budget hearing, he and the City Manager had agreed on the staffing level of 271, which meant that 18 new officers were required. Since then, three officers have left, so the number needed under that budget is 21.

Councillor Cyr asked what the expected effect of early retirement would be on the police department. Commissioner Anderson responded that based on the survey conducted by the City's personnel department, their current analysis was that twelve police officers and one civilian employee would take early retirement.

Commissioner Anderson emphasized that the hiring process will take approximately five months, and said that he believes it is critical to move expeditiously on the hiring process. He said that personnel shortage is at a critical point now, and early retirement will worsen the situation, and would be devastating for the campaign for police visibility.

Councillor Cyr said that passage of Cambridge's home rule petition seeking authority to hire Cambridge residents rather than having to use the Civil Service recall list does not appear likely.

Councillor Toomey asked what was the current status of the recall list, which he has been told has dwindled to twelve people. Councillor Myers asked whether, even if the recall list

was very short now, if Cambridge begins a process using the short recall list and the reserve list, which contains Cambridge residents, but during the five month period it takes to complete the process, the recall list becomes larger, would Cambridge be required to utilize the larger recall list before hiring from the reserve list. Ray Santilli, Cambridge Police Department, said that he would obtain this information for the Committee.

Councillor Myers stated that although hiring Cambridge residents was a clear priority of the Council, given the information about the staffing crisis in the department, and the lack of movement on the homerule bill, it may be important to take action before the homerule bill is resolved. He added that he had additional questions about the hiring of the 22 civilians that was supposed to make 13 additional police officers available for street duty. He asked for information as to the current status of this endeavor.

Commissioner Anderson replied that the Police Department had worked very carefully on developing appropriate job descriptions for the 22 civilian hires, and that that work was now completed. He presented an outline of his civilianization plan. The department is ready to commence the actual hiring process, and thereafter, to reassign the thirteen officers. He said that he expected to sit down with the City Manager to report the completion of the preliminary activity, and then to work with the Personnel Department to do the hiring. He stressed the need to work expeditiously.

Councillor Cyr asked whether the hiring process for the 21 new officers would be used to deal with other special needs in hiring, for example, linguistic minorities, and pointed out that in such a case, Cambridge can request special lists from Civil Service. In response to a question about these special lists, Mr. Santilli responded that the Civil Service would create these lists from its new exam list.

Councillor Cyr moved that:

In light of the lack of progress of Cambridge's homerule petition to enable it to hire Cambridge residents instead of using the Civil Service recall list, and in light of the serious current understaffing of the police department, which will be exacerbated by early retirement, although the value of hiring Cambridge residents is recognized by the City Council and encoded in its homerule petition, the City Manager is hereby requested to allow the initiation of the hiring process to hire the 21 police officers needed to staff the department to the level approved in the FY93 budget.

The motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

Councillor Myers then turned the discussion to the issue of city-wide crime statistics. Police Commissioner presented a report of recent statistics, which is filed with these minutes. Overall, reported crime in Cambridge decreased 8.6% from 1991. There has, however, been a 50% increase in rape. There have been decreases in burglary and auto theft, which he attributes to the new community policing programs and policies, particularly park and walk and walking patrols. Crime statistics are being analyzed by neighborhood each quarter and sent out to all the neighborhood groups.

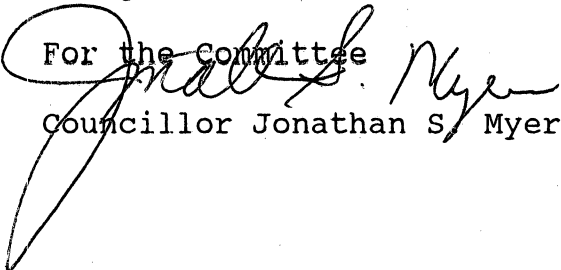
The discussion then moved to the topics of police visibility, park and walk and walking patrols. Ray Santilli described the park and walk program, which uses crime analysis techniques to develop specific dispatches for park and walk assignments for every 24 hour period. They try to focus on where the crimes will occur, based on their analysis of a great deal of data on previous crimes and neighborhood concerns. This program has been worked on for much longer, but has really been formalized in the past ten months.

Commissioner Anderson said that, along with park and walk, the program of neighborhood streets overtime patrol, has been key to increasing uniformed patrol visibility. In this program, officers work on overtime patrols, which therefore do not impact regular and usual staffing, to cover each and every street in Cambridge over the course of a three month period. Each shift is four hours long, and during that time, the officer walks each street in the selected district three times. Times and dates are purposely varied, and special events or anticipated problems are considered in the scheduling. Public response to both programs has been excellent. Commissioner Anderson said that these programs have been two of the department's most successful programs, and he believes that the drop in the crime rate can be attributed to them.

Councillor Myers asked whether any members of the public wished to speak. Robert Johnson, 325 Concord Avenue, suggested that the City Manager send someone in person to the Civil Service with requisitions for both the recall and the reserve lists so that if the recall list does not include sufficient names to fill the Cambridge vacancies, both requisitions can be filed at once to save time. He added that he believes that when a list is requisitioned from Civil Service, that ends the list. Even if 50 names are added later, Cambridge does not have to go back to that list.

At 7:15 Councillor thanked Police Commissioner Anderson for his participation and that of his staff, particularly Ray Santilli, and adjourned the hearing.

For the Committee


Councillor Jonathan S. Myers, Chair

3.
COMMITTEE REPORT

5-873

Public Safety Committee report for a hearing held on Wednesday, Sept. 30, 1992 relative to presentation by the Police Commissioner of city wide crime statistics, hiring of additional patrol officers and police visibility.

In City Council,

October 19, 1992

Report accepted

Placed on file