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- Michigan Association of Chiefs of Police
- Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards
- Michigan Sheriffs Association
- Neighborhood Associations of Michigan

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- Grand Haven
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- Harper Woods
- Ingham County
- Jackson
- Kalkaska County
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- Kentwood
- Lansing
- Leelanau County
- Marquette County
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- Warren
- Washtenaw County
- Ypsilanti

Community Engagement: Stakeholder Participation in the Design of the Police Service Delivery System

THE HOLLAND, MICHIGAN EXPERIENCE

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The summer of 1999 was a watershed period for the City of Holland, Michigan and the Holland Police Department. A community and police department known for innovation in community policing and dealing with an ever-changing community was once again faced with the remnants of suspected gang violence in residential areas bordering a vibrant downtown. The area had experienced similar gang related activity in 1995. Through community policing initiatives, aggressive problem solving, and prosecution the problem was virtually eliminated. The community officers assigned to these fragile neighborhoods in the interim period became part of the community fabric, and created a sense of well being for both residents and adjacent business owners.

As demand for police service grew in Holland, the assignment of the community officers went through a variety of transitions and schedule changes. Officers, who once dedicated 100 percent of their time to specific neighborhoods, began spending less time in these neighborhoods, while handling routine calls for service along with a variety of other duties. This by itself caused concern on the part of residents in these neighborhoods. However, when a series of gang related arsons occurred during the summer of 1999, residents called for the return of "their" community officers. Out of frustration and concern for their neighborhoods, residents circulated petitions for the reassignment of "their" officers and presented the petitions to the Holland City Council.

The Chief of Police in conjunction with the City Manager proposed creating a citizens committee to problem solve the specific issue of officer utilization and assignment, as well as addressing issues of crime, fear of crime, and police service delivery system of the Holland Police Department. Representatives from the National Center for Community Policing and the Michigan Regional Community Policing Institute at Michigan State University were commissioned to facilitate such a process.

From this “simple” proposal began a dynamic process of community engagement that potentially could transform the delivery of police services in Holland. This unique experience totally engaged the community through actual citizen participation, and through extensive media coverage of all Committee activities. Specific information concerning the processes undertaken and the resulting outcomes of the Holland experience are described below.

THE COMMITTEE

The Holland City Council proposed the formation of a citizens committee at the request of Holland’s Police Chief John Kruithoff and City Manager Soren Wolff to review the current delivery of police services and make recommendations for improvement. As the concept of using a citizens group to assist in the process became known in the community, support for the idea solidified very rapidly. The most significant demonstration of this support was the donation of \$10,000 from a locally based corporation to help underwrite the project. Facilitators from Michigan State University were retained to assist in the conceptual development of the project and to facilitate the process. The process was designed utilizing a problem-solving format which would allow members of the police department and the community at large to provide input to the Citizens Committee.

The **Holland Police Department Community Study Committee 2000** appointed by the Holland City Council consisted of 28 members plus two facilitators from The National Center for Community Policing at Michigan State University. The Committee was reflective of Holland with representatives from neighborhoods, the business community (both large and small), schools, Hope College, the courts, City government, City Council, Central Dispatch, the faith community and Holland Police Department. All members appointed to the Committee participated

throughout the process with the exception of three. An alternate represented one of these, and the other two were removed for non-participation.

STUDY COMMITTEE GOALS

The charge to the **Holland Police Department Community Study Committee 2000** was to attain the following goals:

- To review the delivery of police services by the Holland Police Department;
- To examine the implementation of community policing within the police department; and
- To make recommendations based on the input from the Holland Police Department, the community at large, and Committee itself.

STUDY COMMITTEE PROCESS

One of the major concerns of the government officials involved in the endeavor, as well as, that of the Committee members themselves, was the time commitment to such a process. Therefore, the role of the facilitators was to develop a series of processes to accomplish the Committee’s goals in a reasonable period of time.

The Committee met five times during the months of January, February, March, and April of 2000. Each meeting lasted between four to five hours and all were designed to achieve specific outcomes in a building block fashion. This process format allowed for the participation of each member, as well as providing a learning environment for the entire Committee. Each meeting was advertised and open to the public. The Grand Rapids and Holland media closely followed all Committee meetings and the work of the Committee reporting on progress with a high degree of accuracy.

Detailed minutes of each meeting documented the Committee's progress and the goals of future meetings. The Committee formally accepted the minutes from each previous meeting. Agendas with specific outcomes were developed for each meeting and adhered to by the facilitators. The work products of each meeting were documented by the facilitators and provided to Committee members for their review, comment, and acceptance at the next meeting. The Committee also hosted a "Town Hall Meeting" to elicit input from the broader community. The Committee's final task was to draft a list of recommendations that were subsequently endorsed by the entire committee, and submitted to the Holland City Council along with a report from the facilitators.

◆ 1st Session – Defining the Scope of the Problem

Police Chief Kruthoff welcomed members to the first meeting and provided them with their "charge" or task as a committee. The facilitators from Michigan State worked the members through a planning process designed to elicit perceptions about the relationship between the police department and the community, capture initial impressions of community policing, define community policing, and address a specific focus question.

A series of short-answer questions intended to summarize the Committee's insights were presented to the group and their responses tracked for future reference. The questions were:

- *What were the most surprising or important things you've seen or heard tonight?*
- *What important aspects of community/police relationships have not been adequately discussed thus far?*
- *What important challenges face Holland and the Holland Police Department now and in the near future?*

- *What aspects of community policing will help you meet these challenges?*
- *What role should the community play in meeting these challenges?*

Through individual brainstorming and small group discussion, the participants next developed their answer to the following focus question: *What are the best ways the Holland Police Department can work with the community to improve conditions here?* The group's responses were grouped into the six categories of:

- Community connection (Involve community more directly in the work of the police department)
- Promotion (Expand the ways in which the public gains a deeper understanding of the police department's efforts and the needs of the community)
- Resources (Working with the community stakeholders in the prioritization of services will address critical resource issues)
- Call Management (The community needs to be engaged in developing an effective and efficient call management strategy)
- Diversity (The police department needs to continue its aggressive efforts in making the department reflective of the greater community)
- Prevention (The Holland Police Department and all of its community partners need to maintain an emphasis on prevention)

The Committee was asked whether any of the recommendations were "catalytic" meaning that, if they were followed, all of the other recommendations would automatically be easier to implement. The group identified the following three recommendations as catalytic:

- Community Connection
- Promotion
- Resources

◆ 2nd Session – Providing Base Knowledge Information on Community Policing

Maintaining a building block approach, the second Committee meeting was an intensive educational effort aimed at acquainting members with a variety of information pertinent to the Holland Police Department and the philosophy of community policing. Committee members received the following information.

- The Michigan State University facilitators distributed notebooks containing information on “what” community policing is, departments successfully utilizing the philosophy and the processes they are using.
- Police Chief Kruithoff presented a profile of the Holland Police Department for the past ten years in terms of crime, calls for service, staffing levels (including community policing) and budget allocations.
- A presentation by a Lansing City Council member, from the perspective of a neighborhood leader who had experienced a variety of community policing transitions, from a single neighborhood officer to a team approach to community policing. Another prominent theme of the presentation was how the community and police department worked collaboratively to resolve community problems.
- The acceptance and review of the reports from the Police Department and Holland Police Department’s Study Committee 2000 facilitation’s.
- The definition of community policing developed by the National Center for Community Police comprising the three tenants of: “Customer Based Organizational Transformation”; “Unlimited Partnerships”; and “An Informational Based Unified Effort to Solve Problems”.
- Collating all the information presented for utilization by the Citizen’s Committee.

◆ 3rd Session – Town Hall Meeting

The third meeting expanded the information gathering process on the part of the Committee by soliciting input from the greater community to assist in shaping the member’s final recommendations. The meeting was structured to engage community participants and solicit specific information, not just to allow each guest a few minutes to speak. The Town Hall meeting was heavily advertised through the Grand Rapids and Holland media to encourage participation. The advance work of the committee paid dividends, with attendance of community members at the meeting far exceeding Committee expectations.

A process was developed that would assure intense interaction between community guests and Committee members. A number of work groups were developed with Committee members assuming the roles of facilitator and recorder. Community members were divided between work groups. Flip charts were utilized to record the issues raised in each group. Following the meeting each group facilitator and recorder drafted a summary of each individual group’s issues and interactions. In addition to the small group interaction, attendees were asked to complete an anonymous questionnaire to solicit additional information. The individual group reports and responses to questionnaires were collated and distributed to all Committee members prior to their fourth session.

The significant questions dealt with in the small work groups and the questionnaire were as follows:

- What do you want to see the Holland Police Department doing in the next two years?
- What services are needed that are not being addressed?
- How can you as a citizen assist community policing?

- What issue(s) is important to you that needs to be addressed by the Holland Police Department and/or community?
- Generally, the contacts you have experienced with any member of the Holland Police Department have been:
 - ❑ very positive
 - ❑ generally positive
 - ❑ neutral
 - ❑ not positive
 - ❑ extremely negative
- If you could change anything about the Police Department, it would be:
- The responsibility of the community in crime and social disorder issues is:
- Community policing means to me:
- Any other comments you would like to make:
- Representation (why did you come to the meeting):

◆ 4th Session – Visioning for the Future with Practical Application

A visioning exercise culminating in the formulation of the Study Committee’s final recommendations was conducted at the March 9, 2000 meeting. These two final products of the Study Committee were the final outcomes of the learning and information gathering that had occurred over the previous two months.

The members were asked to individually develop their own thoughts of what the Holland Police Department “would look like” in ten years. The purpose of this “visioning process” was the application of the knowledge gained by Committee, and to prepare the Committee in the development of its final recommendations.

The facilitators then grouped the Committee members individual responses into the following six categories:

- ◆ Community Engagement (partnerships)
- ◆ Staffing/Organizational Transformation

- ◆ Problem Solving (proactive approach to identified issues)
- ◆ Technology (enhanced efficiency)
- ◆ Training
- ◆ Miscellaneous

Committee members were then divided into five teams. The task presented to each team was to develop recommendations for the future delivery of police services in Holland, Michigan. The resulting recommendations were based on:

- ◆ Individual Committee member knowledge of Holland and the Holland Police Department.
- ◆ Knowledge of the community policing philosophy.
- ◆ Input from the greater community.
- ◆ Policing “best practices” presented highlighting other police agencies.

Each group developed a series of recommendations that were presented to the entire Committee. Each work group’s recommendations were fully discussed and Committee consensus was reached on all reported recommendations. While several of the recommendations had a common theme, the process allowed for the widest possible range of responses.

HOLLAND POLICE DEPARTMENT COMMUNITY STUDY COMMITTEE 2000 RECOMMENDATIONS

The Study Committee’s recommendations are listed below (duplicate or like recommendations were eliminated from the following list).

- Develop a web-site for public access allowing for both real-time (as technology allows) and historical data.
- Consider a reverse 911 type system for public notification of significant public safety issues in specific neighborhoods or on a citywide basis.

- Create a position within the Department that has responsibility for the development and management of technology. This position either sworn or civilian, should also be responsible for the functions of research and training.
- Provide citywide community policing, with every officer assigned to an area and team.
- Implement a K-9 unit.
- Implement call management protocols which provide the Department with the knowledge and ability to design service responses to meet Department and community needs.
- Train all officers in interpersonal communication skills.
- Place full-time “School Resource Officers” in all middle and high schools.
- Create community officers in schools and/or businesses throughout the community for officer and citizen access.
- Break city into areas and have the same group of officers assigned (team policing), keeping community officers in “targeted areas” as team leaders.
- Involve areas businesses in the community-policing program.
- Align staffing levels with political and community expectations in terms of officers in neighborhoods, and secure the financial resources necessary to accomplish this through a multitude of potential sources, to include the business community.
- Develop an on-going system for professional staff development in the areas of cultural awareness, team building, communication skills, and dispute resolution.
- Align and prioritize the role of the police, in conjunction with other community resources, in the handling of non-criminal tasks.
- Increase the pool of qualified police candidates for employment through community partnership to aid in making the Department reflective of the greater community.
- Improve communication both within the Police Department (between individuals and work groups) as well as with the community as a whole.
- Increase office visibility throughout the community.
- Develop a volunteer cadre within the Police Department to create more time for community policing activities utilizing cadets and senior citizens.

NATIONAL CENTER FOR COMMUNITY POLICING RECOMMENDATION

After a complete review of all the information made available to the Study Committee and the Committee’s recommendations, the facilitators from the National Center for Community Policing recommended the following change for the future delivery of police services by the Holland Police Department. The recommendation takes into account those proposed by the Study Committee and the recommendations generated from the Holland Police Department’s internal planning session conducted as a portion of the review process.

- **It is recommended that the Holland Police Department adopt the community policing philosophy for the delivery of police services on a departmental wide basis.**

The recommendation, while having several facets, was the most appropriate course of action based on all the inputs provided to the facili-

tators. Approached in a systematic manner, the total implementation of community policing will greatly enhance the effectiveness, efficiency, and equitableness of police services in Holland. The ultimate goal of such a change effort is to reduce crime, the fear of crime and improve and sustain the quality of life for all Holland residents and businesses.

While the total implementation of the community policing philosophy within any agency is an ongoing evolving process, the facilitators provided a checklist of planning and implementation initiatives that would begin the process of the Holland Police Department becoming a total community policing agency.

CONCLUSION

The City of Holland and the Holland Police Department by instituting the Holland Police Department Study Committee 2000 addressed critical issues in shaping the future of the Holland Police Department. The open engagement of the community in this endeavor made the Holland experience totally unique. The maturation of the Committee, its coming together as one to deal with complex issues, and its enthusiasm for the community and the Police Department was truly

amazing. The complexity of the Committee's recommendations demonstrates the depth of understanding attained by the Committee in a very short period of time. An ongoing challenge for the City and the Police Department will be to nurture and maintain the community partnership that was developed through the Study Committee.

Initially there was thought by some that the problems currently facing the Holland Police could be solved if there were additional patrol officers hired and placed in the existing organizational structure and deployment plans. The addition of sworn staff may ultimately be justified. However, it became evident through the Committee's work, input from those who participated in the Town Hall meeting, and the many lively discussions that occurred during the four month study period, that the first priority that needed to be addressed by the City, the Police Department and the community was "what do you want the Holland Police Department to do differently"? The final recommendation encompasses several emerging needs of the community and the Holland Police Department that are strong indicators of how a police department must evaluate their service delivery system. The question of adequate resources, including staff, must be addressed in the appropriate sequence of implementing change.

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