

Strategic Plan for 2013-2017





Keeping Amherst Safe and Secure *Planning and Budgeting for the Future* 



Mission ~ Vision

### **MISSION**

In partnership with the citizens of Amherst, to lead by example as we further the quality of life in town  $\sim by \sim$ 

Delivering quality service to the public with compassion and respect whenever called upon

Enforcing the laws of our town, state, and country in a firm, fair, and impartial manner

Maintaining a reputation built upon commitment, professionalism, and uncompromising ethics

### **VISION**

To stand as a symbol of excellence in the eyes of the community and our peers while adhering to our core values and principles

Courage ~ Fairness ~ Integrity ~ Partnerships ~ Professionalism



Executive Summary

Beginning in June of 2013, the Amherst Police Department undertook the development of a Strategic Plan alongside other Amherst town departments in an effort to improve the level of services to our community. The development of this plan prompted our agency to put forward an initiative which had been previously considered but never put into action: a community survey. Three hundred Amherst households were randomly selected to assess the quality of our police services. Though each household was randomly selected, the overall process was structured to ensure that representative samples were drawn from virtually every neighborhood in town, and not just from select geographical areas. The feedback from these surveys has helped to identify not only the public's perception of our agency, but has also served to identify those areas of concern that are most important to our citizens. The Department has used the results of this survey to help shape the goals which form the basis of our Strategic Plan, and we will continue to utilize and refine the community survey process in the years to come.

The goals of our Strategic Plan have also been tied to the Town of Amherst Master Plan, which is a multi-year document aimed at identifying policies and actions for managing future growth and changes, while still preserving the unique heritage of our community. Further, our strategic goals are based upon an internal S.W.O.T. analysis of our department, where <u>Strengths</u>, <u>Weaknesses</u>, <u>Opportunities</u>, and <u>Threats</u> have been recognized and used to help formulate the direction of our initiatives. Finally, the development of these strategic goals has also relied upon our own knowledge of the best practices of law enforcement agencies, as well as being based upon comparisons with similarly sized communities in New Hampshire. The information derived from these sources has led to the development of a clearly defined Strategic Plan –a plan which will be continually reviewed to help ensure that our department is focusing its attention and resources on the objectives that are most important to the community, and to the professional growth of our agency.

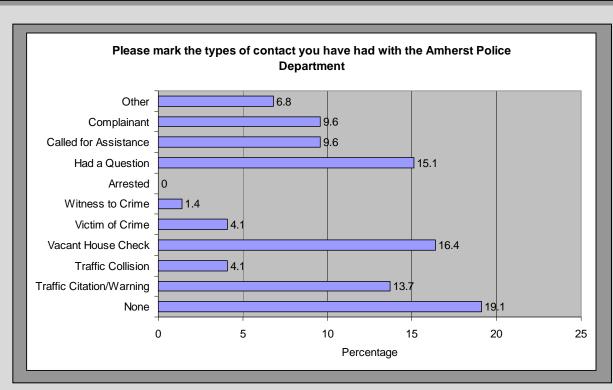
Alongside the initiatives contained within this Strategic Plan, the Amherst Police Department will strive in the coming years to:

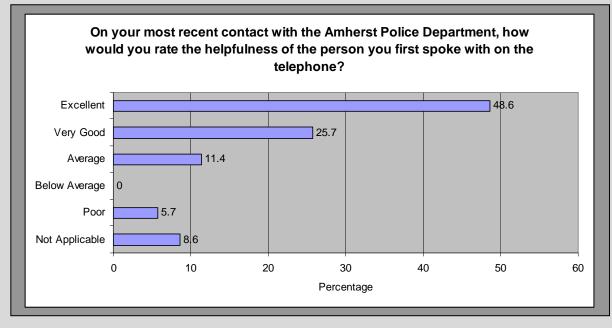
- ~ Strengthen partnerships with Amherst's citizens, businesses, and community organizations
- ~ Implement procedures to help diminish the level of burglary and related property crimes
- ~ Reduce traffic collision and injury rates through dedicated traffic enforcement practices
- ~ Encourage continued program development and collaboration with our schools
- ~ *And*, provide increased overall police visibility throughout our town to help deter criminal activity... *Keeping Amherst Safe and Secure*.

Sincerely, Mark O. Reams, Chief of Police



2013 Community Survey

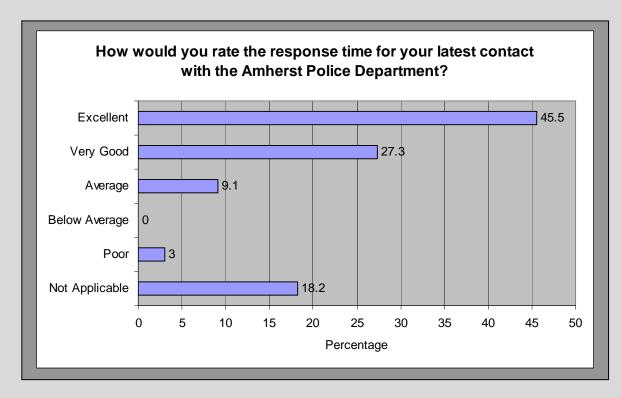






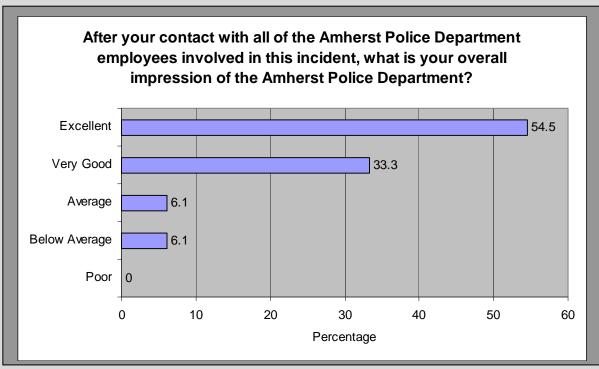
Community Survey, Cont.

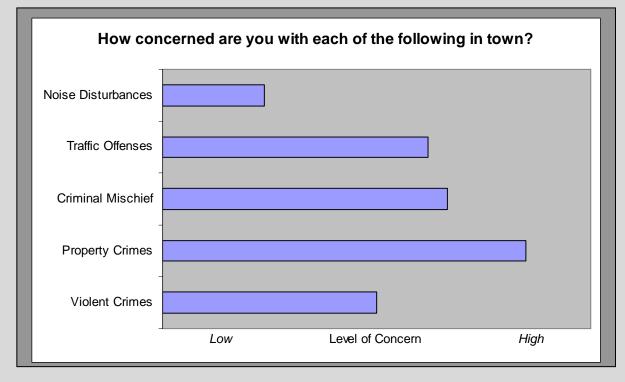






Community Survey, Cont.

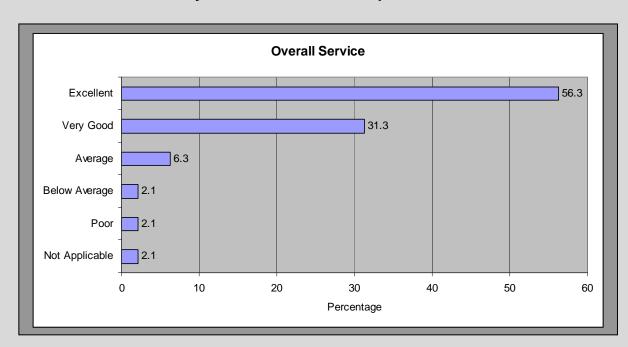


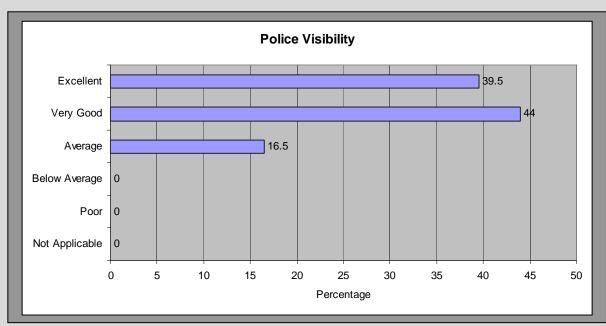




Community Survey, Cont.

### Please rate the following services provided by the Amherst Police Department:



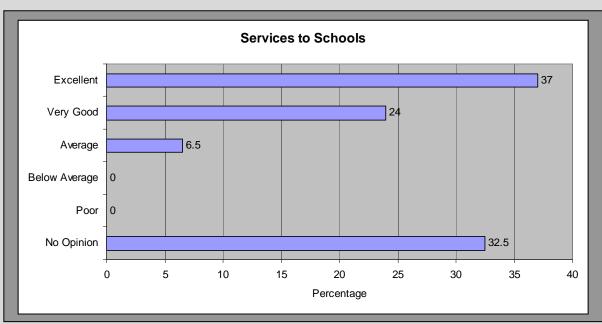




Community Survey, Cont.

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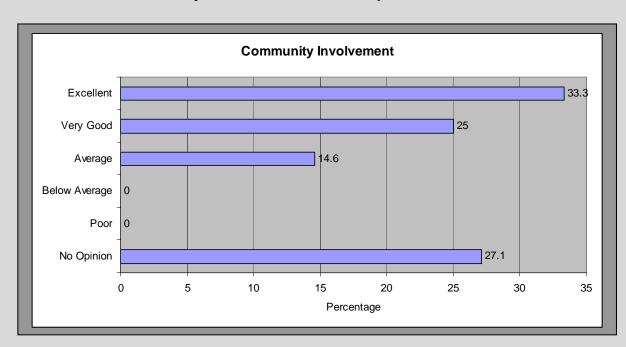


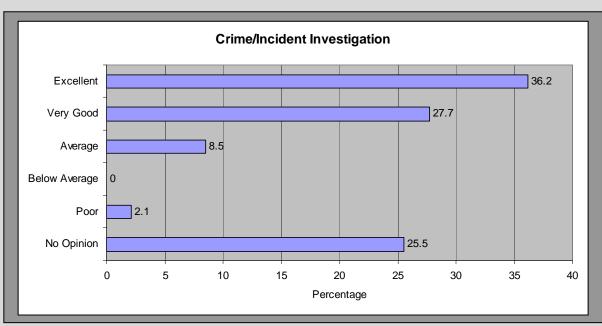




Community Survey, Cont.

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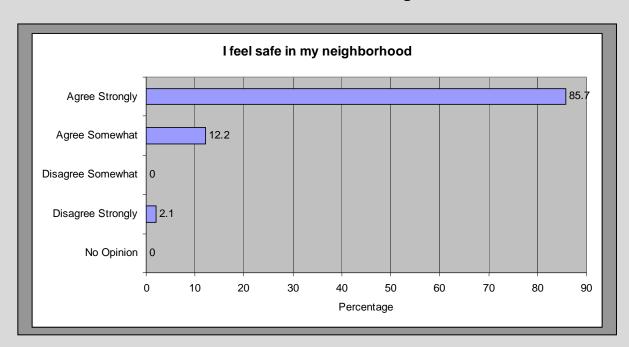


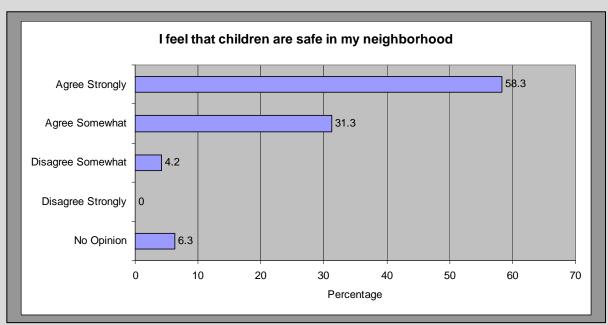




Community Survey, Cont.

### Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following:

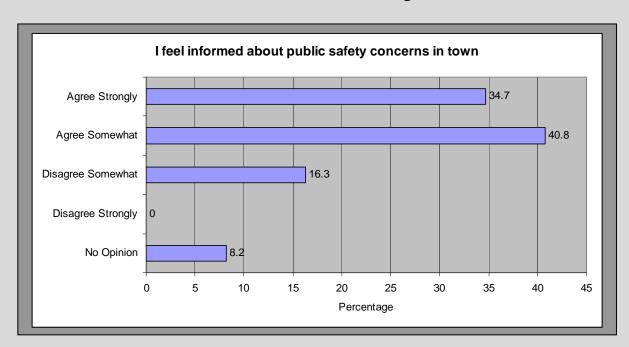


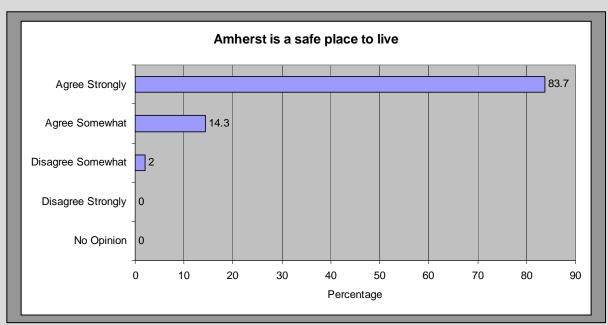




Community Survey, Cont.

### Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following:







Summary of Annual Activity

POLICE				
	2009	2010	2011	2012
Miles of Patrol	239,680	236,142	239,427	229,159
MV Crashes	380	359	380	331
Injuries	58	33	35	31
Fatalities	0	0	0	1
Arrests	486	417	539	470
Adult	390	324	444	430
Juvenile	96	93	95	40
Total Crimes	1269	1092	1288	1104
Arson	1	1	2	2
Assaults	70	49	64	35
Criminal Threatening	30	31	17	13
Criminal Mischief	157	106	94	84
Burglary	27	38	32	17
Criminal Trespass	11	17	27	10
Disorderly Conduct	9	6	14	5
Drug Violations	71	107	103	117
Drunkenness	25	29	22	14
DWI	37	42	57	55
Fraud/Forgery	88	65	80	70
Homicide	0	1	0	0
Liquor Law Violations	51	54	48	44
Sexual Assaults	5	3	5	15
Stolen Motor Vehicle	3	4	1	4
Thefts	192	169	249	215
Robbery	1	1	2	0
Traffic Stops	13,458	9,556	11,628	10,173
Incidents				
Alarm Calls	539	616	643	588
Animal Complaints	406	355	424	331
Assist Motorists	483	413	474	391
Building Checks	18,504	18,500	23,762	24,538
Directed Patrols	8,980	7,701	8,520	8,193
Disturbances	96	109	111	84
Vehicle Complaints	449	470	549	491
Pistol Permits	136	147	146	175
Police Service	1,339	965	459	895
Suspicious Activity	421	462	386	383



Organizational Overview

The Amherst Police Department proudly serves the town of Amherst, a quaint yet vibrant community of approximately 12,000 residents spread over an area of nearly 35 square miles. The Department strives to remain a progressive and innovative agency with a strong emphasis on the development of community relationships, ethical decision making, and the delivery of quality services to our town.

The Department is comprised of a full-time staff of 18 officers and one executive assistant who serve a variety of functions within two divisions: the Support Division, and the Operations Division. The Support Division consists of one lieutenant, two detectives, and two school resource officers. Within the Support Division, the lieutenant serves not only as the detective supervisor, but also as the Department's prosecutor for all violation and misdemeanor level offenses in the 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit, Milford District Court. The trend for many New Hampshire police departments over recent years has been to hire civilian attorneys to handle the prosecution of district court cases. Our Department maintains a proud history of selecting and training personnel to fill this role to a degree that is on par the abilities of civilian district court prosecutors, without the added expense of hiring a private attorney –and we intend to continue that tradition.

Alongside the prosecutor, our detectives are not only investigating criminal offenses, but are proactively involved with interagency networking, presentation of felony level cases to the Hillsborough County Grand Jury for indictment, and the coordination of services to juveniles, victims, and witnesses. One of our detectives is also a member of the Department's Technical Crash Investigation (TAR) team and is available for callout to investigate and reconstruct serious motor vehicle collisions at any time of day or night.

The Department's two school resource officers (SRO's) also fall within the Support Division. For nearly a decade, the Department has maintained one SRO at the Amherst Middle School, and one at the Souhegan High School. The SRO's are valued assets in their schools, and have established vital relationships with staff, students, and parents which allow them to provide the best services possible. Not only are our SRO's on site during the school day, but they frequently host evening training sessions with parents regarding topics such as internet safety and drug abuse issues.

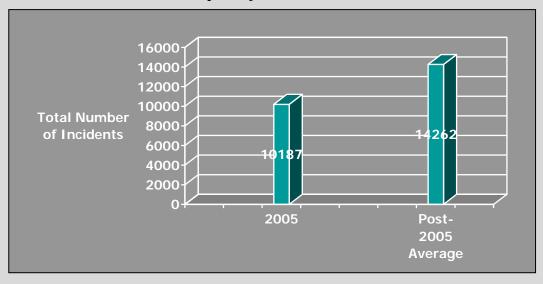


Organizational Overview, Cont.

The Operations Division is tasked with handling day-to-day patrol functions in town, with a lieutenant supervising a staff of two sergeants and nine patrolmen. The officers of the Operations Division are on patrol 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and are prepared to respond to any citizen call for service. In a typical day, our patrolmen perform a variety of functions which include: investigating motor vehicle collisions; conducting security and safety checks of vacant homes, businesses, banks, and schools; arresting criminal offenders; responding to medical emergencies; enforcing traffic regulations; and checking on the welfare of elderly or disabled residents who may have no family nearby. Over the years, our patrol division has performed just about every service that one might imagine.

The Operations Division has been understaffed for some time when compared with comparably-sized communities, and has not seen an increase in personnel since 1998 due to budgetary considerations. The Department's need for additional personnel has been further exacerbated by rising activity levels. The development of the Route 101A business district alone has resulted in the need for a 40% increase in police services since 2005. In order to meet this increased need for police services along the Route 101A corridor, our officers are forced to spend less time in the residential areas of town. The Department will seek to hire additional officers in the coming years to help ensure that all areas of town have adequate and dedicated patrol coverage.

#### Increase in Services Required for the Route 101A Business District





Organizational Overview, Cont.

The trend for police agencies over the last few decades has been to focus on *community policing*; the building of partnerships with the community wherein police and citizens communicate and work together to address concerns and solve problems. The ideal community policing model relies on the presence of densely populated city neighborhoods –neighborhoods to which Community Policing Officers are permanently assigned in order to help better understand the concerns of residents, business owners, and community groups. These officers then act as "mini police chiefs" to help solve problems within their individual neighborhoods. Like most New Hampshire towns, Amherst has a small population that is spread out over a large area, which is not conducive to the true community policing model. As a result, the Department must approach community policing in a broader fashion.

Over the years, the Amherst Police Department has initiated several programs which are rooted in community policing:

- <u>Good Morning Amherst:</u> Elderly or physically impaired individuals call in every morning to verify that they are well. If they fail to call in by the specified time, the dispatcher calls to make sure everything is alright. If the dispatcher cannot get in touch with the resident, then an officer is sent to the home.
- <u>Property Checks:</u> At the request of residents who are away on vacation or otherwise out of the area, officers conduct physical security checks of the home and contact the homeowner in the event that anything is out of the ordinary.
- <u>Special House Checks</u>: Provided for families that are departing either on weekends or for longer periods of time, and who are leaving young adults or children at home. Officers periodically check the home, and will contact the owner if anything appears out of order. The procedure has dramatically reduced underage and unauthorized house parties when parents are not home.
- <u>Security Inspections:</u> Offered to homeowners to help identify deficiencies in home security, and reduce the possibility of a break-in.
- *Fingerprinting:* Officers will fingerprint residents, free of charge, for employment or for personal retention purposes.
- <u>John T. Osborn Memorial Scholarship:</u> An annual scholarship in memory of a former Amherst Chief of Police which is awarded to a Souhegan High School Senior who plans to study Criminal Justice at a college or university.



Organizational Overview, Cont.

In addition to those longstanding programs, the Department has instituted the following community oriented initiatives in 2013:

- <u>School Safety Checks:</u> The Department and school staff met to address concerns over incidents of school violence across the country. At random times during the school day, uniformed officers visit the Clark and Wilkins schools to conduct a brief security check. Not only is the officer presence helpful from a safety standpoint, but students and staff have a daily opportunity to meet with the police to discuss and questions or concerns that might have arisen. It also gives students an opportunity to become familiar with the police long before their arrival at the middle school.
- <u>School Book Reading:</u> The Department coordinated with school teachers to help further the relationship between police, staff, and students by organizing a reading program. Periodically throughout the school year, uniformed officers will sit down with younger students and read a book to the class.



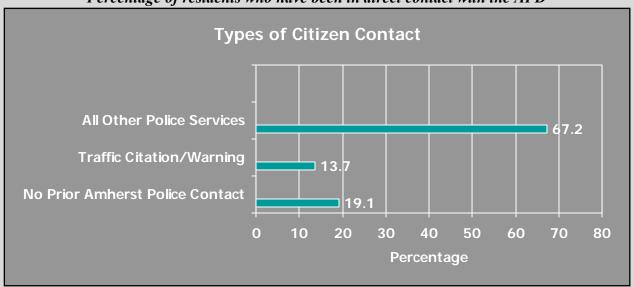
- <u>Bike Safety Recognition:</u> The Department partnered with Tastee Kone Ice Cream, LLC, to help recognize and encourage safe biking behavior. Officers look for children who are wearing their bicycle helmets and riding safely, and hand out coupons which are valid for a free Tastee Kone ice cream.
- <u>Rape Agression Defense (R.A.D.) Training:</u> A self-defense program for women of all ages, taught by the Department's certified R.A.D. instructors. The free program is presented over the course of several weeks, with the first program beginning in July of 2013. The program teaches self-empowerment and can be life changing.



Organizational Overview, Cont.

Over the coming years, the Amherst Police Department will continue to implement community programs which help to form relationships with the citizens of Amherst –keeping in mind that true community policing is not just a series of programs, but rather, a *philosophy* which provides the foundation for these initiatives and encourages citizen contact with the Department. Based upon the Department's 2013 random survey, 67% of those surveyed sought, or were involved with, some type of police service provided by the Amherst Police Department.

Percentage of residents who have been in direct contact with the APD



The Amherst Police Department has developed a strategic plan for the future, which emphasizes goals and initiatives based upon:

- Goals identified in the Town of Amherst Master Plan which apply to the Amherst Police Department
- •Citizen feedback from the Department's recent community survey
- •Best known practices of law enforcement agencies
- •An analysis of the Department's <u>Strengths</u>, <u>Weaknesses</u>, <u>Opportunities</u>, and <u>Threats</u> (S.W.O.T.)



Sources of Goal Development

#### Town of Amherst Master Plan

• The Master Plan identifies several goals for the Department, including the management of speeds on local roads, a new state of the art and more adequate police facility, and contributing to an increase in the overall quality of life in town

#### Community Survey

- Feedback gained from random sample of 300 Amherst households throughout town
- 88% rating of Very Good to Excellent for overall police services
- Foremost citizen safety concern being with property crime (burglary, fraud, etc.)
- Closely ranked second/third are concerns with criminal mischief (graffiti, vandalism, etc.) and traffic safety (speeding, DWI, etc.)
- Communication of safety concerns/trends to the public was identified as an area with room for improvement

#### Best Practices of Law Enforcement Agencies

- Based upon known procedures in professional police agencies
- Based upon U.S. Department of Justice data and NH municipal comparisons
- Federal data based on towns with populations of 10,000-24,999
- New Hampshire data based upon towns with populations of 10,000-15,000

#### Departmental S.W.O.T. Analysis

- *STRENGTHS* include employee screening/hiring process, reputation in NH law enforcement community, traffic enforcement, services to schools, community involvement, equipment, general investigation, professional reputation in community
- WEAKNESSES include lack of clerical support, property room inventory management, aging/inadequate facilities, undercover/specialized investigations
- *OPPORTUNITIES* include improvement of information flow to citizens, expansion of quality in-service officer training options, continued building of media relations, expansion of community programs, increasing officer visibility to deter property crimes, vandalism, and traffic violations
- *THREATS* include the uncertainty of budget/program funding, employee retention, and staying abreast of the technology curve



Community Services

#### GOAL #1

Provide Improved Communication and Community Services to the Citizens of Amherst

#### Strategic Initiatives for Goal #1:

#### • Continue to develop and implement community survey

- Seek ongoing feedback to help continually identify the Department's strengths and areas for improvement
- Refine and improve survey process toward wider community base *ADDITIONAL COST: None*

#### • Improve Department website

- Finalize consolidation of Department's independent website with Town of Amherst website
- Improve overall website to accurately reflect current Department programs and resources
- Develop information delivery mechanism (e.g., crime mapping) to help update public on safety concerns/trends in town

ADDITIONAL COST: None

#### Increase availability of community programs

- R.A.D. (Rape Aggression Defense) self-defense program for women initiated summer of 2013, with more registered participants than spaces available
- o Department currently maintaining a waiting list for future programs
- Additional male and female R.A.D. programs (e.g., for the elderly) available with further equipment and instructor development
- Purchase training equipment necessary for Department to broaden class offerings and availability to the public

ADDITIONAL COST: \$4,100 in FY15 only



Professional Development

#### GOAL #2

Increase Quality and Level of Officer Training to Maintain Professional Standards and Address Community Concerns

#### Strategic Initiatives for Goal #2:

#### • Increase in-service officer training hours

- New Hampshire Police Academy minimum requirement of 8 hours per officer each year
- Current Department average of 35 hours per officer each year
- o Increase yearly average to 40 hours per officer
- o Increased funding required for specialized off-site training (i.e., not @ NH Police Academy) as training offerings are limited for senior officers
- Quality training to help address Department's need for specialized investigative skills in areas such as burglary and fraud investigation which are offenses of particular concern to the community

ADDITIONAL COST: \$1,500 annually, beginning in FY15

### • Graduate all Department command staff from the Command Training Institute, Roger Williams University

- Command Training Program endorsed by the New England Association of Chiefs of Police –the preeminent police training program in New England
- Department's first line (Sergeant) and mid-management (Lieutenants) have typically attended program beginning in 2000
- Current training budget is insufficient to insure timely program completion (i.e., within six months of promotion)
- •Recent Department reorganization has resulted in backlog of senior staff members awaiting training (i.e., two Sergeants and one Lieutenant)
- o Increased training budget allows the Department to meet this goal, resulting in a staff better trained in overall agency management and community policing *ADDITIONAL COST:* \$3,000 in FY15 only



Department Operations

### GOAL #3

Improve Department Efficiency and Patrol Area Coverage

#### Strategic Initiatives for Goal #3:

#### • Increase full-time clerical staff

• Current Executive Assistant handles payroll, secretary to Chief, secretary to Prosecutor, software/computer maintenance and support (including support to the Fire Department and Communications Center), and records management

o Comparable NH agencies employ average of 2.7 full-time positions

ADDITIONAL COST: \$75,200 annually, beginning in FY15

#### • Improve property room inventory management

- Both secure and non-secure property rooms in need of reorganization and inventory reduction
- Prior reliance on live auctions and/or no reduction action taken
- Develop inventory reduction procedure to include possible use of bulk inventory reduction companies (e.g., propertyroom.com)

ADDITIONAL COST: None

#### Increase full-time police officer staff

- o Currently 18 FT officers, with no patrol positions added since 1998
- Department @ 1.5 officers per 1000 residents, while national and state average (of comparably sized communities) is 1.8 per 1000
- o Department staffing should be a minimum of 21.6 full-time officers
- o Improved officer visibility and increased neighborhood coverage

ADDITIONAL COST: \$82,500 per officer beginning with one in FY15

#### • Participate in Attorney General's Drug Task Force

- o Comprised of representatives from police departments across NH
- o Amherst has never participated
- Temporary assignment, provides necessary training to conduct Department undercover operations

ADDITIONAL COST: None



Facilities and Equipment

### GOAL #4 Improve Facilities and Equipment

#### Strategic Initiatives for Goal #4:

#### • Replace undercover vehicle

- Current vehicle used for undercover operations is 14 years old
- o Recently repainted to inhibit rust, but showing signs of age
- Anticipate mechanical issues and general deterioration to warrant replacement within the next few years

ADDITIONAL COST: \$20,000 in FY16 only (this expenditure not anticipated again until 2026)

#### Expand and renovate building facilities

- Current police station houses emergency medical services (lower level) and the police department (upper level)
- o Structure built in 1980, with renovations in 1996
- o Police department occupies roughly 5,000 sq. ft.
- o Police stations in comparable communities average 12,000 sq. ft.
- Current police department accommodations tight but serviceable
- Addition of a full-time clerical position will result in loss of victim/witness room, and no further remaining office space at all
- Master Plan mentions possibility of emergency medical services moving to renovated space at the fire department
- o Intensify feasibility study of emergency medical services relocation, freeing up vital space on lower level for police use
- Alternatively, explore finishing current police department's 3<sup>rd</sup> floor to gain temporary, modest space relief

ADDITIONAL COST: To be determined, beyond FY18



# Town of Amherst PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS CENTER

#### • <u>Goal:</u> Upgrade radio communications equipment

- o Continue with phase 1 and 2 of current infrastructure upgrade
- o Includes installation of new microwave transmission equipment at USAF Tracking Station, simulcast dispatch radio programming, and dispatch consoles **ADDITIONAL COST:** \$11,000 in FY14

#### • Goal: Improve telephone caller satisfaction rating

- Recent community survey showed citizen satisfaction rating of 81% in combined <u>Very Good</u> and <u>Excellent</u> categories for telephone calls made to the communications (dispatch) center
- o Accompanying ratings of 13% Average and 6% Poor

ADDITIONAL COST: None

#### • Goal: Develop standard operating procedures (SOP) manual

- Task-oriented guidelines currently in place for routine communications center operations, but no overall polices/procedure manual exists
- Evaluate model policies from various sources (e.g., International Association of Chiefs of Police) and adapt/develop policies for Amherst dispatch purposes **ADDITIONAL COST: None**

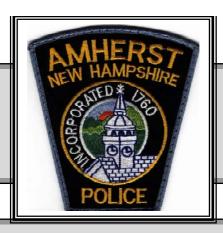
### • <u>Goal:</u> Increase and maintain yearly capital reserve fund (CRF) for long term future communication center repairs and upgrades

- o Among current anticipated projects beyond 2017 include replacement of existing primary radio tower in 2020, and replacement of communications consoles in 2023 @ estimated \$180,000 for both projects alone
- o Partial grant funding likely but not guaranteed
- Maintain & review yearly CRF contribution of \$15,000 to cover major projects and repairs **ADDITIONAL COST: None**

#### • <u>Goal:</u> Increase yearly in-service dispatcher training hours

- o Dispatchers currently average 8 hours in-service training annually
- Increase average to 16 hours in-service training annually to better adapt to changing trends and developments in the communications field
- o Meet dispatcher certification guidelines for compliance with fire suppression insurance reviews that arise during Insurance Service Office (ISO) evaluations

ADDITIONAL COST: \$2,000 annually, beginning in FY15



FY15 Budget Impact Projections

### **POLICE DEPARTMENT**

FY14 Adopted Budget	Projected FY1	<u>% Increase</u>		
\$2,186,325	\$2,178,302		37%	
Proposed Initiatives	<u>Cost</u>	Adjusted Budget	<u>% Increase</u>	
Scenario #1:				
Full time Clerical	\$74,753			
New Equipment	\$4,100			
Training Increases	\$4,500			
Total:	\$83,353	\$2,261,655	+ 3.45%	
Scenario #2:				
Full Time Clerical	\$74,753			
New Equipment	\$4,100			
Training Increases	\$4,500			
Full Time Officer	\$82,375			
Total:	\$165,728	\$2,344,030	+ 7.21%	

### **COMMUNICATIONS CENTER**

FY14 Adopted Budget	Proposed FY	<u>%Increase</u>	
\$373,797	\$378,493		+ 1.26%
<u>Proposed Initiatives</u>	<u>Cost</u>	Adjusted Budget	<u>% Increase</u>
Training Increase	\$2,000		
Total:	\$2,000	\$380,493	+ 1.79%
			Page 23



Fiscal Impact Beyond FY15

### Projected Budget Comparison \*FY15 through FY17

#### POLICE DEPARTMENT

<u>FY 15</u> <u>FY 16</u> <u>FY 17</u>

**BUDGET**: \$2,344,030 \$2,439,798 \$2,557,678

**INCREASE:** 7.21% 4.10% 4.83%

#### **COMMUNICATIONS CENTER**

 $\underline{FY15} \qquad \underline{FY16} \qquad \underline{FY17}$ 

**BUDGET**: \$380,493 \$389,490 \$399,149

<u>INCREASE</u>: 1.79% 2.36% 2.48%

<sup>\*</sup>Figures include costs of yearly wage increases and all proposed strategic initiatives for that given year



Five Year Calendar

POLICE	FY	FY	FY	FY	FY
	14	15	<i>16</i>	17	18
Goals 1.1-1.3					
Strengthen Services to the Community					
1.1 Continue to develop and implement community survey		X	X	X	X
1.2 Improve Department website	X	X	X	X	X
1.3 Increase delivery of community programs		X			
Goals 2.1-2.2					
Increase Quality and Level of Officer Training					
2.1 Increase in-service officer training hours		X			
2.2 Graduate all Department command staff from					
Command Training Institute, Roger Williams University		X			
Goals 3.1-3.4					
Improve Internal Department Operations					
3.1 Increase full-time clerical staff		X			
3.2 Improve property room inventory management	X				
3.3 Increase full-time police officer staff		X		X	
3.4 Participate in New Hampshire Attorney General's Drug					X
Task Force					
Goals 4.1-4.2					
Improve Facilities and Equipment			<b>T</b> Z		
4.1 Expand and renovate building facilities (i.e., complete			X		
feasibility study of emergency medical service relocation)			X		
4.2 Replace undercover vehicle			Λ		
Goals 5.1-5.5					
Amherst Public Safety Communications Center					
5.1 Upgrade communications center equipment					
5.2 Improve telephone caller satisfaction rating		X	X	X	X
5.3 Develop standard operating procedures (SOP) manual		X			
5.4 Maintain CRF for long term capital improvements		X	X	X	X
5.5 Increase yearly in-service dispatcher training hours		X			