

**The Bill Blackwood
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**Maximization of Resources:
A Reduction in Crime through an Increase in Awareness**

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**By
Kristofer M. Wirstrom**

**Allen Police Department
Allen, Texas
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ABSTRACT

Much has been written recently about budgetary constraints and the prolonged effect on the quality of police service in the community moving into the future. Research suggests these budgetary constraints are likely permanent, or at least long lasting, and governments must rethink approaches in the manner in which services are provided. While budgets have decreased, the level of service the community demands has increased along with the population. Additionally, the citizenry now tends to hold entire governmental bodies responsible for crime. Crime prevention is no longer solely a law enforcement problem. With this in mind, governments are encouraged to take a much more comprehensive look at service models in an attempt to maximize assets and resources. When considering law enforcement services specifically, a holistic approach to resource allocation and utilization is required.

This leadership white paper documents research published in executive law enforcement professional websites, private studies as well as publications from research by the federal government. This research shows that the utilization of civilian volunteers in accomplishing law enforcement objectives has been a largely successful endeavor. Additionally, this paper asserts that in an effort to move toward better efficiency, all government employees should be utilized, where practical, to combat crime trends affecting the community. Through the process of training current civilian employees, already in the field conducting governmental business, to be first reporters of suspicious activity and crime, governments can better provide safeguarding services to the community and maximize law enforcement effectiveness. This change in the response to crime serves to benefit communities by reducing the time it takes law

enforcement to be notified of a crime, thus shortening the response to crime and potentially reducing the crime rate by making the area unattractive to criminal elements. This will ultimately serve to increase the quality of life in the community and increase support from the population.

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INTRODUCTION

For decades, law enforcement agencies have embraced, and built upon the idea that involving the community in the policing of the community produces a wide array of benefits to both the agency and the community. Sir Robert Peel, largely considered to be the founder of modern policing, introduced nine tenets that were later dubbed “The Peelian Principles” to 1820s Great Britain. These principles have withstood the test of time and remain utilized as the building blocks for community policing initiatives in modern day law enforcement agencies (Nazemi, 2009).

Over time, communities have evolved and the definition of community oriented policing has changed to reflect the current needs of the community. These programs changed dramatically during the civil rights movements of the 1960s, to attempt to ease civil unrest and tension through community participation. Community policing programs in the 1970s were affected by a new academic interest wherein studies were conducted to measure police effectiveness. In the 1980s, theories including the broken window theory were introduced and built upon. Emphasis on problem-oriented policing brought about tools like foot patrol and district assignments to make officers more aware of crime trends in specific areas. A period referred to as the “national reform movement” began in the 1990s and continues to influence current community policing initiatives. This period brought about smaller, task oriented, groups of law enforcement officers that are able to deploy rapidly and react to crime without the confines of traditional organizational impediments (“Police,” n.d.) These practices continue today, changing still to meet the new challenges of life in global economic distress.

Historically, community oriented policing was an ideal that generally included the components of community partnerships, organizational transformation and problem solving. Through this model, community partnerships are strengthened with organizations and groups outside of the law enforcement agency to attempt to gain investment from the community in achieving common objectives and goals. Such groups have traditionally included school districts, religious organizations, businesses and various civic groups, depending on the geographic location of the agency. The most important group engaged in this model is the actual residents of the community. Organizational transformation is an essential component to the success of the community policing model as the infrastructure of the organization may need to be altered to ensure that no internal obstacles for the continued success of such a program exist; and that the proper resources are being directed to the initiatives of the program. Problem solving is another crucial aspect to effective utilization of a community policing program, as many times the problems addressed reach beyond the scope of traditional criminal law enforcement. Problems encountered may include civil code violations, nuisance abatement, animal control issues, and parking violations. The personnel assigned to these tasks need to have the ability, and administrative freedom, to think, and react, unconventionally to achieve viable solutions to problems in the community as they arise (U.S. Department of Justice, n.d.)

As law enforcement capability has evolved, the components of contemporary community policing have adjusted somewhat. Today, they have been referred to as reactive, coactive and proactive. The reactive aspect to contemporary community policing embodies many of the traditional tools available to law enforcement to include

uniformed officers, detectives and investigators, community relations, school resource officers and other resources that are utilized in the completion of calls for service or investigative follow-up. The coercive component includes neighborhood watch groups, community partners and other civic investors in the traditional community policing models. The proactive ideas in the contemporary community policing models include police functions targeted at preventing crime, to include: security surveys, threat analysis and other community outreach efforts (Masterson, 2009).

Legitimate research into the correlation between the implementation of community policing programs by law enforcement and the immediate reduction in crime in a given area remains inconclusive. The reason being, there are an enormous amount of geographical, economical and environmental variables that all effect crime trending and cannot be specifically measured against the success of the community policing program ("Does Community Policing," 2005). However, what is agreed upon is that there is certainly no harm in officers endeavoring to exit the confines of the modern day patrol vehicle to interact with the community personally. The relationships built during such personalized encounters make it more probable that the citizens will work closely with law enforcement when they are affected by crime ("Does Community Policing," 2005). While these programs have been historically successful, law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve are changing drastically due to global economic shifts (Police Executive Research Forum, 2010).

To augment these existing programs, for the success of crime reduction agendas, to further strengthen the bond between the law enforcement agency and the community, and attempt to keep service levels high while budgets shrink, law

enforcement agencies have successfully implemented various civilian volunteer programs. These programs utilize civilian volunteers working with sworn law enforcement officers in a wide array of assignments to accomplish community objectives, and provide the best service possible. Among these programs are Citizens on Patrol. Participating agencies use these groups of trained volunteers to offset the amount of time sworn officers spend on relatively minor tasks. With high amounts of success, law enforcement agencies have harnessed this willing workforce from within the community to increase the amount of time sworn officers spend actually patrolling, without having an impact on already strained budgets (Fassinger, 2012.)

While much progress has been made to change with the times, and anticipate future needs, law enforcement agencies, and local government as a whole, must get smarter to provide the highest level of service possible, while maximizing the community investment of tax dollars. To this end, the inclusion of local government in the community partnerships formed by law enforcement to accumulate resources with which community policing objectives are met is critical. Community policing is not an issue solely for law enforcement agencies any longer. As cited by the U. S. Department of Justice (1994), "Community policing is, in essence, a collaboration between the police and the community that identifies and solves community problems. With the police no longer the sole guardians of law and order, all members of the community become active allies" (p. vii).

Additionally, the citizenry has evolved to hold government, in its entirety, accountable for the safety of the community. In these lean economic times, tax payers are holding government to a higher degree of accountability regarding fiscal

responsibility to ensure that tax dollars are maximized. With this in mind, governmental officials are re-evaluating the methods employed to provide service to maximize efficiency. This paper will assert that in an effort to move toward better efficiency, all government employees should be utilized, where practical, to combat crime trends affecting the community. Given the historic success of utilizing community oriented policing models to combat ever changing crime trends, and the successful implementation of citizen volunteer programs in law enforcement, it is reasonable to infer that training civilian employees already in the field to assist law enforcement in basic community caretaking efforts would be similarly successful.

POSITION

Community policing has transitioned into a law enforcement function as communities and cultures have evolved. It is important to remember that basic community caretaking, the fundamental caring for neighbors and their property, is at the core of community oriented policing models. These ideals that people should be engaged in protecting themselves, their belongings, and their community are older than organized law enforcement and predate community policing. The spirit of volunteerism can be directly attributed to our formation as a fledgling nation in 1776. For it was militia, volunteers from the community, largely untrained farmers, who stood to face the might of the British Army in Lexington and Concord in 1775. It was not until four days after these battles that the Massachusetts Provincial Congress set about to form and fund a regular army (Risch, 1981). The spirit of volunteerism and community commitment remain alive and well today. As reported by Volunteers in Police Service, presently there are approximately 2,180 law enforcement agencies that are utilizing the

services of volunteers to in some way enhance their delivery of services to the community. Additionally, there are approximately 244,000 registered volunteers providing their services to law enforcement agencies (Volunteers in Police Service, 2011).

In a collaborative report titled *Effective Policing and Crime Prevention a Problem-Oriented Guide for Mayors, City Managers, and County Executives* (Plant & Scott, 2009), published by the United States Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, governmental leadership was encouraged to consider the idea that law enforcement alone will not effectively address most public safety concerns (p. 21). Additionally, leadership was urged to understand the role departments including building inspection, code enforcement, economic development, government attorneys, mass transit authorities, mental health, parking enforcement, parks and recreation, planning and community development, public health, public housing, public works, school systems, social services and traffic engineering all play in public safety (Plant & Scott, 2009, p. 22-23). Plant and Scott (2009) further suggested a problem-oriented solution to public safety concerns in the community, and the utilization of all resources available to obtain goals (p. 24-25).

This assertiveness, heightened awareness and commitment to the community, from resources already available can be further enhanced by local government to provide an increased level of service to the community it serves. This type of full-service community policing could reduce opportunities to commit crime, and increase the quality of life in an area. This could provide long-term benefits to the government to include lower crime rate, higher property values, greater community support and

economic advantages in the ability to recruit more businesses seeking to move to areas with lower occurrences of crime.

During the course of any day, during all times of the day and night, governments have assets in the field completing their assigned duties. These assets navigate roadways, parks, neighborhoods, business, school zones, entertainment and retail areas in the furtherance of governmental business in marked vehicles. These are also the areas where crime occurs and vigilance is critical to crime prevention and reduction. Many of the vehicles utilized by these government employees are radio dispatched, providing a built-in means of quick and effective communication. These assets are the governmental departments, listed by Plant and Scott (2009,) that traditionally are not initially considered when addressing public safety issues. Employees in these departments typically greatly outnumber the amount of sworn law enforcement officers on duty at any given time. Further, these civilian employees spend their shifts mingling with the population, on many of the same rotational shifts utilized by law enforcement agencies. To tap this resource and capitalize on their unique ability to move about unnoticed, while in plain view, would be an immeasurable force multiplier in the aspect of observing and reporting suspicious activity.

The process of increasing public safety efficiency through the combination of knowledge gained through decades of community oriented policing programs and the utilization of civilian law enforcement volunteers is simplified as the resources needed for training and mobilizing non-sworn governmental employees to further law enforcement objectives already exists. As these are civilian, non-sworn personnel, the same curriculum offered to citizen volunteers in police service would be applicable and

provide a basic place to start. Such a program could be tailored specifically as this group of employees will not actually complete law enforcement tasks as volunteers in policing traditionally have.

With the influx of citizen workers and volunteers in law enforcement, many agencies have previously established training programs and allotted resources for the continued sustainability of these citizen training endeavors. To establish a basic program directed to current civilian employees, in periodic increments, would have a negligible effect on strained police budgets as the resources previously exist and are already being deployed. Emphasis during these short training sessions should be placed on not taking any enforcement action, yet providing tips for taking detailed descriptions of suspicious persons and vehicles. The objective is to create trained field reporters, not first responders. Sharing releasable briefing data regarding problem areas and crime trends could be beneficial as the ability of this group of workers to move about the community unnoticed is an immeasurable asset that is difficult to replicate.

Another benefit to this program is that many of these civilian employees are known to officers on the street and an established rapport already exists. With these groups of employees already collaborating on governmental business in the course of their daily routines, engaging in dialogue on reporting suspicious activity is simple. The lines of communication already exist. The information exchanged merely needs to be encouraged, enhanced and used to maximum potential.

COUNTER POSITION

Opposition to the implementation of such a community program is likely to come from several points of view. One will likely be that every governmental department, not just law enforcement, is redefining itself during these tough budgetary times.

Department heads will likely assert that their personnel are also attempting to accomplish more with reduced resources and simply do not have the time. In a report published by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (Oliff, Mai, & Palacios, 2012) large financial shortfalls will continue to be a stark reality for states in future fiscal year budgeting, at least through fiscal years 2013 and 2014.

One of the benefits of the implementation of this program is that heightening awareness while moving about the community does not take government employees off task. In January 2011, The Department of Homeland Security released a new initiative to combat domestic terrorism. The slogan for the campaign was "If you see something, say something" (n.d.). No civilian action beyond that is necessary for the successful implementation of this program. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Napolitano said during kick-off of this initiative "Security is a shared responsibility and each citizen has a role to play in identifying and reporting suspicious activities and threats" ("If you see," n.d.). Having trained observers in the field will give law enforcement the opportunity to be more effective and efficient in the response to suspicious person calls, and should not affect the government's ability to provide services in other areas. While the impetus of this Department of Homeland Security program is to increase the intelligent response to potential terroristic activity, it stands to

reason that if this type of community involvement is effective in the domestic war on terror, it should be equally effective in reducing community based crimes.

Some opponents to this program may assert that it is not totally budget neutral, in that some documentable expense may be identified in the implementation process. While this may be technically accurate, the increase in expense is likely to be mathematically insignificant. There are a number of sunk costs factored into the implementation of this program. The government is already absorbing the costs of employee salaries and benefits, as well as the costs associated with vehicle acquisition, maintenance and fuel. Any new costs associated with the implementation of this program come in the form of the time it will take to establish training. These expenses are relatively minor when compared to the enormity of the entire governmental budget, and can be easily accommodated. There is also potential for a high return of investment in that career criminals can be efficiently removed from areas where they intend to do harm.

Still some, from within law enforcement, will argue that implementation of such a program will increase calls for service and only serve to immediately increase workload. To combat evolving crime trends, law enforcement has established many avenues for the reporting of tips from citizens over the years. As the times have changed, these have transitioned from telephone based reporting from groups like Crime Stoppers and Neighborhood Watch to computer based forums operating through various web applications, including law enforcement agency websites. Federally, the National Suspicious Activity Reporting Initiative exists to be a large repository for information to be utilized by law enforcement. The National Suspicious Activity Reporting Initiative

website indicated, "This initiative provides law enforcement with another tool to help prevent terrorism and other related criminal activity by establishing a national capacity for gathering, documenting, processing, analyzing, and sharing SAR information" (www.nsi.ncirc.gov). To manage the increase in fast moving, real time, information, law enforcement has adapted in an attempt to become more agile. Agencies have begun to implement fusion centers and other data mining resources to consume this raw data and glean from it actionable intelligence that can be quickly disseminated. In so doing, it has been learned that there will inevitably be some information obtained that has little actionable value. Conversely, it has also been learned that some tips trigger investigations that culminate in major arrests and numerous cases solved. Much has been written indicating that these systems work, and work better when the amount of information fed into them is significant. The principle at work is that the more information coming in provides better actionable intelligence going out. The investigative benefits of tips solicited from the community clearly outweigh the operational burden caused by responding to them.

RECOMMENDATION

Many economic influences in the world have profoundly affected governmental budgets and have forced law enforcement agencies to reassess priorities and resource allocation. In 2011, The Congressional Budget Office forecasted that the national deficit will approach \$20 Trillion U.S. Dollars within the next ten years (CBO Report, 2011.) As this forecast is a year old, and this number is already greater than \$16 Trillion U. S. Dollars, it is likely to expect this will occur sooner. The result will include a reduction federal spending in the law enforcement community. A consequence is that it

is time to accept that local government budgets, to include local law enforcement, will remain lean for the foreseeable future. In an effort to maximize services in the area of community based policing initiatives, a holistic approach to the maximization of resources must be considered. In a consider everything environment, it makes sense to utilize previously existing resources that are already deployed to strengthen communities and make them unattractive for the criminal element to operate and thrive within.

These assets are already paid for; using them to the fullest potential maximizes return on the investment and has a negligible impact on the budget. Many of the resources needed to establish a program where civilian employees are trained to spot and report suspicious activity already exist and are being used with documented success in the form of citizen volunteers in law enforcement. Empowering civilian government workers in the community to be trained field observers of potential criminal activity is simple and requires only the application of a little time and effort.

The counterpoints to establishing this type of program, while legitimate, are easily refuted as there is documented evidence to support that the utilization of the community in the policing of the community is effective, and returns large dividends to the government in the form of community support and satisfaction. Beyond that, the trend for residents of a community to hold the entirety of the governing body responsible for increased crime rates is going to eventually foster an environment for this type of program. Considering that most of the start-up expense in a project like this is already being absorbed in the costs associated with running a government, it is difficult to justify citing the expense of such a program as grounds not to participate.

It is recommended that law enforcement agencies, large and small, consider all of the resources already available to them when considering how to provide the greatest amount of service possible to the community. There is an opportunity to capitalize upon the utilization of a readily available force already at work in areas where citizens are being impacted by crime.

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