

**WHAT WILL BE THE AFFECT OF CURRENT TAXPAYER ATTITUDES  
ON THE ABILITY OF POLICE DEPARTMENTS TO FUND  
ADDITIONAL HUMAN RESOURCES IN THE FUTURE?**

JOURNAL ARTICLE

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**This Command College Independent Study Project is a FUTURES study of a particular emerging issue in law enforcement. Its purpose is NOT to predict the future but rather to project a number of possible scenarios for strategic planning consideration.**

**Defining the future differs from analyzing the past because the future has not yet happened. In this project, useful alternatives have been formulated systematically so that the planner can respond to a range of possible future environments.**

**Managing the future means influencing the future--creating it, constraining it, adapting to it. A futures study points the way.**

**The views and conclusions expressed in the Command College project are those of the author and are not necessarily those of the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST).**

The focus of this article is the future impact of negative taxpayer attitudes on the acquisition of human resources for a medium sized police agency. As this article is being written, the philosophy of community oriented policing and problem solving is permeating the nation. While initial results seem to indicate great success in the reduction of the incidence of crime, the fear of crime and enhancement of the quality of life, it is at the same time labor intensive and service expansive. Indicative of contemporary police attitudes toward this topic is this statement from a recent professional publication, "Even though budgetary constraints are a way of life, police organizations compete only with other governmental agencies for resources. And as an essential public service, they usually are assured a subsistent revenue stream. So despite myriad calls to adopt business practices, become entrepreneurial, privatize, or create some form of competitive environment in relevant service areas, few feel compelled to change." <sup>1</sup>

Another author in the same publication, discussing the change to community policing comments, "Paramount to a successful change is understanding and embracing a new paradigm for policing; a paradigm which is inclusive and proactive, which teaches the skills of facilitation, team building and group dynamics, and which takes the approach that in order to be successful peacekeepers we must provide the community with quality police service."<sup>2</sup> In comparing these statements one might conclude that this new paradigm has apparently overlooked the economic aspects of delivering police services. If the first author is correct, why should we be concerned about resource allocation? An article in Western City magazine makes the reason clear. "Since 1984, spending per capita on police services

by cities has increased nearly 40 percent, after adjusting for inflation." <sup>3</sup>

## HISTORY

In the several decades preceding the 1990s, cities in general, and police departments in particular, had become accustomed to regular, incremental increases in funding and human resources. As a result, a sense of complacency and comfort dominated police management as the new decade unfolded. This was, however, to be short lived. Early in the 90's a major recession settled over the nation. Unlike recent previous periods of economic downturn, California was not spared the pain and loss. In fact, the recession in California was deeper and longer than that experienced in the rest of the country. The golden state, which had enjoyed virtually uninterrupted decades of growth and prosperity, was to be in for a serious dose of economic reality. In an article in the Economist the process that occurred was described this way. "For the fourth time in the past 150 years, California is remaking itself. After the gold rush, the oil gush and the defence boom, here comes knowledge-intensive employment." <sup>4</sup>

Although the concept of taxpayer revolt is not new, it is only recently that its full effects have come home to roost. The modern chapter in the saga of negative taxpayer attitudes in California began in 1978 with the passage of Proposition 13. Author Joel Handler remarks on Proposition 13 in this manner, "The taxpayers revolt - which shows no signs of abating soon - plus national and state deficits have resulted in a significant downward flow

of governmental authority." <sup>5</sup> These forces, which taxpayer attitudes have set in motion and negative economic conditions exacerbate, gave birth to the technique known as unfunded mandates. This practice is a direct result of the unwillingness of politicians to increase taxes. Handler also notes, "More and more public activities are being carried out at the local level, and indeed local taxes are increasing." <sup>6</sup> In response to this tactic, angry taxpayers recently passed Proposition 218.

As this drama unfolded over the years, the issue of privatization has become a frequently recommended solution to the woes of local government. The dichotomy presented by these factors was clearly expressed in the book Privatizing the United States Justice System which noted, "Municipal governments have experienced a period of adjustment and retrenchment as taxpayers have demanded that taxes be reduced without sacrifices in service quality." <sup>7</sup> As would be expected, the proponents of public law enforcement are outraged at the prospect of privatizing policing. This view is expressed in the book Privatization and the Welfare State in these words, "...provision of the policing services on a collective but not public good basis undermines some of the key requirements placed on public policing, particularly impartiality, equality of provision and public accountability." <sup>8</sup> Presenting the other end of the spectrum, the authors note "In thinking about privatization, therefore, it is important to note that it is the function - law enforcement and community protection - that is necessarily public, not existing institutional and organizational arrangements." <sup>9</sup>

With the recent recovery of the economy, grant funding, especially from the federal level,

has increased markedly. At the moment this seems to provide a short term solution to the question of how to fund increased human resource needs. In fact, the evidence of the short term nature of this solution is starting to surface even now. An article in Law Enforcement News encapsulates the issue. The City of Toledo, Ohio availed themselves of federal COPS funding to add up to 100 personnel to their Police Department. After committing to the program, the City's financial condition took a turn for the worse in the form of lower than expected revenues. The City now faces the prospect of returning \$7.6 million in COPS grants if they cannot find matching funds and produce a viable plan to retain personnel hired under the program. <sup>10</sup>

### **DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC PLAN**

In thinking about the issue at hand, future funding of human resources, several options suggest themselves. Among the familiar, and in many cases little used, options are regionalization, privatization, organizational restructuring, automation and grant funding.

Regionalization is a method of combining the resources of several smaller agencies into a single larger organization. In this concept administrative and support services, or even entire functions or agencies, are combined into a more efficient single unit with a net reduction of human resources by eliminating duplication and administrative overhead.

In the article called "Can Police Services Be Privatized?", Fixler and Poole noted, "The

major barriers to police privatization include tradition and attitudes, concern about control and accountability, union opposition, legal restrictions, and the difficulty of encouraging all beneficiaries to finance these services voluntarily, or privately." <sup>11</sup> Simplistically speaking, the services provided by a police organization can be divided into either public or private goods; a good in this context referring to a service. A public good is one provided collectively to the community without regard to who pays the cost. A public good is traditionally produced in the public sector and funded by taxation. A private good, by definition, is one consumed individually and available only to those who pay for it. The traditional view is that law enforcement falls solidly into the category of public goods. There are, however, many services that are more closely allied to the private goods definition, except that they are funded at least partially by taxation. These would include vacation house checks, police escorts for funerals, traffic direction at construction sites and alarm response.

In considering the role of grant funding, its availability, costs of assumption, limitation/oversight and longevity are essential issues. At the present time the climate for grant funding is ideal and monies are readily available. This has not always been the case and probably will not be in the future if history is any judge.

With the advent of the new millennium, automation is being touted as the panacea for public and private sector alike. There is no doubt that automation technology has tremendous potential for all of us. We must make critical assessments and construct

cohesive information technology plans.

Finally, we must look at the composition of the police department and the law enforcement profession of the future, referred to as restructuring. The mix of sworn and civilian personnel and the functions performed by each, the role of law enforcement in the community, the relationships of private enterprise to local, county, state and federal agencies and how they should be realigned or consolidated must be reviewed and considered for restructuring.

### **THE RECOMMENDED STRATEGY**

In discussion with stakeholders and fellow practitioners, it becomes clear that there is no normative answer to the issue of human resource funding. In fact, the answer may well be that the issue is improperly stated because it inadvertently suggests a continuation of the status quo. Therefore, the recommended strategy is a conglomeration of approaches designed to bring together the disparate components of this issue and produce a multi-faceted, yet cohesive, resolution.

The first step in the process is to conduct an assessment of the role of law enforcement in the community, which includes all interested stakeholders, as it pertains to the type and cost of services to be provided. The second step in this process is to define what the essential elements of the role of a sworn officer should be in the future. Inherent in this process, is

the defining of the potential complementary role of civilian service providers and alternative hiring options such as a military style short term enlistment. In principle, we will be determining what functions require the authority, training, expertise and expense of a career police officer. The third step will be the formulation of a long range information technology plan for the Police Department. This will include investigating, assessing and integrating the most efficient and cost effective technologies for supporting the delivery of police services. The final step in the process will include costing out all of the various components of the strategy and then determining what combination of city general funds, grants, privatization, service decreases or deletions, automation, internal realignment and/or regionalization will coincide with available fiscal resources. Once the plan is in place, it will need to be reviewed periodically by police management, elected officials and the public.

### **TRANSITION MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The strategy being proposed is comprehensive, radical and broad based. Successful execution of the plan will require a skillful, visionary, well communicated approach. It is the nature of organizations, and those that compose them, to resist change. During change there is a high level of perceived inconsistency, stress levels are elevated, conflict increases, and the wagons are circled. In simpler terms, the good old days syndrome comes to the surface.

The first step in managing change is defining the desired result. It will be the job of the Chief of Police and his management team to clearly articulate the vision and values of the strategic plan. This entails communicating a complete word picture of where the organization wants to be. In order to cope with organizational concerns over change the vision must be clear, consistent and inspired. Members of the organization must be provided enough information to envision the future. There cannot be too much information provided. The next step is to identify the current state of the organizational culture. This will include determining areas of support and resistance. Management can then build on the former and address the latter. The actual work of implementing the strategic plan is a process of building commitment in the organization, identifying the management team that will carry out the plan, creating the necessary systems and processes and setting objectives and timetables. Once these steps are determined they must be clearly communicated throughout the organization, progress must be closely monitored and necessary modifications made as developments occur. In the course of this process, those individuals who are responding positively and setting the example must be publically recognized and commended.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to achieve a successful resolution of how to fund human resources in the future, a few key points must be adhered to. They include:

1. Start early and often to champion the need for addressing this issue.

2. Identify and include all potential stakeholders.
3. Seek broad consensus on the Strategic Plan.
4. Maintain open communication within the organization and with stakeholders and elected and appointed officials.
5. Put aside personal agendas and preferred outcomes.
6. Be flexible and open to new ideas.
7. Appoint persons with high levels of credibility with stakeholders to facilitate meetings.

### CONCLUSION

The purpose of studying this issue and going through the process outlined is to provide the organization with the ability to manage a desired future. We have all become at least quasi-experts in the sport of crisis management. One would think that going through that frustrating and often fruitless exercise would drive us to finding a better way to do business. Apparently, however, we enjoy the thrill of the sporting event, for we repeat it over and over.

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