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Reserve Programs

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By

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### **Abstract**

The purpose has been throughout the research paper to show the City of Marshall Creek, municipalities and other police departments, through the use of articles and journals, that reserve programs are helpful and often needed to a police department or municipality. The writer has shown what other agencies have found and what is to be expected from starting such a program.

The relevancy of such a program in the police field is to offer agencies and municipalities a better tool to serve the community in which they protect and serve. The agencies that have programs show that they are working, by offering extra manpower for replacing officers who are on special assignments or vacation leave.

In conclusion, the police reserve programs that are implemented across the nation have not only enhanced the daily operation of an agency, but provided a greater commitment to serving the public and offered a solution to ever growing budget cuts. The agencies that do not currently have a program in place and have growing concerns within the department in regards to staffing and costs need and should look into starting a police reserve program for their department.

## **Introduction**

In the changing world of law enforcement, certain aspects of the field are ever changing. During these present times, many city governments and police departments are facing the growing issues of budget cuts. With the tightening of budget and the increase of criminal activity, certain police agencies are struggling with the mounting cost of overtime. These costs are often unavoidable due to lack of staff, and with budget restraints this often leaves a police agency with no options. Many police agencies across the country have come up with the idea of starting a Reserve Program in their city.

The purpose of the Police research paper is to show that police reserve programs are becoming an essential part of the daily operation of many departments. Reserve officers open new doors to police administrators, as far as being able to utilize these officers to fill open shifts, relieve full time officers to work special events or concentrate on problem areas in the community. These are issues that otherwise administrators would have no alternative except to fill with overtime officers and pay. But this is not to say, that along with the advantages to having this type of program, there are no disadvantages. Some disadvantages to having this program are the issues of greater liability and causing more internal paperwork for supervisors.

The intended audience of the project is the Marshall Creek police department and city governments and law enforcement agencies that are looking into this type of program for their particular community and agency. This policy research project will show both sides of the issue and attempt to offer a law enforcement agency information to help them

decide on whether to implement such a program.

The sources used in this policy research project are journals, books and certain surveys. The intended audience outcome of this project is to provide some of the advantages and disadvantages of a Police Reserve program, and to offer information regarding this program researching the possibility of implementing such a program.

### **Historical, Legal or Theoretical Context**

A police reserve program was first sought in the City of Marshall Creek in 1989. The police department started with six (6) reserve officers and one (1) Chief of Police. The city grappled with the idea for some time when they realized that they were not getting the service they needed or wanted from the Sheriffs Department, which was providing services at that time. The city council first needed information regarding the history and legal constraints of having police reserves.

Some of the earliest documentation of the concept of reserves came from New York City during the 1730's, when the citizens of each ward were required by the city to serve as watchmen (Bristow 36).

In the more recent documentation of the birth of reserve programs came during the World War II era. The local governments used citizens as a standby force in the event of a nuclear or atomic attack (Krueger 40). This seemed to work very well and a great number of law enforcement agencies organized a permanent unit to supplement their regular officers in the early 1950's (Bristow 37). In the late 1960's the concept of police reserves found its way to Dade County Public Safety Department. The reserve units would be selected, screened and given the same kind of background check as

regular officers in accordance with the Florida State standards (Bohardt 9).

As the times grew nearer to the future along came the concern of certain legal aspects of having a reserve program. The first thing a city has to get is an ordinance authorizing a reserve program. They then needed to look into certain compensation issues. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, people who donate their time and service without the expectation of pay are not considered employees (Wallace and Peter 21). Some of the greater issues that arose were the options of workers compensation. In the State of Texas, volunteer police are covered by workers compensation. In addition, by extending workers compensation to the reserve unit, this will raise morale among the officers by showing that the agency and city are concerned with the welfare of their officers (Wallace and Peter 22). This was not the only major concern of many cities and departments. Another issue was training, or the lack of training. An agency can be held liable for failure to train its reserve officers (Pray 2). Courts have found municipalities liable for failing to train in a variety of situations (Wallace and Peter 22). Reserve Officers in the State of Texas are appointed under Section 341.012 of the Local Government Code (Pray 4). Reserve police officers must go through the same rigorous training as a regular police officer. To receive a license, the reserve must go through a 560-hour basic peace officer course. A reserve officer may receive a temporary license after completing the 228-hour basic reserve course and passing the State approved basic reserve exam (Pray 4). The reserve license will expire after two years if the officer does not complete the rest of their academy training within 2 years (Pray 4).

Along with many legal and historical issues there also comes some theoretical

issues facing reserve programs. Most reserve officers who are looking to make a career out of law enforcement view volunteering as a way to get their foot in the door (Weinblatt 19). There are many full time officers who have a common gripe in regards to the reserve pool. One complaint made by regular officers was that the tendency of policing was to attract basically insecure people who were not adequately screened in the recruitment process (Weinblatt 18).

### **Review of Literature and or Practice**

In many respects, there are a great number of agencies around the United States enlisting the help of their reserve officers. In the City of Glendora, California, five reserve officers assigned to the patrol division worked more than 2,000 hours in 1997 (Glendora 1). There are many different divisions in which a reserve officer may occupy, most reserve officers are utilized in the patrol area, but may be used in other areas as listed below:

<b>Division</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Patrol	20	100
Traffic	7	35
Dispatch	5	25
Jail/Corrections	5	25
Investigations	4	20

Specialty Units	3	15
Other	13	65
Special Events	4	20
Training	3	15
Juvenile	2	10
Vice	1	5
Administration	1	5
Mounted Unit	1	5
Marine	1	5

(Spray 6). The reserve officer is filling many voids in agencies where manpower is short and unavailable. The Harris County Constables Office – Pct 6 are currently using 270 volunteers who provide a wide range of duties, listed below:

- Parole Violator Task Force – Executing Felony Warrants
- Patrol Division
- Civil Process
- Community Service



- Communication and Baliff Program
- Misc. Warrant Division

They have also started the absent student assistance program with volunteer deputies which now eight deputies are funded by the Houston ISD (arpolice 1). Along with the issue of which position the reserve officer may fill, comes how much time per month the reserve will need to work per month. The Dallas County Sheriffs Department requires their reservists to work 16 hours per month (arpolice 2). In Nacodoches County Texas all reserve officers must work at least 16 hours per month. The many different areas in which the reserve officer works and along with the hours they put in have become invaluable to departments. In certain departments if a reservists wishes to work additional hours it must be approved by a shift supervisor, in which the supervisor will assign jobs depending on the need of the department on that particular day (Evans 23). With the ever growing popularity of Community Oriented Policing reserve officers may also offer many community based efforts and assistance. In New York City, auxiliary officers are be using to patrol drug infested neighborhoods on foot (Weinblatt 48). The reserve officer has contributed many things to his or her department, the Dade County Department of Public Safety has found that police reserves are an effective method of enlisting the help of citizens to combat crime (Bohardt 15).

The use of reserve officers has enabled administrators to have a great deal of flexibility in the fight against keeping overtime down and covering openings when regular paid officers are out on other events or duties. In addition, they are beneficial

during times of emergencies, are no cost to the taxpayers and can function the same as full time employees (Spray 7). Although many people associate reserve programs with local law enforcement, there has been a federal agency looking into the reserve or auxiliary move. The U.S. Marshals Service has appointed special duties as part timers who are not granted employee benefits (Weinblatt 16).

### **Discussion of Relevant Issues**

During the research of this project there has been many relevant issues facing the police reserve program. This section will show those issues and attempt to explain this to the reader. The key issues seem to be training, cost and benefits to maintain a reserve program.

The training issue seems to be identified, as the reserve officer may not be available when departments conduct their training classes, police administrators must then ensure that the reserve officer receives the training at another time. This requires extra effort on the personnel in a departments training section to schedule training during the times when the reservists are available (Wallace and Peter 22). The issue of training will forever be a question, reserve officers volunteer status engages them in law enforcement activities sporadically. This part time employment raises issues of the effectiveness of any post academy training (Wallace and Peter 22).

The second relevant issue that accompanies reserve programs is the cost issue. Many departments have seen both sides of the cost issue, the financial disadvantage to a police agency utilizing police reserves, includes the cost of training the reserve (Bristow

40). The police administrator must use full time officers to train the reserve officer. On the flip side one advantage of the cost issue is that police administrators may utilize reserve officers to fill open slots when full time employees are out sick or on vacation. This list could go on forever, the chief of police in Selma, North Carolina states that he "has had a tremendous degree of success in these areas: 1) Cost Savings, 2) enhancement in patrol manpower, and 3) establishment of a highly qualified and motivated pool of applicants" (Aragon 274).

The issues of benefits to a reserve officer are very great. Many agencies have given equipment to reserve officers as an incentive to them (Krueger 41).

There has been many reported constraints that go along with having this type of program, Dade County Department of Public Safety reported that four reserve officers lost a total of 112 hours from their full time jobs as a result of injuries received during their service as a reserve officer. The average hours lost per man was 28 (Bohardt 13). Some other constraints that need to be addressed are as follows:

- Regular officers initially distrust reserve police officers.
- Reserve Officers availability is generally limited.
- Reserve Officers may lose interest in the program

(Pray 4).

Some of the larger agencies around the nation that are looking into a reserve program also need to investigate the issue of accreditation. It has been shown that many

agencies have found it difficult to become accredited with a reserve force. The Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc. has set guidelines defining and governing the uses of reserve and auxiliary officers (Weinblatt 103). The COLEA has set many guidelines for departments to abide by that would tend to raise an eyebrow with most administrators looking into this problem. The COLEA has stated "auxiliaries are to be placed in a different category by virtue of less training and authority". "They can't be armed, even with a baton, they must wear a distinctive auxiliary uniform and they possess no more authority than a private citizen" (Weinblatt 103). Many departments have spoke out on this issue stating that they only have three options, listed as follows:

1. Abolish the volunteer unit
2. Change it to fit the commission guidelines
3. Forego accreditation all together

(Weinblatt 103).

The main issue that seems to arise most of the time with all agencies is the cost issue. The main question seems to be, Is this cost effective? What is it going to cost? Will it save the department money? Reserve programs will provide a distinct financial advantage when budget timing becomes a number one priority (Aragon 274). Through research and investigating these issues other than time and energy in planning and organizing phases, there have not been many negative aspects related to the reserve

program (Aragon 274).

### **Conclusion/Recommendations**

The purpose of this policy research paper is to examine the ability of a reserve program for the City of Marshall Creek. The preceding research will aid the city in the decision to adopt this type of program or not to.

As each day, week and year go by in the police field, agencies and municipalities are looking for ways to make departments better efficient and cut cost at the same time. The problems that have been examined in this paper have been cost, training and benefits that a reserve program will provide to a department.

It is the conclusion that although nothing in this world is full proof and problem free, reserve programs have past the test of time and offered many agencies throughout the nation with an effective tool in cutting cost and bettering there departments. One chief stated that he was able to save his city \$50,000 a year by using reserves, while another commented that his reserve officers permitted him to replace regular officers on vacation, on sick leave and non-compensated overtime to a total of 25,000 hours per year (Bristow 40). It is the recommendation of the writer that the rationale use of volunteers in police services, as well as other public services has included the following points:

- Cost Effectiveness
- Better Service to the community

- Citizen Participation

- Source of Recruits

(Sundeen and Siegel 49-50).

With all of the points taken in this research paper the police reserve program should be considered one, if not the best tool that administrators should look into, in this era of decreasing budgets, community oriented policing and low staffing.

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