

Savannah-Chatham police working to rebuild trust, stop attrition

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By Dash Coleman

Public safety in Savannah isn't easy.

When Joseph Lumpkin was sworn in as chief of the combined city-county police force Nov. 10, he inherited a department that was hemorrhaging officers and under scrutiny after public revelations of corruption and the controversial shooting of a handcuffed man who had tried to escape custody.

His predecessor, Willie Lovett, would soon be sent to federal prison after being convicted for his role in an illegal gambling operation over a period of years while serving as a senior police official.

During his first six months on the job, Lumpkin has spent much of his time working to bolster trust between the community and police. As part of that process, he said, he's fired officers who lied.

He said he's also working to make sure officers can trust one another. In an effort to replenish and retain officers, the department has been retooling recruitment practices and working to improve physical standards, morale and leadership skills.

"Just as we have to build trust with the citizens, we have to build trust with the officers, and we have to understand that we have their best interests at heart," Lumpkin said.

Loss prevention

Cracking down on crime is still the department's top priority, and that means it has to have enough officers to do the job.

If fully staffed, the Savannah-Chatham police department would have 605 officers. As of last week, fewer than 530 officers were on the force. Attrition has been about 19.7 percent over the past five years.

About 35 have left since Lumpkin started. Six, including Dean Fagerstrom, a long-standing member of the department's command staff, retired. One, Chris Tucker, who quit this month, was a decorated member of the SWAT team and K-9 unit who had been named officer of the year.

Lt. Robert Gavin heads both internal affairs and recruiting, so he hears what officers say when they interview for the job and when they head for the door.

✓ "They leave for various reasons," Gavin said. "Some want to move home and be closer to family. For some, it's financial. Some have had problems with leadership and management in the past."

✓ Money's a big issue.

Officers patrolling Savannah and unincorporated Chatham County start at either about \$34,000 or \$36,000 a year, depending on education. Lumpkin says that's not competitive for a department of Savannah's size.

Some smaller nearby agencies, for example, pay amounts comparable to what metro offers for assignments with far less violent crime. Officers in Pooler, the next largest municipality in Chatham County, start at about \$35,000 a year.

Metro salaries fall short, too, compared to a regional city to which Savannah is often compared.

In Charleston, S.C., only a few of the 480 officers who patrol a city of about 127,000 residents receive starting pay of \$36,000. Those are the ones with a minimum of a high school education.

More than 90 percent of the officers in Charleston, however, have at least a bachelor's degree. Human resources staff there said Thursday, and starting salaries for officers with bachelor's, master's and law degrees range from about \$41,000 to \$47,000 annually.

Mayor Edna Jackson said during her State of the City address in February that officials needed to "explore" making the local department's starting pay the highest in the Southeast.

The city is currently contracting with an outside firm, Evergreen Solutions, to study pay increases in all Savannah departments. The study, said city spokesman Bret Bell, is expected to be complete in June, and priority is being given to police and fire services. Bell said the city manager plans to recommend to City Council that public safety pay increases be made before the end of the year.

Bell said the city wants to make starting salaries for officers competitive but pay scales are being looked at across the board for all ranks

within the department.

What needs to be avoided, he said, are issues the city has run into in the past in which employees with higher ranks wound up supervising employees who were making more money. Such oversight has resulted in problems at the fire department.

While the salary study and potential raises work their way through the bureaucratic process, Lumpkin said he's trying to do what he can to improve working conditions within the department.

"The only thing that I have the power to do is try to make a good work environment for them," the chief said. "I'll change policies and rules to try to help them acquire a setting they feel more comfortable with. As long as that setting is one of transparency we can share with citizens and we'll all agree is in the best interest of public safety."

Among the initiatives being launched, the ranks of corporal and advanced police officer are being brought back, and professional leadership programs are being taught at the department.

Career development initiatives are on the way.

Also, Lumpkin said he's trying to do some little things such as ease restrictions on tattoos because it's 2015 and character counts more than appearance. After getting feedback from officers working in hot, sunny weather, he said the department **will** start issuing baseball caps for police to wear.

Gavin said some officers have been leaving because they saw no future in what they were doing.

"Now you can start to see some of those things," he said, "but we still need to attract them in the first place because people are going to retire every year. People are going to leave."

The importance of trust

Not all of those roughly 35 officers who left in the last five months did so **willingly**.

Seven who left since Nov. 10 were fired. Five didn't make it past probation.

Lumpkin said he's fired "more than one" officer for "being untruthful."

Two of them, Sgt. Laprentice Mayes and Lt. Katrina Hughes, were fired for violation of city policies.

In Hughes' case, termination paperwork signed by Lumpkin cited multiple instances of untruthfulness. In similar paperwork for Mayes' dismissal, Assistant Chief Julie Tolbert referenced similar violations as well as misappropriation of property.

"We want to slow attrition, but we're not going to retain folks who violate our core principles," Lumpkin said. "We will not tolerate people who lie or steal. We can work with most other performance issues, but if a person lies or if a person steals, they cannot remain a police officer."

Internal affairs staff have begun using a polygraph during the hiring process and for administrative investigations.

"We can't make decisions just on polygraph results," Lumpkin said. "But we can use it as an indicator of other things to make decisions. We can use other testimony by other individuals or that person or other (evidence), and the totality of it can help us make decisions."

One officer who was fired, a supervisor, apparently admitted to cursing at members of the public.

"He indicated that was the only way some people could be communicated with," Lumpkin said. "... Most citizens don't feel they can object to that type of behavior, and it puts you as an individual in a real precarious position to say anything back, from a perceptive perspective, anyway.

"We will not tolerate officers cursing citizens. And the vast, vast majority of officers don't communicate in that manner."

At the same time, a body camera rollout continues on patrol officers in the department's five precincts. Officers activate them whenever they interact with people. The chief said that gives senior staff a chance to watch how officers talk to community members.

Department officials said plans were underway to buy the devices before the fatal shooting of a man, Charles Smith, in police custody last September in West Savannah.

The incident, which was not recorded, ultimately resulted in the officer, David Jannot, being cleared by a grand jury in February. The shooting, subsequent investigation and proceedings came at a time when the national relationship between law enforcement and the public is being rocked.

Lumpkin said the department has put significant resources into doing the types of things that would "help citizens have enough comfort level to trust us."

Part of that process involves getting out and talking to community leaders and speaking to neighborhood organizations.

Lumpkin said he and Tolbert each go to two or three public meetings weekly to address the community, usually at the request of neighborhood associations or other groups.

Department leaders also keep pushing the idea of a return to "community policing" as essential in building the kind of rapport between officers and the public that results in a safer place to live and the kind of trust that makes people feel comfortable sharing information that could help put violent criminals behind bars.

"Across America, in our neighborhoods that are less fortunate, we have to be seen as community helpers and not an occupying army," Lumpkin said. "We have to treat people with respect and dignity."

Lumpkin said he wants the department's public information staff to talk more about the day-to-day activities of police that typically don't make the news.

"Citizens ought to know of the good things that we do," he said. "They're certainly going to know when we've made mistakes or when people perceive that we've made mistakes."

Recruiting

Department brass are tying public image in with recruiting, enlisting marketing experts and launching TV ads aimed at attracting applicants while humanizing officers.

An ad that ran during March Madness college basketball tournament featured a metro officer who joined the force after leaving the Army. It shows him interacting with his family, playing basketball in uniform, and responding to a call.

"It's to show (the public) that police officers are just like everyone else," Gavin said. "They have families. They have goals. They have those issues."

Then there's the military angle. Gavin said veterans are some of the best fits for police work, and one of the key targets for metro police recruiters.

They're also going to colleges around the region and have tried to be increasingly public, including setting up a station on St. Patrick's Day. The office would like to get more local applicants, especially people who grew up around Savannah.

In the past few months, Gavin said, his office is seeing more applicants with military backgrounds and degrees. While military skills are a plus, they're not crucial.

Gavin said character counts.

"We're looking for someone that can be a partner with the community, who has good communication skills and can talk to community members and work with community members to solve problems," he said.

The department has streamlined the application process. What used to be a 60-page application is now about 20 pages, and it's all online. And when recruitment staff are visiting college campuses and military bases, they are able to administer some oral and physical tests onsite rather than require applicants to travel to Savannah for that process, Gavin said.

After marketing efforts, such as the March Madness TV spot and targeted online advertising, staff saw a bump in views on the recruiting page. Gavin said about four times the usual number of applicants have applied in the last month.

"The more applicants we get, the better selection we can do and the more we can put on the street quicker," he said.

But you don't just hire someone, hand them a gun and put them on the street.

Applicants have to meet physical standards and undergo psychological evaluations and background checks. They also have to take a polygraph. Gavin said that typically weeds out some candidates.

Speaking hypothetically, he said 30 to 40 out of 200 applicants might make it to an initial offer of employment.

Then there's police academy, which takes 11 weeks. They also have to go through seven weeks of orientation, learn how to drive the cars and use weapons and other equipment. New hires then learn hands-on, assigned to a precinct in the company of a veteran officer. They're graded and assessed before being assigned to the street on their own.

"It is a long process, but you can't skip any of those portions," Gavin said. "It's important they go through all of it and they complete all of it correctly."

A recruit class of about a dozen officers started in early April and hopes are for the next group to be about twice as large.

Physical training is also getting a bit of an overhaul. Lumpkin said he plans to adopt the standards of physical fitness taught by the Cooper Institute, a Dallas-based nonprofit research and education organization dedicated to preventive medicine.

The requirements, used by many law enforcement agencies, is more convenient for officers to maintain, the chief said.

While the new standards will focus on activities such as pull-ups, running and sprinting, others may over-emphasize obstacle courses, he said.

"Most of us don't have those types of things at home," Lumpkin said. "But we do have a floor where we can do pushups each day. We do have a floor where we can do situps each day. We have sidewalks that we can do the run and the sprints on. So it's much easier to prepare for in terms of an applicant getting him or herself in condition over time."

More changes

Thirty-five employees of metro graduated from the 120-hour Leadership in Police Organizations class this month, many of them supervisory level officers.

Several of the graduates will be sent to a training course taught by the International Association of Chiefs of Police so they can return and instruct the class in-house at metro.

The course teaches a definition of leadership that's common across the entire organization. Additionally, it focuses on empowering all employees, no matter their rank, and stresses communication.

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As troopers' numbers fall, challenges grow



Brian Lyman, Montgomery Advertiser 11:39 a.m. CDT July 29, 2015



(Photo: Mickey Welsh/Advertiser)

One night stands out for Trooper Chuck Daniel. He worked the midnight shift — 8 p.m. to 4 a.m. — and he spent the evening driving from one accident to another.

Starting his night in Blount County, he got a call to head to a wreck in Birmingham. While working that accident, dispatchers told him to respond to another one in Pell City.

While working that scene, he got a call for an RV fire along Interstate 22, at the Marion County line. Daniel was the only officer who could respond. And the fire was 100 miles away.

"When you've got an RV on fire at the side of the shoulder, that interstate is shut down," he said in an interview last week. "And when a major highway is shut down, it creates all these other problems. And they don't get fixed until I get there."

Bearing the burden

Working solo is a common experience for state troopers. Their ranks have thinned as retirements and hiring freezes have taken their toll. Between 2010 and 2015, the state of Alabama did not hire a single state trooper. A federal grant helped pay for a class that graduated earlier this year.

The cuts could get deeper. The Legislature approved a General Fund budget last spring that cut the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency's funding from \$55 million to \$39 million.

That proposal, said law enforcement officials, could further reduce the resources of state troopers. It would not only hurt state law enforcement, but many rural counties that depend on ALEA to provide services that they cannot.

Spencer Collier, the Secretary of Law Enforcement, described the budget last week as "apocalyptic."

The department would close all but three of the state's driver's license offices and lay off 2/3 of its department's civilian personnel. The department would try to keep the number of troopers steady, even if that meant transferring personnel out of other law enforcement agencies such as the State Bureau of Investigation. Collier, a former state trooper and state representative from Mobile County, called the budget a "nuclear option."

"It would have been unheard of in my time as a trooper and as a legislator to vote for a budget with a \$16 million cut to state law enforcement," Collier said. "Now it's passed casually and left to the governor to kill it. If I seem frustrated, I am."

Law enforcement has faced the same employee cuts as other state agencies. Before the consolidation of ALEA was completed at the start of this year, the Alabama Department of Public Safety, one of its predecessor agencies, had lost 248 employees between 2010 and 2014. That was 17.5 percent of its workforce, larger than the 12.7 percent loss in the total state employee workforce during that time.

Collier, who began working as a state trooper in Mobile County in 1995, said there were 32 troopers assigned there at the time. Now, he said, there are about 15.

"We're losing through attrition and not being able to replace them," he said.

A University of Alabama report released earlier this year estimated the state needs 1,016 state troopers. Before consolidation completed this year, there were just 289 state troopers on the roads. Transfers of personnel from other law enforcement agencies boosted those numbers to about 431 at the beginning of the year, but the state trooper ranks remain well below full staffing.

Long hours and fatigue

As a result, troopers can find themselves responsible for calls beyond their posts. Some may cover two counties on a shift; covering five all at once is not uncommon. Daniel once shared a midnight shift out of Birmingham with another officer, but they almost never saw each other.

"When he was off, I was on, and you were responsible for five counties," he said. "Any given night, you were going to work two of those counties by yourself. Traveling so much by yourself through those counties, it's an officer safety issue, to be traveling by yourself."

Fatigue also becomes a factor. A state trooper can work a full shift, get home and sleep a handful of hours before another call comes in.

"If he is mentally fatigued from being overworked, then he is not as safe as he would be if he only had to work that one shift and got proper rest before the next shift," Daniel said. "I'm not as safe, and my officers' safety is jeopardized. You can only stay mentally sharp for so long before you only think about going home and going to bed."

Impact on rural counties

The shortage also affects local law enforcement, particularly in rural areas. State troopers handle homicide investigations and provide patrols for roads in those districts. Fewer resources mean fewer means to respond.

"When you go to the Black Belt, we're working a majority of the homicides, a majority of the rapes and all the traffic fatalities," Collier said. "The areas that need us the most are going to be the areas that suffer the greatest, because they depend on us."

Sheriffs' departments face their own personnel shortages. Bobby Timmons, executive director of the Alabama Sheriffs' Association, said troopers responding to wrecks allow deputies to focus on other duties. Working accidents, he said, is a big time commitment for sheriffs' departments that might have as few as four deputies on hand.

"They get tied up in court on litigation, if they worked that wreck," Timmons said.

The other issue is visibility. Both Collier and Daniel talk about long drives without seeing any state troopers on the roads. Daniel said the department is in a reactive mode now, and Collier said the lack of presence takes its toll.

"The philosophy I try to instill is the best way to solve crime is to prevent crime," he said. "You prevent crime by having a heavy presence. With the manpower we have, we can't prevent crime or prevent poor driving."

Perry County has no state trooper assigned to its roads, though troopers from other counties do patrol. Billy Jones, the sheriff of the county, said Tuesday the result is more complaints about speeding, and response times to accidents that can take up to an hour.

"We don't have the best roads in the state, and it's dangerous on most of these roads in Perry County," Jones said.

There's also a human toll. Collier said there's "no steadiness" in a trooper's life.

When Daniel works a late shift, his wife, a teacher, is getting up for work just as he is trying to get some sleep. His time with his 9-year-old is also limited.

"You miss them doing their homework, helping them do their homework," he said. "You miss so many things with your family. I chose to do this job because I love this job. My wife is probably one of the most understanding women about my job. Even with her great understanding, there are times when she says 'You need to come home,' and I say 'Honey, I'll be home when I can.'"

Even with the workload, Daniel said he has his dream job, one he'd looked for for 20 years. A former police officer in Atlanta, Daniel also worked as a youth pastor and a business owner before going into the state trooper's ranks. It's a job he plans to do for life. Even so, he said, officers need resources to enforce the laws.

"For the 61/2 years I've been a trooper, we have always worked more with less," he said.

Correction

An article on state troopers that ran Wednesday erroneously stated state troopers do not receive overtime. Under state law, law enforcement officers do receive overtime, but are given the option of taking compensatory time instead. The article has been updated to reflect the correction.

About this series

The Alabama Legislature will convene on Monday to address a \$200 million shortfall in the General Fund budget, which pays for a host of services in the state. Legislators passed a budget this spring — ultimately vetoed by Gov. Robert Bentley — that would have addressed the shortfall through cuts, and reduced funding may be on the table in the special session. "The Cost of Cutting" looks at selected services, and how reductions could affect the people who depend on them.



South Carolina Police Shortage Means Employment For "Gypsy" Officers

By [Gordon Dill \(http://wspa.com/author/wspagordondill/\)](http://wspa.com/author/wspagordondill/)

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Upstate police chiefs and sheriffs said they now struggle to fill open jobs and, in some cases, job postings go unanswered for months.

The statewide shortage of police in South Carolina led departments to look for new solutions to recruit and retain veteran police while trying to avoid problem officers who bounce from department to department because of disputes over pay, conflicts with supervisors, or trouble with internal affairs investigations.

"Every agency in the state is feeling the effects of it, from the smallest agency all the way up to say the highway patrol or even SLED, every agency is feeling the effects of hiring and retaining good officers," said Major Florence McCants at the South Carolina Criminal Justice Academy where all of the state's officers are certified.

In Pacolet, a town of 2,500, Chief Raymond Webb heads a department of 7 full-time officers. That means one officer works each shift. Webb said he was proud of all the officers who serve the department now and there were no problems officers on staff.

Webb will have to fight to keep that staff together. His department, like most in the Upstate, struggles to fill vacancies when officers leave.

"I had an ad in the newspaper, I put one on our website for i think it was three months. I had about three hits on it. People just aren't applying for it," Webb said.

What happens when nobody applies?

"You just have to do without," Webb said.

In Williamston, Chief Tony Taylor had a similar problem. He's had 80% of his staff turnover in the last three years. The department has two current openings.

Taylor said he got plenty of applications but there is a problem with the people who applied.

"Usually the applicants that you get in are what we call problems," Taylor said.

Those "problems" include officers who bounced around to multiple agencies. Some of them are looking for an increase in pay. Taylor said that could be as small as a 25 cents an hour.

Other officers had problems with one or more previous departments, were allowed to resign, and easily found new jobs with other agencies desperate for new hires.

At the South Carolina Criminal Justice Academy, where all new officers are certified, they call those officers "Gypsy Cops".

"A gypsy cop! That's been termed an officer that will jump from agency to agency .They may have 10 agencies under their belt within a 5 year period," said Major Florence McCants of the Criminal Justice Academy.

7News tracked the case of one officer who fits the "gypsy cop" profile after a shooting on the campus of Spartanburg Methodist College.

Campus police shot a man suspected of breaking into cars after they said he tried to run them down.

Officer Justin Yarbrough was among the officers who responded but he did not open fire. Spartanburg Methodist Police is the 9th agency that Yarbrough has worked for and his third agency in 2015. Some prior jobs only lasted a few months.

Yarbrough started with Union Police and left that job to work with the Union County Sheriff. The current sheriff, David Taylor, did not work with Yarbrough but said that the former deputy has since applied to return to the agency. Sheriff Taylor said he did not rehire him because of the officer's history of moving between agencies.

From Union County, Yarbrough went to Clinton Police, Laurens Police, Cherokee County Sheriff, Jonesville Police, Laurens County Sheriff and Pacolet Police.

The Laurens County job began in October 2013. In February of 2015 documents filed with the Criminal Justice Academy showed Yarbrough resigned from that job "during investigation of alcohol use."

Deputies said they could "smell an odor of alcohol" while Yarbrough was responding to a call. The reports provided by the Sheriff's office show deputies believed Yarbrough's driving ability was "compromised" and said they discovered a half-empty bottle of rye whiskey and a baggie of assorted pills in his patrol cruiser.

According to state records, Yarbrough said "I'm not taking no drug test, I guess I'll resign".

That's when he left Laurens County to spend 7 weeks working for the Pacolet police.

"You have some agencies that take the approach, we need warm bodies, so they will hire that individual," said Taylor who said his office is more selective in new hires.

"They're going to get hired somewhere," he said.

"That's happened," said Webb, "It happens every day. It's happened here. It happens everywhere."

The problem starts at the justice academy.

Maj. McCants said most new recruits don't last long. First time officers are required to pass a 12-week certification course. Out of 70 in a typical class, only about 50 would make it to graduation.

Of those who graduate, McCants said only about half will stay in law enforcement more than a year.

That means the shortage of officers becomes a serious issue for agencies of every size.

"Every agency in the state is feeling the effects of it, from the smallest agency all the way up to say the highway patrol or even SLED. Every agency is feeling the effects of hiring and retaining good officers," McCants said.

Officers offer different solutions for the shortage.

Taylor said the public perception of police has been damaged by media criticism and focus on the few officers who get into trouble. That, he said, discouraged some people for seeking it as a career.

He also said changes to the state retirement system made it more difficult for smaller agencies like his to recruit veteran officers who had served in larger agencies.

Webb said people, in general, seem to have less interest in community service and aren't willing to pay dues as a police officer.

Police Chiefs and Sheriffs across the entire Upstate agreed that police pay is a factor. Officer salaries are relatively low compared to other high skilled dangerous jobs and the lure of higher pay is a major factor in officers hopping from one job to another.

7 News compiled a list of starting salaries for police at agencies across the region.

AGENCY	UNCERTIFIED	CERTIFIED	STARTING PAY MEETS MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME?	MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME
Abbeville PD	\$28,731.00	\$31,381.00	ABOVE	\$19,869.00
Abbeville Co. SO	\$30,000.00		BELOW	\$35,409.00
Anderson PD	\$29,500.00	\$30,975.00	ABOVE	\$28,987.00
Anderson Co. SO	\$31,000.00	\$31,310.00	BELOW	\$41,822.00
Belton PD	\$28,800.00	\$29,500.00	BELOW	\$31,399.00
Calhoun Falls PD	\$27,500.00	\$27,500.00	ABOVE	\$27,333.00
Campobello PD	\$25,000.00	\$27,500.00	BELOW	\$51,667.00
Central PD	\$27,300.00	\$28,938.00	ABOVE	\$24,581.00
Cherokee Co. SO	\$31,470.00	\$31,470.00	BELOW	\$34,766.00
Chesnee PD	\$28,063.74	\$28,063.74	ABOVE	\$21,138.00
Clemson PD	\$29,494.00	\$33,196.00	BELOW	\$33,632.00
Clemson University	\$31,000.00	\$32,260.00	BELOW	\$33,632.00

PD				
Cowpens PD	\$25,251.00	\$30,118.00	BELOW	\$27,206.00
Duncan PD	\$30,385.00		BELOW	\$30,642.00
Easley PD	\$33,027.00	\$33,027.00	BELOW	\$40,453.00
Fountain Inn PD	\$28,065.00	\$29,300.00	BELOW	\$46,989.00
Furman University DPS	\$33,000.00		BELOW	\$41,147.00
Gaffney PD	\$27,426.00	\$27,926.80	BELOW	\$29,943.00
Greenville PD	\$31,907.72	\$33,495.28	BELOW	\$41,147.00
Greenville Co. SO	\$33,633.60	\$34,985.60	BELOW	\$49,968.00
Greenwood PD	\$30,784.00	\$32,032.00	ABOVE	\$24,760.00
Greenwood Co. SO	\$30,731.00		BELOW	\$36,045.00
Greer PD	\$33,500.00		BELOW	\$44,111.00
Honea Path PD	\$27,300.00		ABOVE	\$24,510.00
Inman PD	\$26,500.00	\$29,000.00	ABOVE	\$27,174.00
Iva PD		\$29,900.00	ABOVE	\$23,906.00
Lander University DPS		\$33,700.00	ABOVE	\$24,760.00
Laurens PD	\$28,392.00	\$28,392.00	ABOVE	\$27,499.00
Laurens Co. SO	\$29,054.00	\$29,054.00	BELOW	\$38,300.00
Liberty PD	\$26,832.00	\$29,068.00	BELOW	\$29,250.00
Mauldin PD	\$31,683.74	\$33,267.93	BELOW	\$56,619.00
Oconee PD		\$29,120.00	UNKNOWN	UNKNOWN
Oconee Co. SO	\$29,120.00	\$29,120.00	BELOW	\$41,197.00
Pacolet PD		\$27,000.00	BELOW	\$31,700.00
Pickens PD	\$31,304.00	\$32,422.00	BELOW	\$33,669.00
Pickens Co. SO	\$32,336.00	\$33,848.00	BELOW	\$41,501.00

Salem PD		\$27,040.00	BELOW	\$35,833.00
Seneca PD		\$31,907.00	BELOW	\$37,983.00
Spartanburg PD	\$32,739.30		BELOW	\$34,092.00
Spartanburg Co. SO	\$29,474.00		BELOW	\$43,555.00
Simpsonville PD	\$32,698.00	\$32,698.00	BELOW	\$55,910.00
Travelers Rest PD		\$28,626.00	BELOW	\$51,066.00
Union DPS		\$36,282.00	ABOVE	\$26,689.00
Union Co. SO	\$32,000.00	\$34,558.00	BELOW	\$35,221.00
Walhalla PD	\$31,291.09	\$33,759.63	ABOVE	\$30,016.00
Ware Shoals PD		\$27,000.00	ABOVE	\$24,076.00
West Pelzer PD		\$32,000.00	ABOVE	\$26,818.00
Westminster PD	\$28,100.80	\$31,324.80	BELOW	\$33,234.00
Williamston PD		\$31,000.00	BELOW	\$40,432.00
Woodruff PD		\$30,000.00	BELOW	\$33,701.00
MEDIAN	\$29,750.00	\$30,987.50		\$33,669.00

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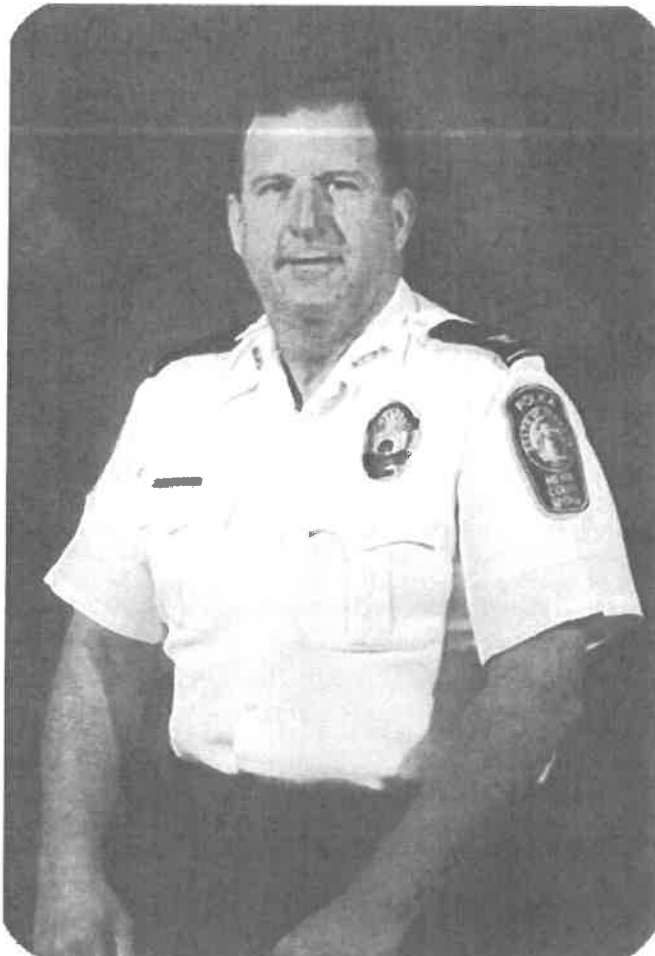
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EDITOR'S PICK

Officer pay and retention at core of Henry County Police Department's budget request

By Aimee Jones

ajones@henryherald.com Feb 15, 2016



Henry County Police Chief Keith Nichols

McDONOUGH — Two local organizations representing police officers in Henry County are joining forces to advocate for pay increases and an incentive plan for the Henry County Police Department.

The Police Benevolent Association is a nonprofit organization that aims to financially support struggling police officers and their families.

The Fraternal Order of Police is also a volunteer organization that coordinates many community outreach programs, such as Sirens for Santa at Christmas and the Dictionary Program.

The two groups typically endorse candidates for local office they believe would best represent the interests of their members. This year, however, the PBA and the FOP are teaming up to make joint endorsements.

The main issue they are concerned about is pay for officers with the Henry County Police Department.

For several years, the police department has requested that Henry County commissioners approve budget requests to allow for an increase in starting salaries as well as a pay plan that includes incentives for advanced degrees and certifications.

For Scott Gray, president of the local PBA, and Wayne Bender, president of the FOP in Henry County, the issue is reaching critical stages.

Gray said the Henry County Police Department is losing many officers to agencies that pay more, and in most cases offer pay incentive plans.

"We're losing people to Brookhaven, Atlanta and cities in Henry County," Gray said.

According to figures compiled by the PBA and FOP, the Henry County Police Department – which has jurisdiction throughout the county – is one of the lowest paid law enforcement agencies in the area.

Information provided by the two police organizations show that the starting salary for a certified police officer with the Henry County Police Department is \$36,523. By comparison, the starting pay in 2014 for a recruit at the Clayton County Police Department was \$36,610 and \$38,475 for a

certified officer.

The McDonough Police Department recently increased its starting salary for police officers from \$34,498 to \$38,089. Hampton's starting pay is \$41,609 and increases to \$45,000 after one year, according to information provided by the PBA and FOP.

Officials fear that the Henry County Police Department is becoming a "training ground" for new officers who leave to pursue higher paying positions elsewhere. As a result, the overall experience level in the department is declining – a situation that will likely get worse in the next five years or so when about 20 to 25 percent of nearly 225 officers will be eligible to retire, Gray said.

Gray and Bender said the PBA and FOP support the police department's budget request for the upcoming 2016-17 fiscal year.

Part of that proposal includes a request for an additional 20 personnel in the department, with an eye toward adding about 122 new hires over the next five years.

The justification for these new hires, according to a memo to Police Chief Keith Nichols, is that the department is currently operating with 100 fewer officers than what is recommended by the International Association of Chiefs of Police based on the county's population and average calls per year.

Specifically, Henry County's population in 2015 was estimated to be around 247,000 and the police department has responded to an average of 185,000 calls per year for the past five years, Major James Burch with the Uniform Patrol Division states in the memo.

"We have gained 40,000 more residents (since 2010), but the Police Department has lost 20 positions," Burch states.

Furthermore, the police department points to added commercial growth and development, which anticipates expansion of roads, and will require more manpower.

In addition to requesting funding for more personnel, the Henry County Police Department is requesting a compensation plan "to allow for retention of experienced personnel" in order "to ensure progressively qualified personnel are being developed for future roles within the department."

According to the proposed developmental pay plan, a newly hired non-certified officer still would be hired at a salary of \$33,644 and once graduating from the police academy, would be made Level I peace officer at a starting salary of \$36,523. From there, the officer would receive step and level increases based on longevity and successful completion of various professional courses and certifications.

"We have lost 151 officers since 2007," said Chief Nichols, pointing out that some was due to natural attrition, but much of it was due to officers leaving for higher paying positions elsewhere.

He said that the biggest obstacle the department faces is losing officers who were trained and certified through the Henry County Police Department to other agencies.

"We are experiencing a dilemma like we've never seen before where the city agencies pay more than the county, and now these officers are going to city agencies," Nichols said.

He said it appears the biggest hurdle is retaining those with about two to three years' experience in the department.

"So we are looking at giving them something tangible," the chief said.

Nichols said he has appealed since he was named chief in 2010, and even before that as deputy chief, for a pay plan for officers, but has not been successful.

"So, now we're taking a smaller bite at the apple," he said.

The current pay proposal, which targets just the uniform patrol division, would affect 93 officers at a cost of just under \$300,000.

A long-range plan to include each division within the department would be closer to \$900,000 to implement, according to information provided by the police department.

The police department's proposed 2016-17 budget is close to \$26.3 million – about \$8 million more than the current budget.

"A lot of that increase is capital projects we have put off for quite some time," said Nichols, pointing to the need for patrol cars and evidence tools, as examples. "This is the domino effect of us staying stagnant for many years."

Gray pointed out that the county did implement a 3 percent across-the-board pay raise last year, but with mandated increases for health insurance and other benefits, that raise was nominal. In some cases, he said, some employees actually saw their take-home income go down.

Gray and Bender said their respective organizations plan to take advantage of the upcoming election season by asking qualified candidates for the Henry County Commission how they would solve problems of officer retention. Endorsements will be made after the primary election.

"In the past, the FOB made its endorsement of candidates and the PBA made its endorsement," Bender said. "Now we are coming together."

Bender and Gray are currently employed with the Henry County Police Department, although their efforts advocating for the pay plan are solely on behalf of their respective organizations, they said. The veteran officers both stressed that any salary increases will not impact them personally, since they are nearing retirement themselves.

"It won't affect us," Gray said. "We have nothing to gain, except it will help us keep some people."

Aimee Jones



Be Advised...

with Doug Wyllie, PoliceOne Editor in Chief

What can be done about understaffing of police departments?

With this problem persisting beyond a reasonable period of time, we asked our PoliceOne members on our LinkedIn page to offer some solutions

Jul 13, 2016

There has recently been a spate of headlines decrying understaffing at police departments across the nation, with media reports coming from places such as Austin, Albuquerque, Burbank, Dallas, Pittsburgh, Portland and Washington, D.C.

Sadly, this trend is about seven years old.

Police agencies were severely hit when municipal tax revenues went in the tank following the housing bubble burst and the "Great Recession" began in 2008. At its worst stage, many agencies lost as much as 10 to 15 percent of their work force through a combination of attrition and layoffs — mostly layoffs. Even when the economy recovered (and it's a debatable point that it truly has recovered for many cities and individuals who live there), those shrunken police budgets did not substantially bounce back. Some positions were added, but many agencies were forced to "do more with less" — the new normal.

Another contributing factor for agencies that continue to struggle to attract qualified candidates for this great profession is the "Ferguson Effect." It is widely accepted that in the aftermath of that incident on West Florissant Avenue, a whole host of potential recruits looked at the profession and simply changed their minds, choosing instead to pursue a totally different profession. This is understandable when considering a career path in which simply doing their job could land them in court, in jail, or in the grave. Suddenly, becoming a computer engineer looks incredibly appealing. So, what can be done?

10 Opinions from LinkedIn

With this problem persisting beyond a reasonable period of time, we asked our PoliceOne members active on our LinkedIn page to offer some solutions. Here are 10 of those opinions (edited for brevity and clarity). Add your own thoughts in the comments area below.

Greg King: Current events reveal a greater need for our services than ever before, but society in large part doesn't seem to place a value on the services we provide. Arguably some of our own employers don't truly value what we do. Can we capitalize on this opportunity to market what we can do for them? Seems we would have the high ground in this dilemma if we were a private business. But we are sworn to duty in this profession and our customers can have their cake and eat it too.

Russel Workman: Privatize a portion of the uniform and investigative branches with highly rated and respected security/private investigation companies, free up sworn personnel for selective enforcement in areas they are needed most.

Darrin Zehnpfennig: This is a reflection of police reputation being attacked by the media (coupled) with cutting benefits, pay, and the elimination of pension plans. While middle class cost of living has increased, many departments have frozen wages, and cut benefits. You get what you pay for. Officers are asked to take on more responsibility every year. Agencies want the best of the best but instead they get what they pay for.

Roy Turnwall: Stop looking for perfect candidates. Value experience — there is a lot to be said for a candidate who is currently working as a police officer for a government agency with an excellent work history.

Martin Gilliland: The lack of organizational commitment, community commitment, personnel commitment and the list can go on. Our "leadership" is more concerned about themselves than anything else. People leave good jobs because of the lack of true all-around good leadership. It looks like the "me generation" has taken over. I would say the spate of negative publicity hasn't helped, but leadership comes into play in this area as well. Take control of the situation! Don't let outside influences dictate what you need to do.

Richard Dettmer: There are at least two reasons for understaffing. First is as mentioned by some already the fact that "becoming a police officer is not as attractive as it used to be." Pay and retirement benefits used to be very good in the '90s to early 2000s and the work was not as hazardous as it is today plus there was more respect given to good cops by the general public. The second is one of economics — not yours, but cities, counties, and states. The very reasons that made being a cop a good choice went south. Local governments could not afford to offer the great pensions, early retirements, salaries and other benefits so what did they do to cut costs? New hire benefit plans were reduced and required copay, LE positions were cut if not eliminated and cops had to do more with less even with perhaps too strong a cop union support on their side. Lastly, cops started getting bad raps — some deservedly, most not so — that lost some of their public trust. Blame the cell video or whatever, but it hurt.

TK Brown: In this current climate, I'm not sure we could get more qualified applicants if there were a large pay increase. That could help some, but it won't solve the entire problem. And it's not just recruitment, its retention of current officers. We need to try and keep the solid, seasoned officers

instead of letting them walk away when they get other offers.

Fredric McQuiggan: The fix to labor shortages is no great mystery. Departments can either raise pay and benefits and/or increase the size of the hiring pool (i.e. lower the minimum hiring standards for police). Problem solved!

Tim Gordon: Pay, benefits, and resources. Pay your officers a rate commensurate with the community they serve. Give them good health and traditional retirement. Then support them publicly when they do their job. Provide them with the resources they need to work safely. Cars with 200000 miles and working solo tours make you question the commitment of your administration — add to that the traditional nepotism and corruption of government and you can see why many officers become disillusioned with their chosen profession. Oh yes, and provide them with training, lots of training. But make sure it's relevant to what they need and not just smoke and mirrors PR for political reaction.

Michael Habash: Find a way to recruit midcareer professionals from other fields looking for a change. Right now if someone wants to leave their field and enter law enforcement it comes with a pay cut. Millennial tend to switch career more frequently, are well educated and could help meet public expectations.

Conclusion

Historically, a commonly accepted "standard" staffing level was one officer for every 1,000 citizens. This ratio is, of course, not present in truly massive cities like New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles, where the geography and other factors allow a lower ratio. But in too many jurisdictions, the problem of understaffing has police: citizen ratios nowhere near that level. In those places, police service can be slower for the citizens and more dangerous for the police.

Somehow, the profession needs to address this issue. Sound off with your thoughts in the comments area below.

About the author

Doug Wyllie is Editor in Chief of PoliceOne, responsible for setting the editorial direction of the website and managing the planned editorial features by our roster of expert writers. An award-winning columnist — he is the 2014 Western Publishing Association "Maggie Award" winner in the category of Best Regularly Featured Digital Edition Column — Doug has authored more than 900 feature articles and tactical tips on a wide range of topics and trends that affect the law enforcement community. Doug is a member of International Law Enforcement Educators and Trainers Association (ILEETA), an Associate Member of the California Peace Officers' Association (CPOA), and a member of the Public Safety Writers Association (PSWA). Doug is active in his support for the law enforcement community, contributing his time and talents toward police-related charitable events as well as participating in force-on-force training, search-and-rescue training, and other scenario-based training designed to prepare cops for the fight they face every day on the street.

Read more articles by PoliceOne Editor in Chief Doug Wyllie by clicking [here](#).

Contact Doug Wyllie

DeKalb County considers police pay and retention

Posted: 12:04 p.m. Friday, Feb. 12, 2016

When officers leave the DeKalb Police Department, they often list pay as the main reason, according to a county analysis of exit interviews.

But DeKalb officials say the county's police salaries are competitive, and officers are departing for a variety of reasons including lower-stress jobs with better benefits. Last year, 96 officers left the county's force of more than 800 officers, some of whom went to departments that offer higher pay.

DeKalb police are seeking a raise in the county's 2016 budget, saying it would help stem attrition. All DeKalb employees received a 3 percent raise in 2014, but before then they hadn't received an increase since 2007. Police and fire employees also received a one-time 3 percent bonus in 2013.

Interim DeKalb CEO Lee May said county needs to figure out how to retain officers.

"The salary survey that was done will show that in general they're in line with the market, but as you can see the numbers bear out that we have way too many leaving for all of our comfort levels," May said during a committee meeting Tuesday. "In my mind, we need to be ahead of the market."

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MARK NIESSE More than two dozen police officers and firefighters stood in solidarity as they asked the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners for ... read more

Most of those police officers who completed exit interviews remained in law enforcement, joining other local, state or federal agencies.

About 44 percent of those surveyed said pay was their main reason for leaving.

Other reasons included a lack of take-home cars, safety issues, long commutes, retirement and "job not a good fit," according to the county's exit interview analysis.

Policing in DeKalb comes with a heavy workload, with officers going from incident to incident and little time to

spend in their communities, said Jeff Wiggs, president of the DeKalb Fraternal Order of Police.

"The bottom line is that the officers want to be compensated for the work they're doing," Wiggs said in an interview. "We have to lead. If we just meet par with everyone else, officers are going to keep leaving."

Commissioners say they're trying to find money for raises in this year's budget, which is scheduled for a vote Feb. 25, but further pay adjustments would have to be made as part of midyear budget adjustments because the county's pay study won't be completed until late April.

"Pay is one of the issues, but it doesn't seem to be the only issue," said DeKalb Chief Operating Officer Zach Williams.

Entry-level officers in DeKalb receive salaries averaging \$38,626, which is lower than departments in Atlanta and in Clayton, Cobb, Fulton and Gwinnett counties. The area's average pay for entry-level officers is \$40,930.

DeKalb pays its more experienced officers better. Master Police Officers, who generally have five years of experience or more, make an average of \$51,307 in DeKalb compared to \$50,171 in the metro Atlanta area.

The county's analysis didn't include MARTA or city police departments other than Atlanta, which in some cases pay higher salaries.

DeKalb firefighters are paid less than than police compared to nearby jurisdictions. Fire Department pay is about 15 percent below market averages, according to DeKalb Human Resources estimates.

Average Master Police Officer pay

Atlanta: \$56,364

Clayton: \$46,016

Cobb: \$49,477

DeKalb: \$51,307

Fulton: \$42,631

Gwinnett: \$56,369

Market average: \$50,171

For more details about metro Atlanta pay rates, please visit <http://on-ajc.com/1QbKHL8>

Source: DeKalb County Human Resources

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Sixth person charged in Powell's death

TOP STORY

Two police academies close due to low enrollment

By Eppie Pallangyo St. Joseph News-Press Jul 29, 2016



Two Basic Law Enforcement Training academies in northern Missouri have been canceled due to low enrollment.

The Livingston County Sheriff's Office and Missouri Sheriff's Association joined forces to offer the academy — which was scheduled to begin in August — in both Chillicothe and Kirksville, Missouri.

“My understanding is that the academy must have a minimum of 10 students enrolled to have each academy,” said Steve Cox, Livingston County sheriff. “For Chillicothe, I think we only had three students that qualified for enrollment and I believe Kirksville had none.”

Cox said, due to the low enrollment at both locations, they were unable to combine the cadets into one academy, therefore the Sheriff's Association “reluctantly had to cancel both.”

He said a variety of factors could have contributed to low enrollment including recent negative national headlines concerning officers.

“Some of it may be the current attitude or what you see in policing in the United States and Missouri. ... Some of it may be economical,” Cox said.

He also noted salary in rural Missouri is lower compared to other areas.

“Honestly, if they want to make good money, they need to go to the Highway Patrol, work for bigger cities like St. Joseph, Kansas City, St. Louis and some of those suburbs around there pay pretty well — or get their bachelor’s degree and work for a federal organization,” Cox said.

Last year, the academy in Chillicothe also was cancelled due to low enrollment. The year before, when the Livingston County Sheriff’s Office first came together with the Sheriff’s Association, they were able to hold an academy.

“I think we had 11 start that academy, and then we had around eight graduate,” Cox said.

He said multiple inquiries regarding training prompted the department to offer the academy, and it’s “unfortunate” they couldn’t host it.

“In the class we had two years ago, we were able to hire one of the guys that graduated,” Cox said.

“There are days around here we could easily use 10 more deputies,” Cox said. “I’m not trying to suggest that we hire 10 more, but, realistically, we could use two more people to significantly help with the requirements we have.”

He said the Livingston County Sheriff’s Office has a bailiff position vacant, but overall they are properly staffed.

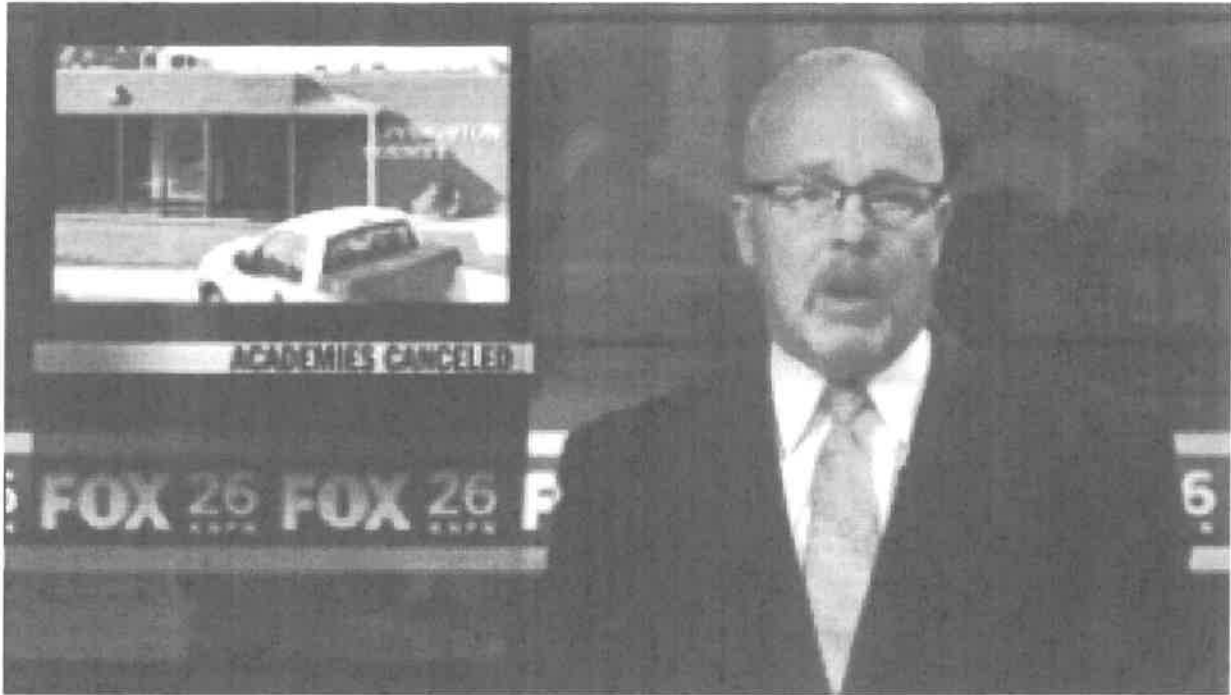
The deputies also were able to earn additional income working as instructors during the academy and scout potential hires.

“They had a good feel about the applicants’ work ethic, knowledge and skills — so that was an advantage for us as being the host agency,” Cox said.

If people express interest, he will host another academy, he said.

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Two police academies close due to low enrollment
Jul 29, 2016