Amherst NH Town Government

Amherst Police Department and Communications Center

Strategic Plan Review

September 11, 2023

MISSION

Protect the lawful rights, freedoms, and safety of all in our community with compassion, fairness, and respect

VISION

Further enhance accountability, transparency, and effectiveness in the delivery of services

Strategic Agency Goals *

- Initiatives tied to goals aimed at improving public safety and maintaining overall level of service to the community:
  - *Maintain professional policing standards*
  - *Increase traffic safety along town roads and through residential areas*
  - *Reduce neighborhood property crime*

** The Department initiated random, biennial community surveys in 2013 to obtain feedback on issues concerning the community to help develop goals and initiatives to better apply police services. Five surveys have been conducted over the course of the last ten years. Survey feedback has remained very consistent to the extent that the agency will be looking at alternate survey methods in the coming year to enhance that information and feedback gathering process.*

S.W.O.T Analysis: *Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats*

- Strengths
  - Employee screening/hiring process, neighborhood safety, services to schools, infrastructure longevity, community survey practices, accident and criminal investigations
- Weaknesses
  - District Court prosecutor role succession and recruitment/retention
- Opportunities
  - Enhancing transparency and accountability
- Threats
  - Budget funding challenges, staying abreast of the technology curve

Goal #1: *Maintain professional policing standards*

- Agency standing and perception tied in large part to maintaining recognized professional policing practices
- Current police station renovation plan was central to maintaining and building upon professional policing level of service
- Phase I of building renovation finished January 2021
- Phase II was completed following our last strategic plan update last fall
- Finishing touches were completed this past spring 2023
- Renovated facility anticipated to meet the needs of the police department and community for the next 30 years.
- Facility now meets current and anticipated demands for space and community services

Goal #1: *continued…*

- Alongside infrastructure improvements, the Department has pursued and obtained grant funding and Selectmen support for Body Worn Camera implementation
- Supply chain issues have recently improved and the camera system shipped several months earlier than anticipated and is due to be integrated into the Department's IT system in the coming weeks
- The Town's grant application for the maximum allowable state grant of $50,000 was approved and accepted
- The five-year, all-inclusive BWC contract cost is $124,871 which reflects a roughly $40,000 savings from the figures presented during the Department's strategic plan review one year ago
  - $33,815 payable in year one
  - Remaining payments of $22,764 in for the remaining four years
  - Followed by multi-year contract renewal, or continuation on yearly basis
- BWC implementation is integral to the Department's vision statement commitment to *further enhance transparency and accountability*

Goal #1: *continued…*

- Department vision also focused upon maintaining *effectiveness* in delivery of police services
- Staffing shortage brought on by retirements (5 vacancies as of Nov. 1) will require considerable effort to acquire qualified employees in a diminutive applicant pool
- Interviews are underway and 3 conditional offers will be in place soon
- Primary focus is continued and future effectiveness of district court case prosecution
- New Hampshire statute allows for police officers to act as prosecutors in district court, not requiring that they be NH BAR certified attorneys
- Amherst has always utilized police-prosecutors since the agency's inception
- In recent years, departments across the state have increasingly shifted away from police-prosecutors and toward attorney-prosecutors
- 80% of departments in Hillsborough County and other comparable towns statewide employee either full or part-time attorney-prosecutors

Towns ***with*** Attorney-Prosecutors ***(32)***			Towns ***without*** Attorney-Prosecutors ***(8)***
Antrim	Hillsborough	New Ipswich	Amherst
Bedford	Hooksett	Pelham	Exeter
Bennington	Hollis	Peterborough	Gilford
Brookline	Hudson	Plaistow	Greenfield
Bow	Lebanon	Raymond	Lyndeborough
Deering	Litchfield	Sharon	Mason
Francestown	Manchester	Temple	New Boston
Goffstown	Merrimack	Wilton	Weare
Greenville	Milford	Windsor	
Hancock	Mont Vernon	Windham	
Hanover	Nashua		

Goal #1: *continued…*

- Attorney-Prosecutor is a part time, independent contractor position with anticipated workload of 25-30 hours weekly and a salary of $65K-$80K commensurate with training and experience (see appendix A for sample municipal prosecutor agreement)
- Prosecution duties are currently performed by Support Division Captain
- With addition of the Attorney-Prosecutor, the agency's Captain of Support will remain in charge of Detectives, School Resource Officers, and Juvenile Court Prosecution, with Attorney-Prosecutor assuming all other District Court obligations and reporting directly to Support Captain
- Support Captain to then assume alternate, added responsibilities of complete Body Worn Camera system and records management, along with Department's new, multi-year initiative to achieve formal State or CALEA professional accreditation by 2026
- CALEA (Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies) is the national accreditation program for law enforcement
- The State of New Hampshire is currently in the process of establishing its own *State Accreditation* program for New Hampshire law enforcement agencies

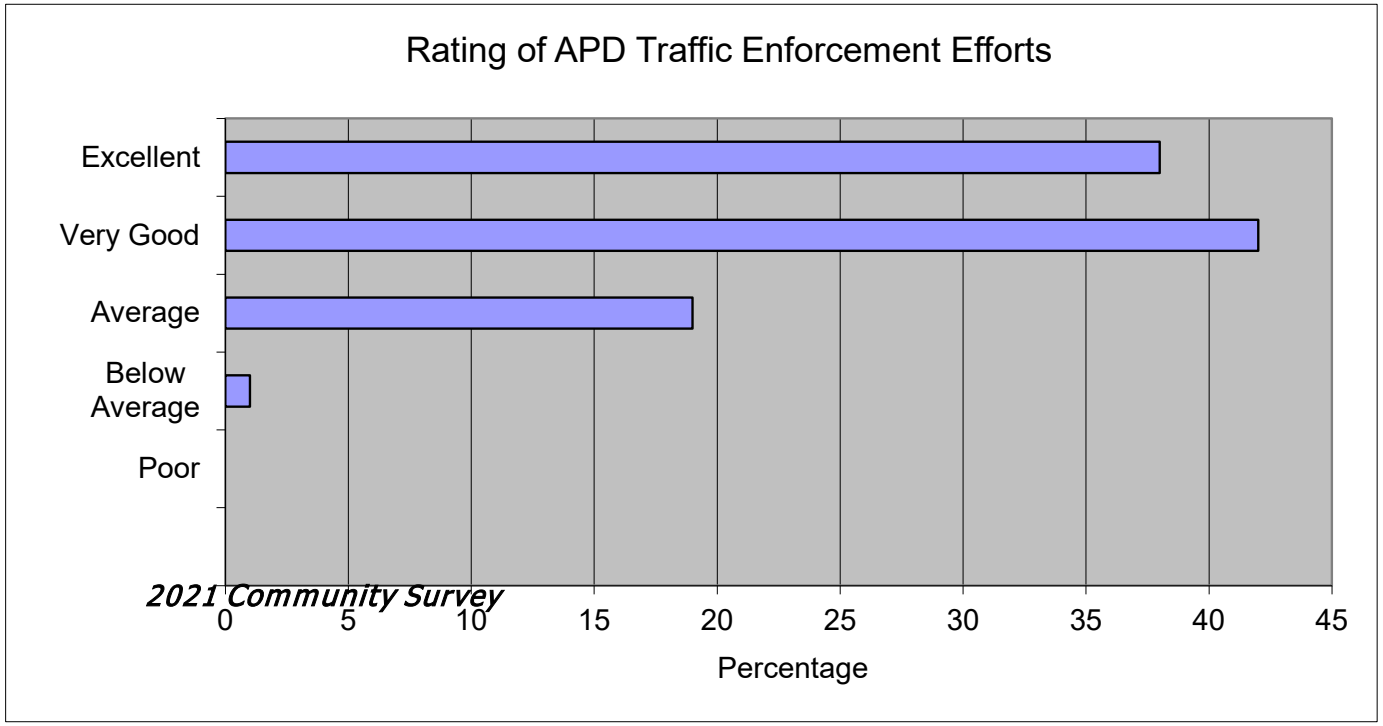
Goal #1: *continued…*

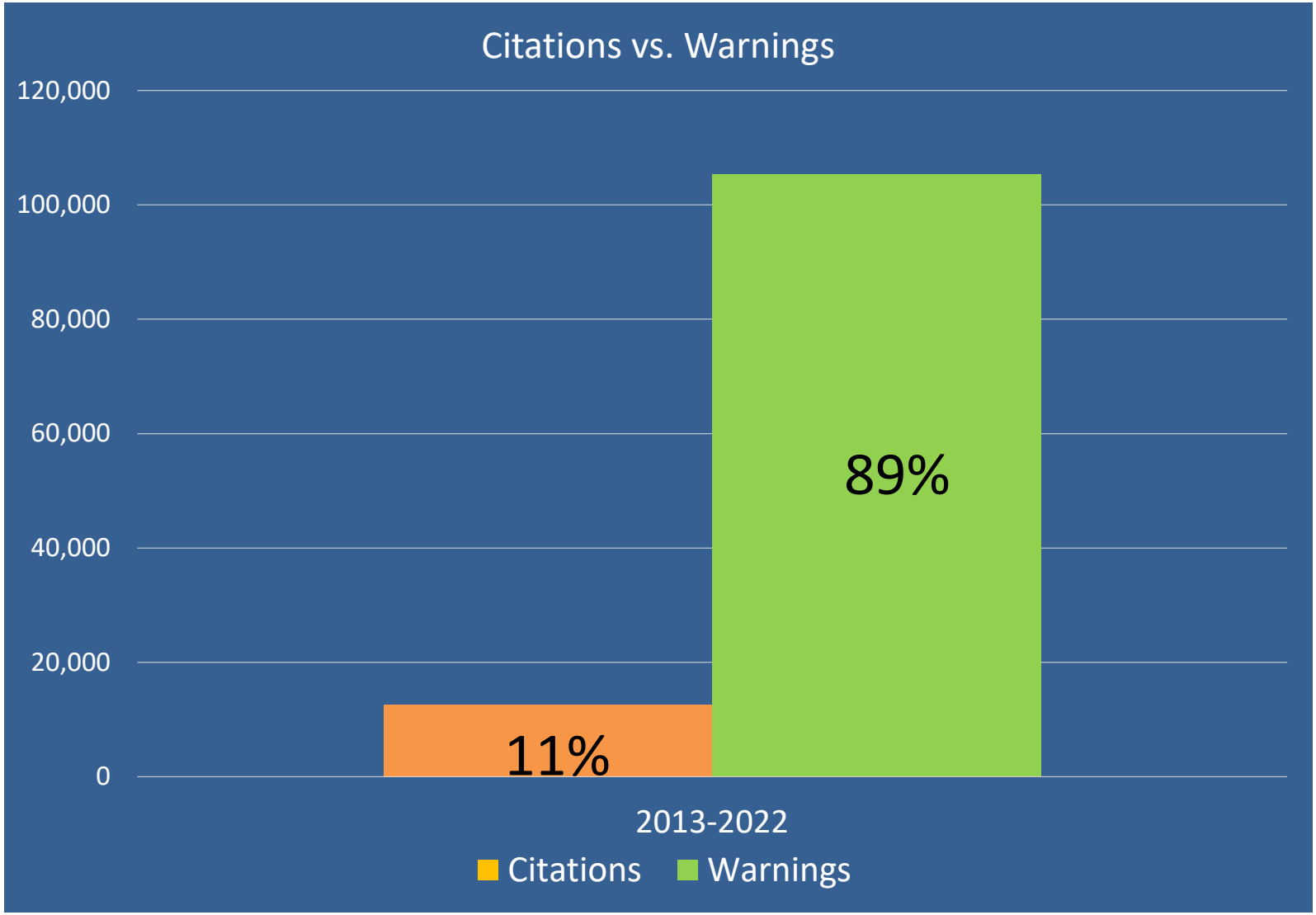
- In either scenario, policy development, implementation, and agency operations are guided by strict accreditation (and yearly re-accreditation) standards to insure compliance with statewide and nationwide law enforcement best practices
- State or CALEA accreditation represents the next step in the professional development of the Department, and stands as evidence of the Department's commitment to excellence
- Agency certification (and continuing compliance) requires significant new duties which the Department was previously not staffed to manage
- Professional accreditation for all NH agencies was recommended in New Hampshire Governor's Council for Law Enforcement Accountability, Community and Transparency (LEACT) in 2021 state LEACT report Commission on Law Enforcement Accountability, Community and Transparency | Governor Christopher T. Sununu (nh.gov)
- As in the case of the agency's Body Worn Camera program, accreditation represents another important initiative tied to our Vision Statement to *further enhance accountability, transparency, and effectiveness in the delivery of services*

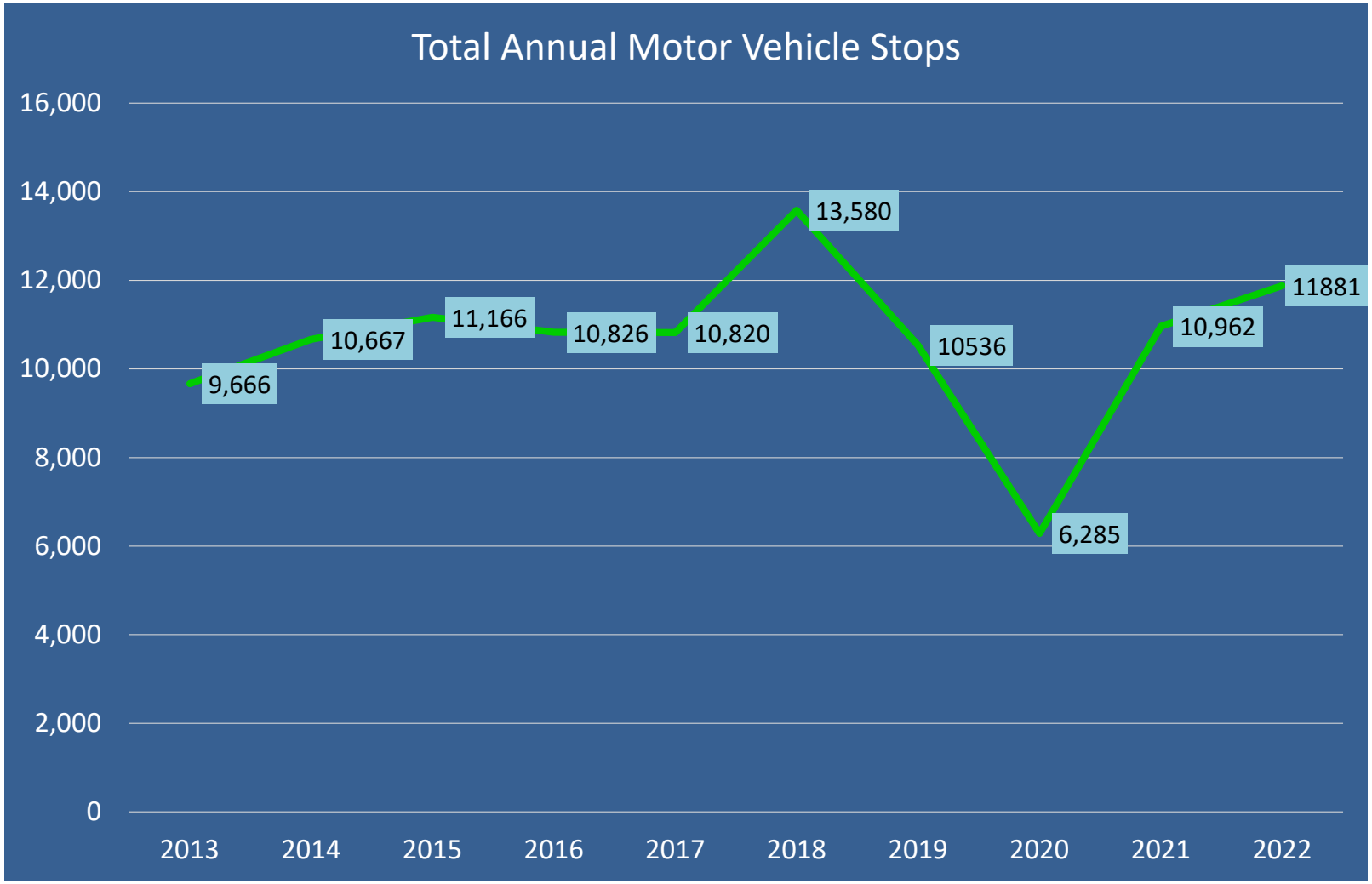
Towns with CALEA Accredited Police Departments:	
Claremont	Bedford*
Dover	Hanover*
Durham	Newton*
Goffstown	Salem*
Hollis	
Hudson	
Keene	
Laconia	*currently in process of*
Lebanon	*becoming accredited*
Londonderry	
Manchester	
Nashua	
Newington	
Portsmouth	
Stratham	
Strafford County Sheriff's Office	
Univ. of New Hampshire PD	

Goal #2: *Increase traffic safety along town road and through residential areas*

- Community surveys have consistently shown over the years that Traffic Enforcement remains one of the top two primary concerns of residents alongside residential property crime

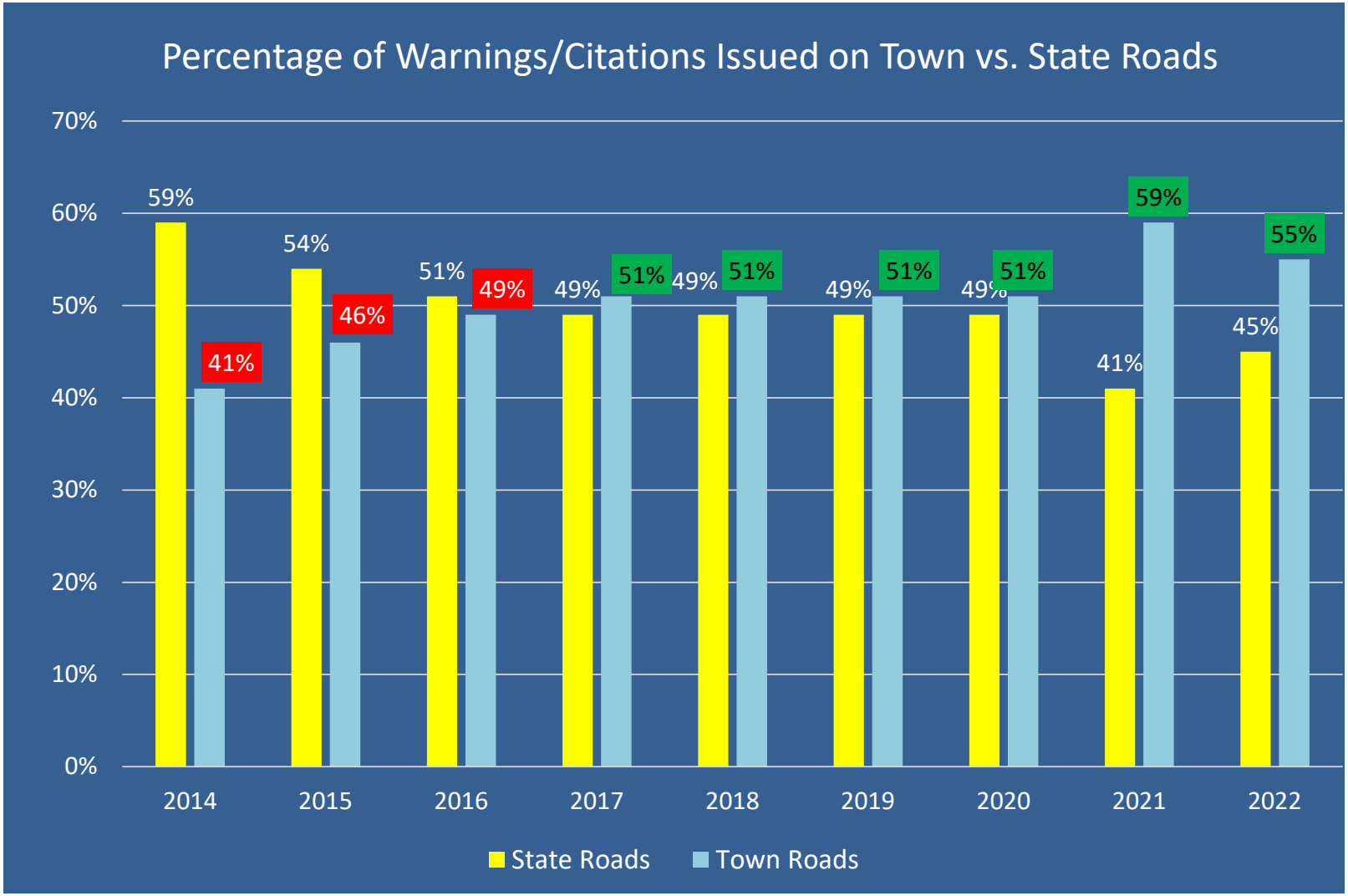



Citations vs. Warnings
120,000
100,000
80,000
60,000
40,000
20,000
0
89%
11%
2013-2022
Citations
Warnings


Total Annual Motor Vehicle Stops
16,000
14,000
12,000
10,000
8,000
6,000
4,000
2,000
0
2013
2014
2015
2016
2017
2018
2019
2020
2021
2022
9,666
10,667
11,166
10,826
10,820
13,580
10536
6,285
10,962
11881

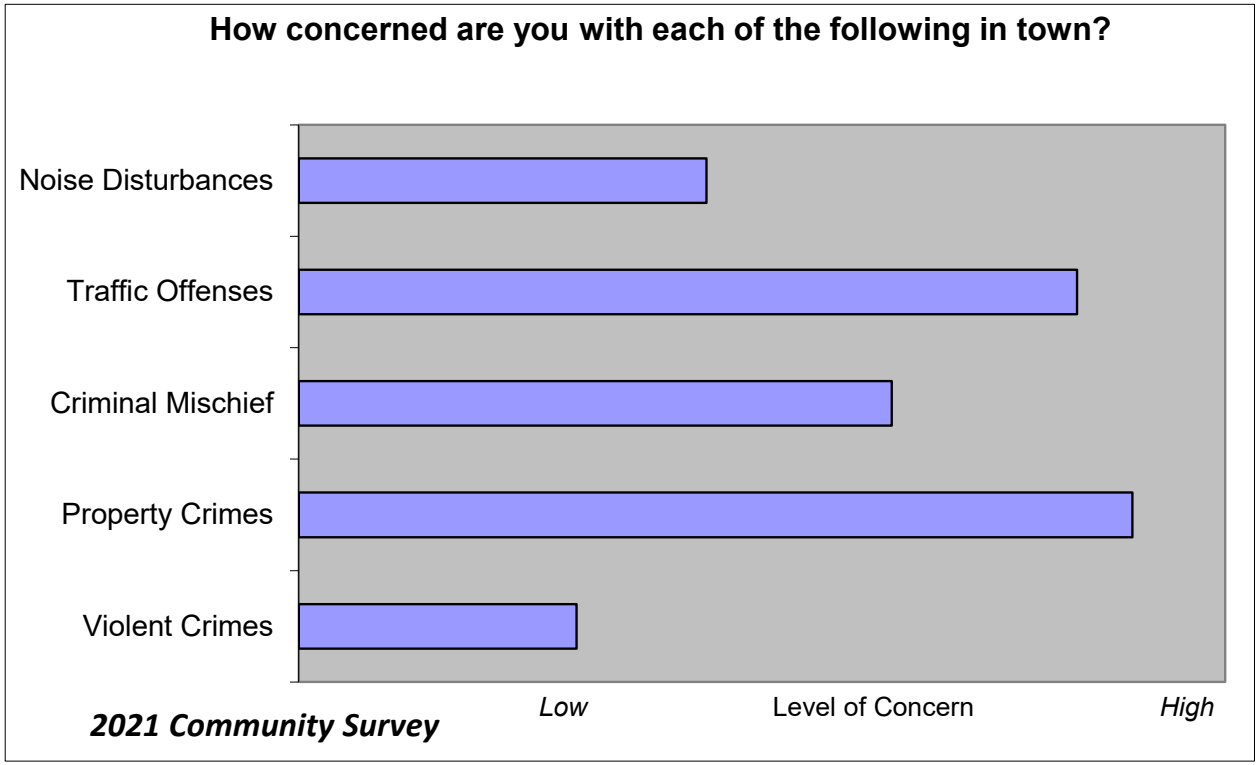
Goal #2: *continued…*

- Steady officer presence will always be required along our two major state roads due to enormous traffic volume and proportionally higher accident and incident rates
  - Routes 101 and 101A alone account for roughly 66% of total yearly motor vehicle accidents
  - Routes 101 and 101A also account for approximately 60% of total DWI and drug-related arrests
- Agency efforts have been specifically aimed at increasing presence along *town roads* to help improve visibility and impact driver safety awareness
- For the last six consecutive years, the Department has increased officer visibility along town roads when compared with state roads


Percentage of Warnings/Citations Issued on Town vs. State Roads
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
59%
41%
54%
46%
51%
49%
49%
51%
49%
51%
49%
51%
49%
51%
41%
59%
45%
55%
2014
2015
2016
2017
2018
2019
2020
2021
2022
State Roads
Town Roads

Goal #3: *Maintain reduction in neighborhood property crime*

- Five community surveys since 2013 consistently list property crime as one of the top two citizen public safety concerns alongside traffic offenses

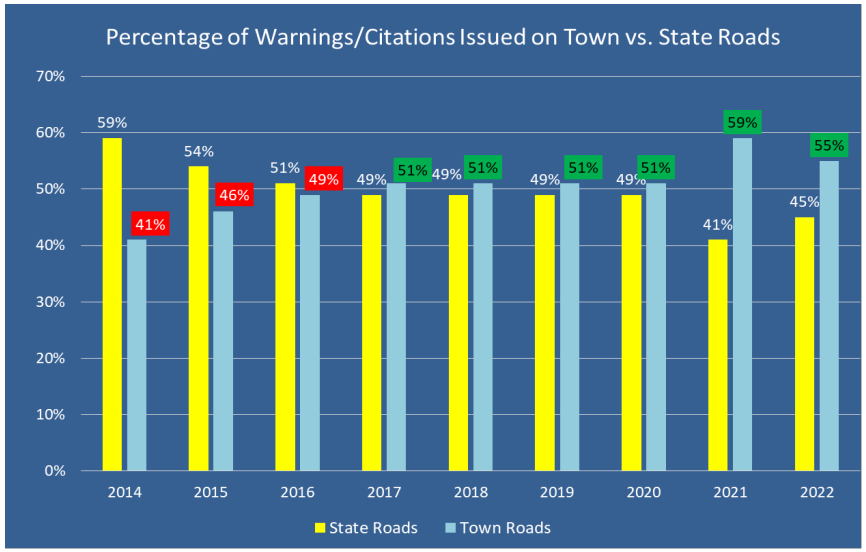


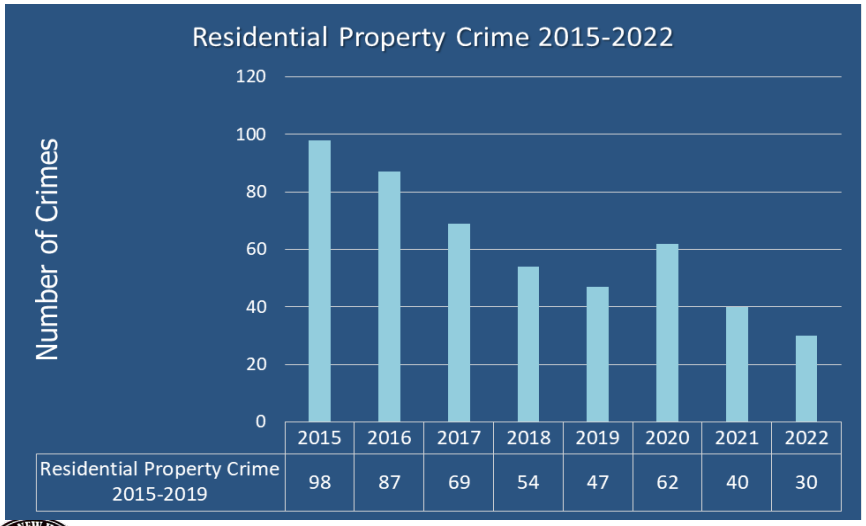
Goal #3: *continued…*

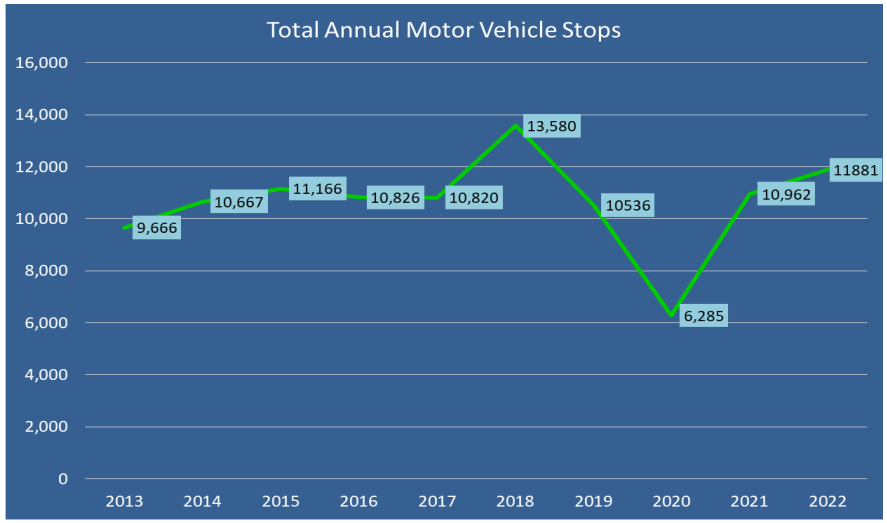
- With the exception of 2020 which saw increased residential property due to political sign vandalism, residential property crime has been steadily declining since 2015 as noted with a continued reduction for 2022

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Residential Property Crime 2015-2019	98	87	69	54	47	62	40	30

Vision Dashboard







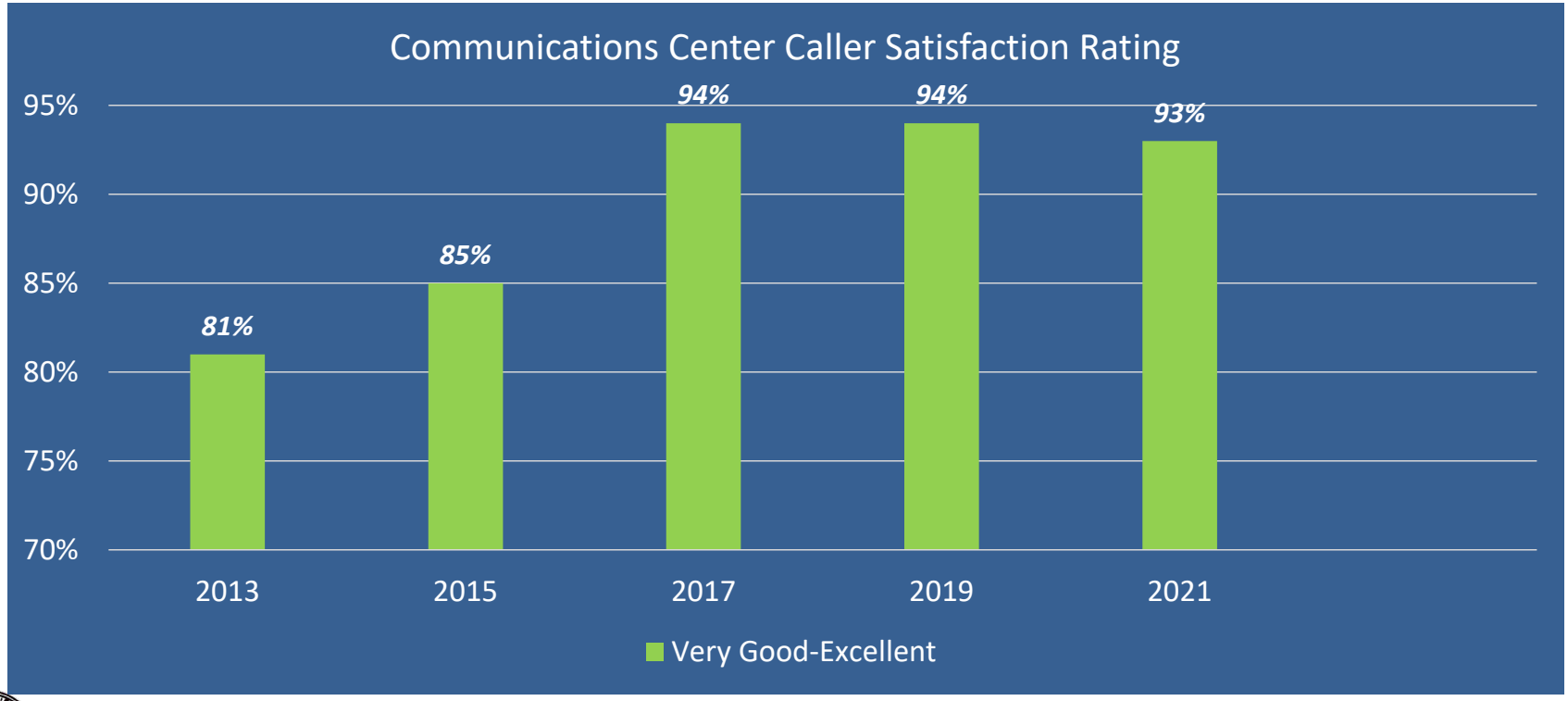
Amherst Public Safety Communications Center

Strategic Agency Goals

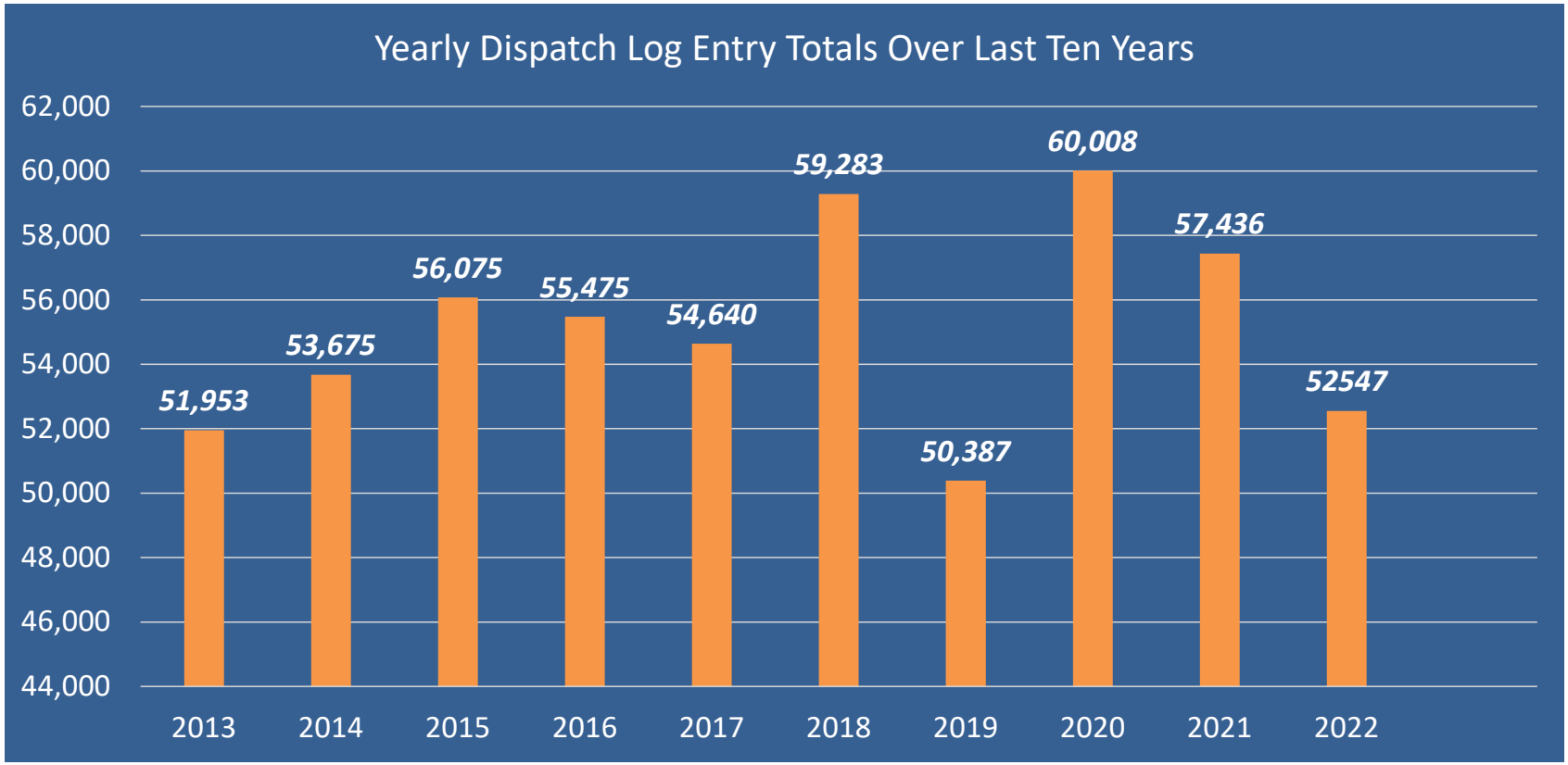
- Goal #1: Maintain caller satisfaction rating of 90% or better
  - *In-service training and professional development, management and supervision, employee recruitment and retention*
- Goal #2: Maintain communications infrastructure to provide continued quality public safety services to the community
  - *Continued voter support for yearly Communications Center Capital Reserve Fund warrant articles, prioritized schedule for equipment replacement/upgrade, and regular systems maintenance*

Goal #1: *Maintain Caller Satisfaction Rating ≥ 90%*

- Continued performance evaluation via community survey feedback and public input aimed at maintaining a satisfaction rating of no less than 90%
- Steady increase and maintenance of caller satisfaction rating reflected in four biennial surveys beginning in 2013 (81%) through most recent 2021 survey (93%)
- As mentioned earlier, varied survey methods are being considered moving forward

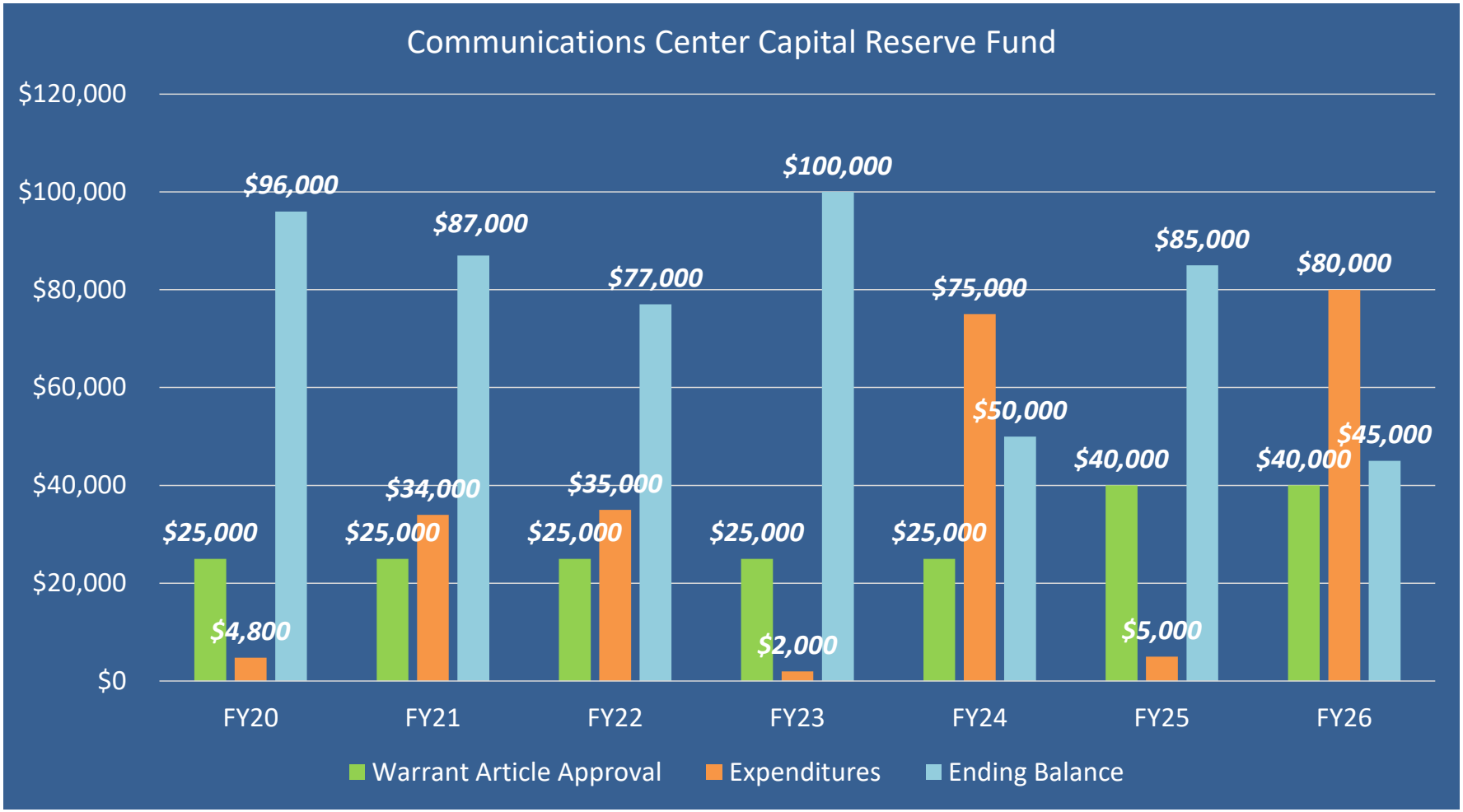


Goal #1: *continued*



Goal #2: *Maintain communications infrastructure to provide continued quality public safety services to the community*

- Communications Capital Reserve Fund (CRF) established to address major repairs and long term equipment replacement
- Approximately $125,000 expended on major repairs over the last five years, which included the unanticipated early replacement of three microwave radio dishes at roughly $30,000 each which had fallen years short of their projected lifespan
- Annual Communications CRF contributions maintained for emergency repairs and anticipated major equipment upgrades and replacement
  - Radio Console replacement has been bumped up in priority over the last several months as our vendor has encountered unanticipated shortages in spare parts for the system
    - Replacement costs for the consoles are estimated at roughly $150,000, though we are still waiting for a more exact estimate in the coming weeks
    - APD and AFR/Emergency Management are currently working through the grant process toward match funding, while exploring possible cost savings through our radio vendor
  - Replacement of the primary radio tower at the police station remains a priority
    - The previous estimate from one year ago for a total cost of $90,000 (grant match of $45,000) has now increased to a project estimate of $160,000 as the vendor reports a doubling in the cost of steel for the tower


Communications Center Capital Reserve Fund
$120,000
$100,000
$80,000
$60,000
$40,000
$20,000
$0
$25,000
$4,800
$96,000
$25,000
$34,000
$87,000
$25,000
$35,000
$77,000
$25,000
$2,000
$100,000
$25,000
$75,000
$50,000
$40,000
$5,000
$85,000
$40,000
$80,000
$45,000
FY20
FY21
FY22
FY23
FY24
FY25
FY26
Warrant Article Approval
Expenditures
Ending Balance

MUNICIPAL PROSECUTOR AGREEMENT

Appendix

The Town of Amherst Police Department desires to appoint a municipal prosecutor to represent the Town and the State of New Hampshire in cases involving, without limitation, civil causes, violations, misdemeanors, and felonies within the jurisdiction of the 9th Circuit Court – Milford. In some cases, prosecutorial jurisdiction may be preempted by the Hillsborough County Attorney or the New Hampshire Attorney General. Minor traffic violations, grand jury presentations, and juvenile prosecution will continue to be handled by the Bureau Support Captain, the direct supervisor of the prosecutor's office.

Duties

Legal Services: Attorney shall perform the services required of him by the Town as a police prosecutor. Attorney shall perform the full range of prosecutorial tasks with the assistance of the Town, including, but without limitation:

Providing consultation and legal advice to Amherst Police Officers and personnel related to criminal law and proper procedures for enforcing the law;

Evaluating information and reports, reviewing search warrants, questioning witnesses, considering evidence, and giving opinions on merits of cases;

Drafting and filing complaints at the Milford District Court;

Appearing at court proceedings, including: arraignments, pre-trial hearings, administrative license suspension hearings and motion hearings;

Drafting motions, memorandums of law, and pleadings;

Attending to discovery and disclosure matters with defense counsel;

Participating in settlements discussions and plea negotiations;

Working with victims of crimes and ensuring proper adherence to the victim's bill of rights;

Preparation and submission of all felony cases to the Hillsborough County Superior Court "Felonies First" program;

Handlings all phases of trial, including, but without limitation: compelling attendance of witnesses and production of evidence at trial, arguing cases before the Milford District Court, examining and cross-examining witnesses, preparing for defense arguments and all other tasks necessary for the fair prosecution of cases;

Appearing at sentencing and review hearings; and

Arrangement for conflict counsel as needed.

Working Hours and Availability:
The position is a part time and is expected to be between 25-30 hours weekly, although there may be instances that the Attorney and the Town agree that additional hours are necessary to complete the tasks described herein.

Other Employment Allowed:
Attorney shall not be prevented from other employment, provided that such other employment(s) do not create any conflicts of interests, ethical considerations, or otherwise compromise the ability of the Attorney to continue and carry out his duties as the police prosecutor for the Town of Amherst and the State of New Hampshire.

Records:
Attorney is required to keep and maintain records relating to all professional services rendered in the form and manner as required by the Town. All records generated by Attorney, Town, and related materials shall be the exclusive property of the Town, and shall continue to remain the exclusive property of the Town upon termination of this agreement, with or without cause.

Licensing:
The position is subject to and conditional upon Attorney at all times being NH Bar certified and licensed to practice law in the State of New Hampshire.

Continuing Education:
Attorney shall devote a reasonable amount of time and at least the minimum required Continuing Legal Education credits hours, attending professional conventions and otherwise participating in continuing education in order to improve and maintain his professional skills. Attorney shall be responsible for paying the cost of tuition and registration for such activities.

Attorney Reports to Chief of Police or His/Her Designee

Attorney shall be under the direct supervision and shall report to the Chief of Police, or his/her designee. Attorney shall keep the Chief of Police, or his/her designee advised of the status of all legal proceedings in which Attorney is involved on behalf of the Town and the State of New Hampshire. Subject to applicable law and the professional and ethical rules governing the practice of law, Attorney understands and acknowledges that the final decision to file a criminal complaint or enter into a plea bargain agreement is subject to review and approval by the Chief of Police, or his/her designee.

Compensation and Benefits

Compensation and Benefits: Attorney is a professional person and the relationship created by this agreement is that of an **independent contractor**. Attorney is not an employee of the Town, and is not entitled to benefits provided by the Town to its employees, including, without limitation: sick leave, holidays, paid vacations, nor participation in insurance or retirement plans. This part time position will have a yearly salary range of $65,000-$80,000 commensurate with training and experience

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