

WORKING TOWARD A COMMON GOAL

STRATEGIC PLANNING MEETING

SPONSORED BY

THE LANCASTER CITY POLICE FOUNDATION

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Working Toward a Common Goal

Report of the February 9, 2008 Strategic Planning Meeting

INTRODUCTION

On February 9, 2008, the Lancaster City Police Foundation hosted a strategic planning meeting at Franklin and Marshall College. The goal of the meeting was to create a prioritized list of strategies to improve public safety. Approximately fifty attendees representing city and county agencies, human service organizations, citizens' groups and the private sector met to share ideas and resources and to examine the feasibility and desirability of implementing sixteen Lancaster Crime Commission recommendations.

Each of the Crime Commission recommendations discussed involved either nuisance crime reduction or community policing; none of the recommendations considered has been fully implemented. After informal conversation and introductions, the chair of the meeting briefly reviewed each of the sixteen recommendations and noted the extent of implementation as determined in a follow-up study to the Final Report of the Lancaster Crime Commission.¹ The attendees supplied additional information regarding implementation efforts for each recommendation. Following that discussion, six groups made up of no more

¹ *Implementation of Lancaster Crime Commission Recommendations*, A report of the Public Safety Research Institute, 2007.

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than seven participants each met with a facilitator supplied by the Public Safety Research Institute. Each group discussed four recommendations and prioritized them according to the following criteria:

- This recommendation is so important that it needs long term effort.
- This recommendation can be implemented now.
- This recommendation is impossible or no longer an option.

During the discussion, the facilitators prompted the small group members to consider specific concerns such as financial roadblocks, political will, the need for state or federal involvement, the need for and likelihood of collaboration, and the positives and negatives associated with each recommendation. The facilitator of each group recorded the highlights of its discussion and presented them orally to all of the attendees in a general meeting that followed the small group discussion. One of the facilitators recorded all of the summary comments.

This report uses the comments recorded in each small group as well as the summary comments presented to the whole group to categorize the recommendations in terms of whether it is important and feasible to continue efforts to implement them. These materials suggest that groups rated four recommendations as high priorities that fit the criteria of being so important it requires long term effort. At the opposite end of the spectrum, the groups' comments suggest that five of the recommendations should not be

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pursued further because they are impossible or no longer an option. Information presented in the discussions regarding five recommendations suggested that these efforts are currently underway.

The recommendations pertaining to the creation of a new countywide telephone dispatching system that includes provision of numbers for non-emergency municipal services (311) and social services (211) and the development of a clearing house/referral service to support the social service telephone dispatch system do not meet the criteria for inclusion in any of the three categories described above. Regulatory approval from the Pennsylvania Utility Commission is a precondition to establishing 211 as a social service referral number. The process of approval is underway, but the likely timeframe for approval is unknown. Consequently, the comments reported on these two recommendations focused primarily on how to maximize public awareness of existing referral mechanisms for non-emergency municipal services and social services. The comments also suggested uncertainty about the need to undertake the expense associated with establishment of 311 as a non-emergency municipal services number. Overall, the discussion of these recommendations suggests that the development of steps necessary to implement them is on hold until local action is feasible.

In this report, each of the sixteen recommendations has been placed into one of four categories:

1. So important it requires long term effort
2. Currently underway

3. Impossible or no longer an option
4. On hold.

A synopsis of the comments reported at the meeting follows the classification of each recommendation.

OVERVIEW OF RECOMMENDATIONS

SO IMPORTANT THAT IT NEEDS LONG-TERM EFFORT:

- 1. Crime Mapping System - The creation of a crime and disorder incident mapping system and database that is secure, operates in real time and is able to provide all law enforcement, code enforcement, education and social service professionals with the current information they need to coordinate their quality of life improvement efforts.**

Comments:

- It's important
- It needs to be countywide, not just in the city
- Need to link police departments
- High priority item
- Must pick right system
- Work with county IT people
- Wait for new city chief
- Solicit pro-bono assistance from business community, including LGH
- Try to coordinate police information with information from other agencies

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- Examine what other cities are doing
- How do we utilize the information obtained through a mapping system?

2. More police on the street - The expansion of the authorized complement of sworn officers of the Lancaster City Bureau of police by 24 before the end of 2004. In addition, the planned quota for sworn officers in each district should be brought up to full complement as quickly as possible.

Comments:

- The retention of officers is more important than the expansion of the authorized complement
- The focus needs to be on insuring that current officers are more efficient and more effective
- Sustainability of complement is crucial.
- Quality of officers is more important than quantity
- Need to keep officers on the street. For example, settle workmen's compensation cases and disability cases
- Use civilians to free up police officers
- Utilize volunteers to free officers
- State and federal programs for new officers not helpful
- Need funds to improve pay of officers rather than hire new officers
- Explore ways to finance salaries of officers. Consider a city work tax on those who work in the city but live in the county
- Explore private funding
- Explore whether officers are too engaged in community activities

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- Civic engagement is more than meetings. It means the community develops projects draws people together based on common interests. Police are included
- Lancaster City Police Foundation should raise funds for research initiatives (PSRI) to assess effectiveness
- Need to maintain non-monetary positives – need a positive work environment
- F&M study found that officers need to feel appreciated
- Need to be sure officers feel appreciated – provide recognition, equipment and other perks
- Provide scholarships for college for children of officers

3. Officer Retention - The adoption of the principle of maintaining parity in pay, overtime, and benefits of uniformed officers as the core of the ongoing effort to retain current and recruit future community policing officers. It is important that the city stop losing its officers to neighboring communities and that it be able to recruit the best officers of other departments to staff its new community policing system.

Comments:

- Good recruitment is essential
- Funding for officers must be long term
- Funding from local, state, federal and private sources must be sustainable
- Fund better equipment and training
- Lancaster City Police Foundation should help with this
- Need to provide ongoing training for officers (Tools for Tolerance, legal training, etc.)

4. Independent assessment -The creation of an independent assessment entity to establish objective criteria for determining success that includes, yet goes beyond crime statistics. Such an entity would determine what data should be routinely gathered, compared and analyzed to track exactly how the police are performing, and would establish a process for the regular distribution of this information to police and city managers, to community groups, to the media and to the general public.

Comments:

- Evaluation research is important – need to know what is and what is not working. Invest in what works
- Lancaster City Police Foundation should raise resources for this
- Determine goal of assessment
- Find out what other agencies are looking at assessment issues
- PSRI is available to help; can draw on resources at local colleges
- Provide information to agencies regarding type of data they should collect

CURRENTLY UNDERWAY:

1. Pro-Bono Prosecution Program - The expansion of the existing pro bono prosecution program of the District Attorney's office to supplement DA staff in the

prosecution of nuisance crime. Similarly, the abilities of the Lancaster City Solicitor's Office should be expanded in a pro bono manner to handle an expected increased load of civil offense litigation. The Lancaster Bar Association is encouraged to become the leading partner taking on the responsibility for the recruitment of attorneys to serve in the aforementioned pro bono programs. Participating attorneys are afforded unique opportunities to serve their city and county, while receiving invaluable legal experience.

Comments:

- Progress is occurring at county level through support of DA's office
- Barley/Snyder & Armstrong attorneys are assisting
- Important to continue
- Recommendations include additional training sessions for landlords and training for police on how to expedite evictions

2. Accountability for repeat offenders - The city should regularly publish the names of our most recalcitrant landlords and inform insurers and mortgage holders when repeated offenses occur.

Comments:

- There are many initiatives underway to address the problems of problem landlords, including state legislation
- Discuss with newspapers

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- Review ordinances to determine whether fines are adequate
- Explore increasing fines and costs to cover the city's enforcement expenses
- Provide training to officers regarding evictions, etc.

3. Non-Uniformed Assistance - The expansion of the complement of non-uniformed professional administrative staff members of the Lancaster Bureau of Police by 12 before the end of 2004.

Comments:

- Expansion of staff has occurred. Major issue is sustainability. How does department continue to fund new staff?
- Need to do more with less
- What is most efficient way to do police reports
- Use cadets to help
- Provide interns with meaningful work
- Important for civilian employees to help police do their jobs

4. Police-Community relations - The creation of a formal, continuing police-community relations education and information program to be conducted by the Lancaster Bureau of Police and the Department of Housing and Neighborhood Development aimed at:

- **Informing individual residents how community policing and community police officers will**

work in their neighborhoods and how they and their neighbors may assist the community police officers in improving the safety and quality of life of their neighborhoods;

- **Informing (training) the individual citizens of the city how they can most effectively access police and other city services in emergency and non-emergency situations, outlining the kinds of responses that can be expected from calls for service and communicating the parameters of a citizen complaint procedure;**
- **And establishing a formal ongoing dialogue between the assigned community policing officers and the individuals and groups of each policing district which will allow the officers to better understand their neighborhoods and allow the residents to learn to better trust their assigned community officers.**

Comments:

- A top priority to continue
- Hold block parties
- Put quarterly policing reports on website
- Put quarterly policing reports in city newsletter so that citizens are informed
- Put information for citizens in sewer and water bills
- Use police website more effectively—include more information for citizens
- Hold civilian police academy again

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- Lancaster Council of Neighborhoods is already doing a lot of what has been recommended (newsletter, meetings, social gatherings)

5. Simpler Complaint Procedures - The development of a streamlined and simple complaint procedure for citizens reporting quality of life crimes that will be implemented and can be expanded by the Lancaster Bureau of Police and the Lancaster County District Attorney's Office.

Comments:

- To some extent this is already being done. Form is OK
- Suggestions
 - Put form on the website
 - Promote form better -- publicize through the city newsletter
 - Follow-up phone calls are important to citizens
 - Make neighborhood/community police officers aware of forms
- Negatives – some reports should be taken over the phone – it allows information to be recorded. Some people think phone is better way to handle these issues.

IMPOSSIBLE OR NO LONGER AN OPTION

1. Section 8 Housing Supervision - The development and implementation by the Lancaster City Housing Authority of a rigorous supervision program for all

Section 8 participants (tenants and landlords). Such a program should require:

- **Monitoring of all police and code enforcement activity on site**
- **Monitoring criminal activity by participants**
- **Monitoring quality of life crime and disorder complaints**
- **Maintaining a record of identity of all site residents, and**
- **Providing the Lancaster Bureau of Police, Lancaster Bureau of Fire and the Lancaster City Housing and Neighborhood Development Department with current monthly lists of all city Section 8 program properties.**

Comments

- Participants objected to focus on Section 8 housing
- Scrap this recommendation

2. Living Conditions Monitoring and Social Service Access - The development by the Lancaster City Housing Authority of a program that insures that the living and economic conditions of all Section 8 tenants, and their impact on neighborhoods, are being monitored and that they are provided access to the appropriate range of social services.

Comments:

- Eliminate the focus on Section 8 tenants. Important to insure that all residents have access to social services and improved living conditions
- School District of Lancaster (Safe Schools/Healthy Children grant) is currently coordinating social services for families with children throughout the city

3. The creation of a permanent council of representatives of city social service, criminal justice and law enforcement agencies with the goal of providing better coordination, greater information sharing and cooperation between agencies, community policing officers and residents of the city's neighborhoods.

Comments:

- Not needed
- Just one more meeting to attend
- Could be beneficial to formalize some information sharing – for example, between police and probation and parole

4. The adoption of a system of organizing the delivery of services of all human service agencies and institutions around the geographic structure of the neighborhood-based Lancaster City Community Policing District system. (Including but not limited to MHMR, Probation and Parole, Children and Youth, SDL, CAP, Neighborhood Services, the Department of

Housing and Neighborhood Development and the United Way Agencies).

Comments:

- This would take a lot of effort to develop from the ground up
- Not effective to organize at the neighborhood policing district level

5. Computerized Tracking System - The creation of a computerized, internal crime tracking and accountability system similar to the COMPSTAT system used successfully in NYC. The model provides for immediate sharing of intelligence among districts, rapid and coordinated deployment during peak crime times at likely crime locations, relentless follow-up of all recommendations and accountability and evaluation of each officer's performance.

Comments:

- Application of COMPSTAT is a management decision police department must make. It is more of an internal issue than a community issue.
- Preferable for non-police to address community issues rather than micro-manage the police department.

ON HOLD

- 1. 911-311-211 Telephone System - The creation of a new countywide telephone dispatching system which includes provision for emergency calls (911), calls for non-emergency municipal services (311), and calls for social services (211).**

- 2. 211 Clearing House - The development of a clearing house/referral service to support the establishment of 211 social service telephone dispatch system.**

Comments:

- LINC is working on 211. Can't do anything until there is PUC approval
- 311 is not necessary. It's easy for dispatch to redirect calls
- The cost for 311 is significant. Not sure that it would be worth it
- City newsletter should publicize non-emergency numbers (County-wide communication, LINC)
- Work on "low-tech" ideas for the present. For example, non-emergency numbers for countywide communication and LINC could be added to the Violence Prevention Committee "where to call for help" card. Publicize numbers and educate the public regarding the appropriate numbers to use

CONCLUSIONS

A review of the comments regarding each of the recommendations suggests several important conclusions. First, the participants appeared to be well aware of the limitations of resources available to enhance public safety. Consequently, much of the discussion focused on sustainability – the need to assure that the community can maintain appropriate public safety measures. Therefore, discussion of two recommendations judged to be important enough to warrant long-term effort – more police on the streets and officer retention – emphasized non-economic incentives and the need to explore creative solutions to the fiscal limitations the city of Lancaster faces. Second, the participants recognized that crime does not respect municipal boundaries. The discussion of the recommendation that the Lancaster City Bureau of Police have state of the art crime mapping software supported collaboration with county efforts and encouraged adoption of a countywide system. Third, the participants endorsed creating mechanisms for independent assessment to measure the effectiveness of public safety initiatives and to assure that scarce resources are allocated appropriately.

It is also notable that the discussions resulted in a judgment that several recommendations do not require further consideration or effort. The participants rejected the Lancaster Crime Commission's assumption that Section 8 Housing is particularly problematic in terms of crime and disorder and also dismissed its recommendations for social service collaboration as impractical. The meeting

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participants expressed a high level of agreement with both of these positions.

One of the most striking aspects of the meeting was the extraordinary amount of information shared. It became apparent that a lot of thought, effort and time has been given to the Lancaster Crime Commission recommendations and the improvement of public safety since the Lancaster Crime Commission completed its work. A majority of attendees shared examples of the many innovative efforts underway to establish a pro bono program to assist in the prosecution of quality of life violations, to assure accountability of landlords, to develop simpler complaint procedures, to use volunteers and non-uniformed employees to support the police and to improve police community relations. Not only did this information provide an updated picture of the community's efforts to implement these specific recommendations, it also stimulated creativity in thinking about ways to advance other important initiatives

Municipal officials, agency heads, executives of social service agencies, citizens, business leaders and the people who serve on the front lines of law enforcement and human service face significant challenges. Improving public safety will require careful planning, genuine collaboration and objective assessment to identify badly needed resources and to insure their wise application. The information and recommendations that emerged from this meeting have helped construct an agenda that acknowledges some of the challenges Lancaster faces, but also offers suggestions on how to transcend them.