



## Final Report

# METHUEN POLICE DEPARTMENT PERFORMANCE AUDIT



This document contains the best opinion of CNA at the time of issue.

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# Acknowledgements

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CNA acknowledges the support and assistance we received from Mayor Neil Perry, members of the Methuen City Council, and the Methuen Police Department in completing this report. The input, experiences, data, and resources we received were invaluable in conducting our research and compiling our findings and recommendations. The assistance and input provided throughout our assessment were essential to this audit.

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# Executive Summary

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In May of 2020, the City of Methuen, through a competitive bid, selected the CNA Center for Justice Research and Innovation to conduct a performance audit of the Methuen Police Department (MPD). In conducting this audit, the CNA team developed an objective and in-depth understanding of MPD's operations in areas including budget, equipment, training, staffing levels, and processes (hiring, equipment acquisition, and development of policies and procedures). After the onset of the audit, the CNA audit team was made aware of concerns about department leadership, organizational culture, and department personnel morale. Although the City of Methuen did not originally contract with the CNA audit team to explore these issues, we expanded the scope of our inquiry and this report to reflect these emerging topics.

The CNA audit team developed this report by reviewing department operations, policies, procedures, general orders, department data, and culture. The report includes findings and actionable recommendations that outline specific items for improvement related to different areas of department operation. To develop these, we compared MPD's standard operating procedures with national best and evidence-based practices, Massachusetts Police Accreditation Standards, and practices of similar Massachusetts law enforcement agencies. The audit team also collected data from interviews and surveys of department personnel. This report presents the results, findings, and recommendations from the audit.

CNA's comprehensive assessment of MPD included an examination of the following:

- Organizational structure and governance
- Budgeting and planning
- Operating policies and procedures
- Department culture
- Professional standards and accountability

As a result of this audit, our key findings include:

- MPD lacks a formal procedure or process for conducting a comprehensive review of policies and procedures on a regular basis.
- Members of the organization do not trust the department's use of the assessment center to make promotional decisions because there seem to be conflicting interests involved in the process.
- The MPD's high number of assigned specialist positions is not warranted, given its size and operations.
- There is widespread perception that favoritism affects management and discipline decisions within the MPD.

- MPD officers do not feel confident in making formal or informal complaints or expressing concern relating to department operations and management.
- The demographics of MPD are not representative of the demographics of the City of Methuen.

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# Introduction

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The constantly evolving nature of public safety provides daily challenges to law enforcement agencies nationwide, as evidenced by the increase in public scrutiny on police-community relations in the past few years, the rapidly evolving use of technology and social media, and the recent challenges related to the public health and safety crisis of COVID-19. Law enforcement agencies must be nimble and responsive to these challenges by assessing, adapting, and improving their organizational policies and practices to reflect the values of their communities, align with best practices in the field, and adhere to the law enforcement standards within their states. Municipal leaders can also face challenges in addressing these large-scale issues that affect public safety at the local level in their communities. Evaluations of department performance can help identify these issues and develop helpful and corrective solutions that promote public safety.

In 2020, the City of Methuen and the Methuen Police Department (MPD) embarked on a valuable and important effort to address such challenges. In May 2020, through a competitive bid, the City selected the CNA Center for Justice Research and Innovation to conduct a performance audit of the MPD.

The City of Methuen's local news outlet, the Eagle Tribune, documented much of the process of this audit, capturing the sometimes sensitive nature of this work and its consequences. Early on, much of the reporting focused on the administrative aspects of the audit,<sup>1</sup> but as the work continued, headlines highlighted the tense emotions emerging regarding the department. As concerns and criticisms of the department mounted, there was a vote of no confidence in MPD about Chief Joe Solomon on August 31, 2020,<sup>2</sup> and the department's promotional process was publically called into question.<sup>3</sup>

The city council had initial concerns about the scope and impartiality of the audit. Members wanted to ensure there would be no interference, either from outside or from involved parties. As a result of the conversations with the city council, the CNA audit team shifted from evaluating only the objective operational components of MPD to also evaluating the culture, morale, and reputational issues of the department.

Concurrent to the audit team's work, the Massachusetts Office of the Inspector General (OIG) conducted its own investigation and released a report that summarizes its findings. Although the findings of this audit align with the findings in the OIG report, those findings did not influence the development of the conclusions drawn by the CNA audit team.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.eagletribune.com/news/merrimack\\_valley/methuen-mayor-councilors-push-ahead-with-audit/article\\_d5f9c5a5-8317-5ffa-abe2-1892438f06ea.html](https://www.eagletribune.com/news/merrimack_valley/methuen-mayor-councilors-push-ahead-with-audit/article_d5f9c5a5-8317-5ffa-abe2-1892438f06ea.html)

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.eagletribune.com/news/merrimack\\_valley/council-votes-no-confidence-in-solomon/article\\_bb8921b0-ee02-5e52-80c6-7ee2c58821e6.html](https://www.eagletribune.com/news/merrimack_valley/council-votes-no-confidence-in-solomon/article_bb8921b0-ee02-5e52-80c6-7ee2c58821e6.html)

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.eagletribune.com/news/merrimack\\_valley/2017-methuen-police-promotions-in-doubt-as-video-surfaces/article\\_6b52624b-5664-566d-a79b-7b69864a8008.html](https://www.eagletribune.com/news/merrimack_valley/2017-methuen-police-promotions-in-doubt-as-video-surfaces/article_6b52624b-5664-566d-a79b-7b69864a8008.html)

In developing this report, the CNA team aimed to provide insightful findings regarding MPD structure and operations, as well as actionable recommendations that MPD and the City can implement immediately. The CNA audit team, comprised of practitioners, academics, and research staff, was able to develop an objective and in-depth understanding of MPD's operations in areas ranging from budget and financial management, facilities, training, and staffing levels and processes (hiring, equipment, and policies and procedures). Because of safety restrictions enacted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, this audit was conducted virtually through online surveys, electronic data sharing, and virtual meeting platforms. CNA performed this audit using its proven evidence-based approach to develop findings and recommendations for MPD. Five major activities comprise this approach: (1) data collection, (2) identification of best practices and innovations, (3) gap analysis, (4) observations and findings documented in draft topical reports, and (5) development of a final report.

## Goals and objectives

CNA designed this audit to accomplish the following:

- Collect and analyze data related to department structure, operation, and cultural perceptions.
- Identify existing areas of performance that need improvement, including MPD's organizational and budgetary policy and practice.
- Align MPD operations with professional standards and innovative practices.
- Recommend operational and organizational strategies that allow MPD staff to work in the most efficient and effective manner.

## Audit areas of focus

The goal of this audit was to gain an objective and in-depth understanding of MPD's operations in areas ranging from budgeting, management, processes, policies, and procedures. We additionally considered the department's culture and leadership. During our review, the audit team explored areas of the department's organization and operation including promotions, hiring, discipline, organization, culture, and staffing, as well as the perceptions of members of the organization. The audit team report reflects findings in these areas as well as other emerging themes that arose during interviews, policy reviews, document analysis, and work environment surveys.

The resulting findings and recommendations from this audit are organized in the following sections:

1. Organizational structure and governance
2. Planning and budgeting
3. Operating policy and procedures
4. Department culture

## 5. Professional standards and accountability

### Methodology and approach

The CNA audit team based its approach on a number of guiding principles, including the following: (1) evidence-based assistance with an emphasis on research, including both academic research and documented lessons learned and best practices from the field; (2) a multimethod assessment design, including interviews, policy and document review, administrative data review, and survey analysis; and (3) a commitment to conducting a comprehensive review and applying best practices in police settings. CNA's methodology included three major components, described below.

#### Document review

The CNA audit team reviewed MPD's staffing structure, operations manual, policies and procedures, and other documents that govern the areas of this audit. The team reviewed MPD documents from up to the past 5 years. One key goal of this audit was to review some of the high-liability policies and practices in such areas as use of force, special operations, emergency vehicle operations, and high speed pursuit. In addition to these policies, we also reviewed department budgets, annual reports, department staffing information, and disciplinary records. During this review, our team consulted information pertaining to national best practices, such as the *Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing*,<sup>4</sup> Massachusetts Police Accreditation Standards, and practices from other Massachusetts law enforcement organizations to develop our findings.

The MPD and the City of Methuen shared policy documents with the CNA audit team to provide a better understanding of documented operational procedures and practices. The MPD provided the audit team with its policy and procedure manual, which contained an index that classified 94 department policies into 13 sections: organization and administration, personnel administration, training and career development, standards of conduct, general management, operations, investigations, traffic, transportation and detention of prisoners, emergency procedures, property management, records, and communications.

The CNA audit team reviewed all policies provided with particular attention on areas that are considered high-liability/high-risk management areas for police agencies, which include the following: agency authority, jurisdiction, and use of force; recruitment, selection, hiring, and promotion of personnel; training, discipline, and internal affairs; prisoner transportation and holding facilities; property and evidence control; off-duty conduct and employment; search and seizure including arrest; special operations; emergency vehicle operations and high speed pursuit.

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<sup>4</sup> [Final Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, 2015](#)

## Administrative data

In coordination with MPD, the CNA audit team requested administrative data to support the performance audit. We collected data on organization, staffing, budgets, contracts, facilities and equipment, procurement, discipline, promotions, and organizational procedures. The team requested and reviewed MPD data from up to the past 5 years.

The CNA audit team also gathered information from other Massachusetts police agencies that are comparable to MPD. These agencies—Peabody, Salem (MA), Haverhill, Malden, and Medford—are similar in local population, size of agency, annual crime numbers, and annual department budget. After gathering information from these agencies, the CNA audit team conducted a comparison analysis of local crime, budget, and department staffing across the departments.

## Interviews

The CNA audit team conducted 32 semi-structured interviews with individuals who work with and for the City of Methuen and MPD, including the chief, representatives from the command staff, the Public Safety Committee Chair, and MPD sworn and civilian personnel. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, our team conducted all interviews virtually in accordance with national public safety guidelines. The results from these interviews are representative of the individuals who requested to be interviewed by our team, not necessarily of the entire department. In line with best practices, we ensured the complete anonymity of those who participated in our interviews. The interviews provided a major source of qualitative data for our assessment of the department.

## Work environment survey

In August 2020, the CNA audit team administered a work environment survey to all MPD employees to gather input and feedback about employee satisfaction and employee perceptions of the work environment. To ensure that the survey instrument was objective and reliable and that the questions reflected contemporary policing policy and practice, CNA relied on the survey instrument utilized by the National Police Research Platform and the Pew Research Center in 2016.<sup>5</sup> This national police survey has been in use for over a decade and with multiple police agencies across the country. We modified the questions to focus on all personnel in the MPD (sworn and civilian).

## Overview of the report

This report contains four sections. The first three sections highlight the major themes that we identified based on our analysis of data from comparison analysis, interviews, and surveys. These sections summarize our assessment and conclusions, which support the report findings and

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2017/01/11/behind-the-badge/>

recommendations in the fourth section. In the fourth section, we review our overall conclusions and provide key findings and recommendations related to the various audit topics: organizational structure and governance, operational policy and procedure, department culture, budget and planning, and accountability and professional standards. In each section, we provide a description of the topic area, a summary of the overall themes we identified (including overviews of the perspectives of those involved with the department), and our detailed findings and actionable recommendations for the MPD.

# Section 1: Comparison Analysis

The MPD and the City of Methuen provided the CNA audit team with data on staffing, budgets, equipment, technology, and other administrative areas. Our team used this information to outline how MPD's practices align with best practices and standards and with the practices of other Massachusetts law enforcement agencies of similar size and resources, according to data from the past three years.

The audit team identified five Massachusetts cities that are comparable to Methuen in terms of characteristics such as population, geographic size, and budget. These cities are Haverhill, Malden, Medford, Peabody, and Salem (MA). The following tables reflect several key areas including crime data, budget, and staffing.

## Crime data

As presented in Table 1, the overall crime level in Methuen is midrange in relation to the comparison cities and substantially lower than the level in the nearest city of Haverhill. A low crime rate is certainly a target of any police agency and community.

Table 1. Crime data for Methuen and comparable cities, 2019<sup>6</sup>

	Population	Violent Incidents (count and rate)	Violent Offenses (count and rate)	Crimes Against Person Arrests (count and rate)	Crimes Against Property Arrests (count and rate)	Crimes Against Society Arrests (count and rate)	Drug Sale Arrests (count and rate)	Drug Possession Arrests (count and rate)	Arrest Totals (count and rate)
Methuen	50,727	84	95	184	129	267	46	132	580
		16.6	18.7	36.3	25.4	52.6	9.1	26.0	114.3
Haverhill	63,935	303	354	728	301	513	100	152	1542
		47.4	55.4	113.9	47.1	80.2	15.6	23.8	241.2
Malden	60,746	148	170	188	64	109	8	16	361
		24.4	28.0	30.9	10.5	17.9	1.3	2.6	59.4
Medford	57,484	107	123	115	43	114	50	30	272
		18.6	21.4	20.0	7.5	19.8	8.7	5.2	47.3
Peabody	53,104	113	123	253	118	394	20	46	765
		21.3	23.2	47.6	22.2	74.2	3.8	8.7	144.1
Salem	43,443	97	108	328	149	332	76	120	809
		22.3	24.9	75.5	34.3	76.4	17.5	27.6	186.2

<sup>6</sup> The 2019 crime data is from the Federal Bureau of Investigation's National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS). Rates represent the number of incidents, offenses, or arrests per 10,000 population.

## Annual budget

Table 2 presents the 2021 budgets for Methuen and comparison cities, according to the local fiscal year (FY) budgets for the cities. The overall FY 2021 MPD budget aligns with the comparison cities. As indicated across all of the comparison cities, personnel costs are by far the greatest percentage of the total police budget. As the Methuen personnel costs increase substantially in the future, it will require either a corresponding significant increase in the overall budget or a substantial reduction in other areas of the budget.

Table 2. Fiscal year 2021 budgets for Methuen comparable cities

	Total Budget	Personnel Costs	Overtime
Methuen	\$11,378,423	\$10,461,703	\$466,527
Haverhill	\$13,530,805	\$11,740,611	\$2,942,241
Malden	\$11,390,308	\$9,180,103	\$200,000
Medford	\$14,333,556	\$13,274,806	\$1,248,000
Peabody	\$10,447,492	\$9,905,992	\$700,000
Salem	\$10,705,402	\$10,012,200	\$989,592

Wide disparities exist among the cities in terms of overtime spending. The wage structure has potentially the most significant effect on the Methuen budget and overtime spending. The audit team is aware of ongoing arbitration relative to the wages of Chief Solomon and the superior officers. The topic of the wage contracts has received extensive media attention and was noted by many interviewees as having created a negative perception within the community. Perhaps the biggest challenge the audit team faced was the lack of access to precise figures. Chief Solomon indicated that he was being paid substantially less than his contract required. Additionally, Captain Greg Gallant, president of the Superior Officers union, was not able to provide salary information for the superior officers because of the pending arbitration. What can be stated is that Chief Solomon's posted salary exceeds \$300,000, which makes him the highest paid police chief in Massachusetts, significantly above all others according to salary information provided by the Massachusetts Major Cities Chiefs organization.

## Staffing

Table 3 displays the staffing counts for MPD and comparison cities. MPD has a relatively higher number of personnel assigned to specialist positions, dedicating 31 percent of personnel to those roles. In comparison, Haverhill has the next highest proportion of specialist personnel at 19 percent.

Table 3. Personnel counts for Methuen and comparable cities

	Total Sworn	Specialist Positions	Deputy Chief	Captain	Lieutenant	Sergeant	Patrol Officer
Methuen	98	30	0	3	6	10	63
Haverhill	110	21	1	3	8	12	85
Malden	104	14	0	4	7	16	76
Medford	114		0	3	9	16	85
Peabody	87	12	0	5	5	15	61
Salem	97	14	0	4	9	13	71

Based on the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) data presented in Table 3 and other information the audit team gathered, this emphasis on specialist roles in the department does not seem justified. For example, MPD recently realigned the narcotics investigation function after disbanding the Homeland Security/Narcotics Unit. However, having six detectives plus supervisors assigned to a unit that averages less than one drug sales arrest per week is not an effective use of resources. Even if there is a reduction in this unit, the Criminal Detective Division and the narcotics task forces should still be able to provide narcotics investigation resources. Drug possession arrests would require further analysis, but these are generally made by patrol officers or during searches incidental to arrest, and are thus not the direct result of drug unit activity.



## Section 2: Survey Analysis

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To complement the department data analysis and interviews, the CNA audit team administered a workplace survey in August 2020 to all MPD personnel. Administering a work environment survey was critical to this audit because it provided an opportunity for all members of the MPD to anonymously share their concerns and experiences relative to MPD operations and direction. To ensure objectivity and to align with best practices in police surveying, we consulted the Pew Research Center’s national policing survey, conducted in collaboration with the National Police Research Platform (NPRP). The survey, conducted by the NPRP in 2016, has been used by police departments for decades to gauge the perceptions and experiences of police officers across the United States.<sup>7</sup> The CNA audit team adopted this survey, modifying it in structure and language to the Methuen context. See Appendix B for a copy of the survey.

### Survey administration

Our process for administering and analyzing the survey was guided by the Dillman Tailored Design survey methodology, an evidence-based practice on survey administration (2014).<sup>8</sup> The Dillman survey methodology is a tested and trusted methodology for obtaining high survey response rates across a number of mediums, including paper, mail, and online surveying.

In following the Dillman Tailored Design, the CNA audit team requested MPD personnel email addresses, which we used to recruit survey respondents. We administered the surveys via CHECKBOX, an online survey tool that allows for the administration and analysis of large-scale surveys and, in this case, would ensure respondent confidentiality. The CNA audit team sent an introductory email to all MPD employees approximately one day prior to the survey release, informing them of the upcoming survey. We then sent an email with the embedded survey link to all respondents one business day following the initial email. The CNA audit team sent out three personalized weekly reminders to all MPD employees who had not yet responded.

#### **About the survey respondents**

Survey response rates typically hover around 30–35 percent; however, for this survey, we contacted 145 individuals listed as MPD employees, and 104 of them completed surveys—a 72 percent survey response rate. Our goal was to reflect as many employees as possible. In this instance, the number of responses in relation to the total number of employees suggests that the results are reflective of the entire MPD workplace population.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2017/01/11/behind-the-badge/>

<sup>8</sup> Dillman, D.A., Smyth, J.D. & Christian, L.M. (2014). *Internet, Phone, Mail and Mixed-Mode Surveys: The Tailored Design Method*. Wiley Publishing.

Of the total, 88 identified themselves as sworn personnel, and 16 identified as civilian employees. The roles/functions that best described their work in the MPD were frontline (officer, investigator), 53 percent; civilian staff (not manager/supervisor), 11 percent; sworn supervisor, 15 percent; prefer not to answer, 21 percent (see Figure 1). These response rates are generally reflective of the overall department employee breakdown according to the MPD data (see Figure 2).

Just over 12 percent identified as female respondents, and 64 percent identified as male. Almost 24 percent of respondents preferred not to answer this question. Their racial/ethnic backgrounds were reported as just over 69 percent White/Caucasian, 1 percent Black/African, 1 percent Middle Eastern/North African, and just over 5 percent Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish. Nearly 24 percent preferred not to answer.

Figure 1. What role/function best describes your work in the MPD?

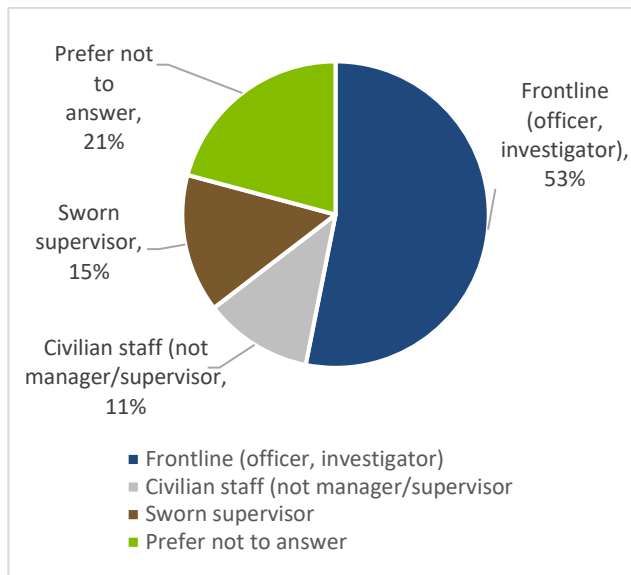
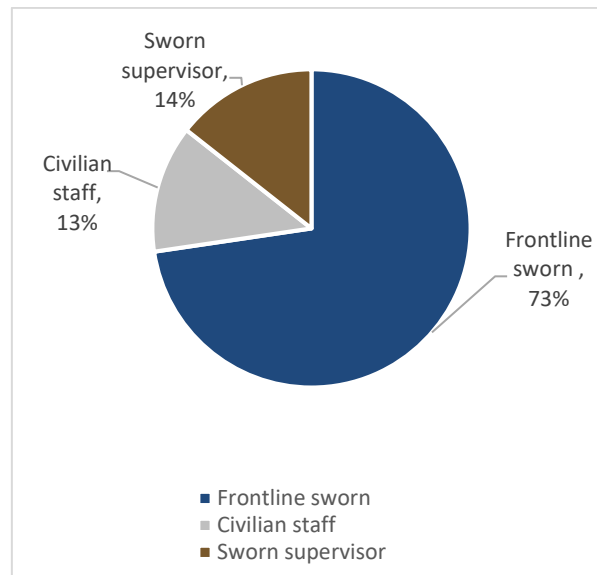


Figure 2. MPD employee breakdown

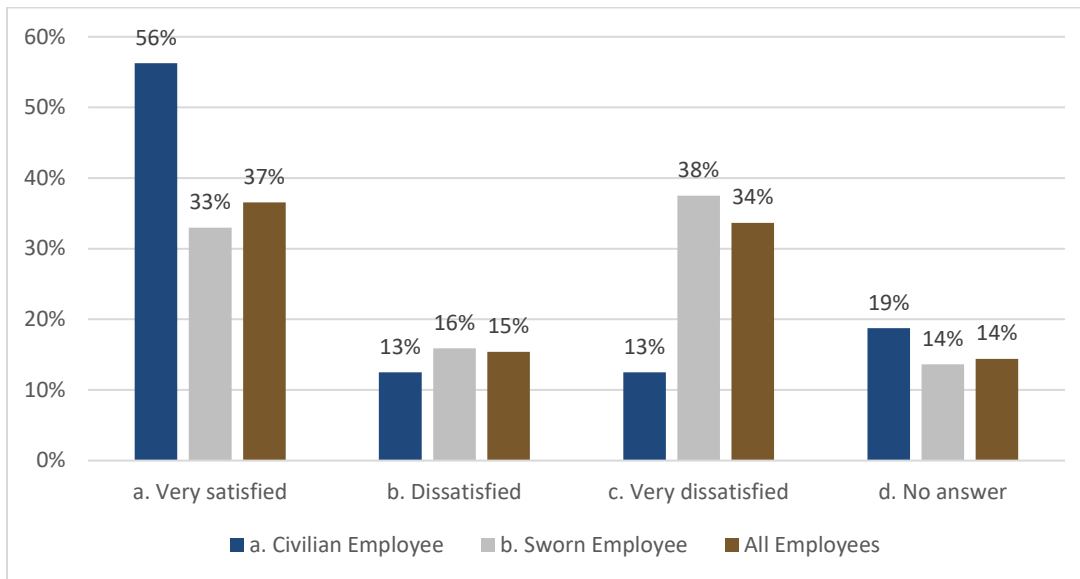


## Survey results

In this section, we summarize the survey results. In general, the survey showed significant differences in perceptions and experiences reported by MPD employees. Survey results revealed a highly divided police department, in which the divides seem grounded in policy and practice implementation as well as organizational cultural deficiencies. These divides are reflected below in our analysis of the survey responses, but also in comments received in the final survey item.

A key question was “**what is your overall satisfaction with the agency as a place to work?**” In response, 49 percent of all employees were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied, about 37 percent were very satisfied, and about 14 percent did not answer. Figure 3 shows a breakdown of the responses from both civilian and sworn employees.

Figure 3. Please rate your overall satisfaction with the agency as a place to work



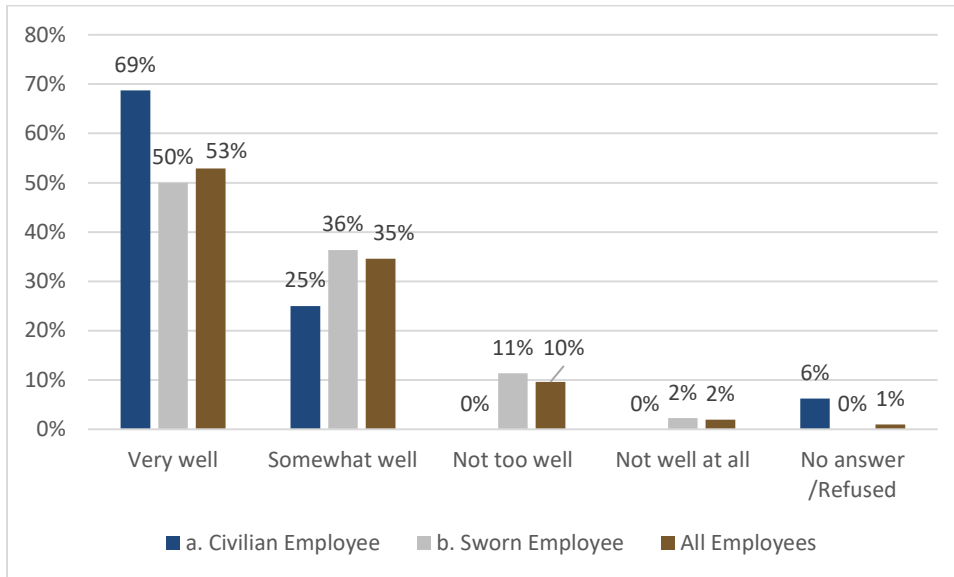
In responses to other questions, some employees reported feeling supported by top management and felt they had adequate information about the direction of the MPD, while others did not feel supported, nor did they feel that management does a good enough job communicating expectations, policies, procedures, future direction or strategic plans, and opportunities for advancement. Moreover, 77 percent of respondents indicated that the department hardly or never asks for their input on decisions that will affect them. Despite these mixed results, over 90 percent were strongly committed to making the agency successful.

More than one-third (38 percent) were either extremely or very supportive of the direction that top management was taking the MPD, with the majority of those respondents serving in supervisory roles. The majority (88 percent) reported that the department trains them adequately for their job, and the same majority reported that the department adequately equips them for their job.

Training is an area in which we would suggest MPD introduce more consistency and transparency. We asked, **“In general, how well does your department do each of the following: Train you adequately for your job<sup>9</sup>.”** We learned that though many receive training across a range of topics and competencies, some have received no training at all in some areas. Figure 4 below reveals the distribution of responses relative to training.

<sup>9</sup> This question also asked participants to describe how well the department communicates job responsibilities and equips officers to adequately to perform their job

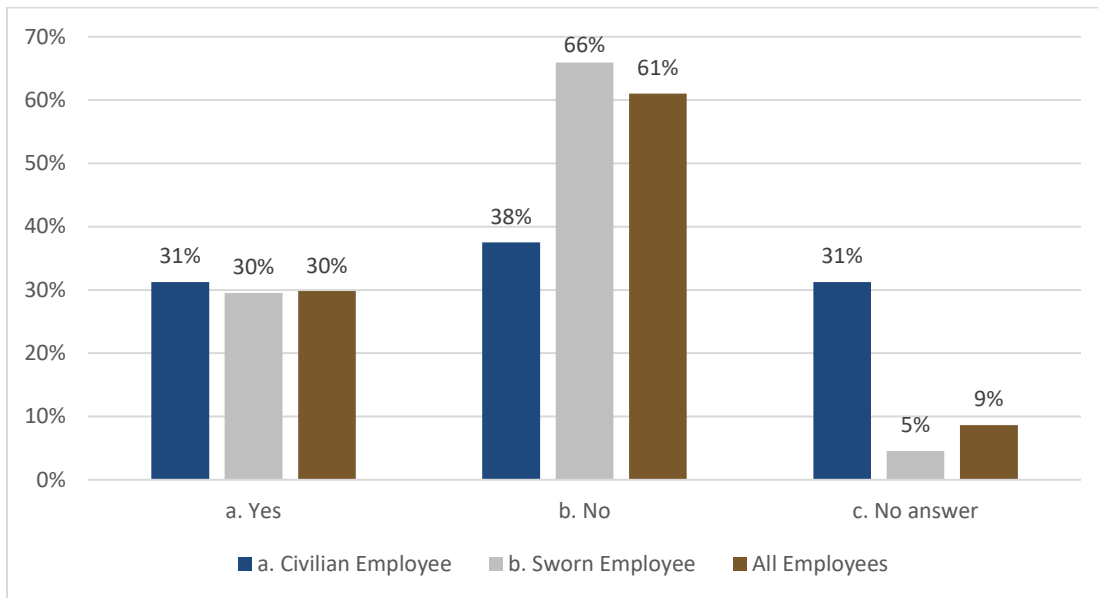
**Figure 4. In general, how well does your department do each of the following: Train you adequately for your job**



When asked about supervision, approximately 57 percent reported that their supervisor treats them with respect, though only 36 percent said that this was always the case. Over 20 percent said that this occurs only sometimes.

The survey asked MPD personnel a series of questions regarding work in the community. The majority reported that MPD leadership does provide support for officers in regards to showing concern and respect for the community. In relation to how officers conduct their work, 94 percent reported that it is very and somewhat important for law enforcement officers to be knowledgeable about what research shows to be effective policing strategies. The same percentage reported that it is important for law enforcement officers to have detailed knowledge of the people, places, and culture in the areas they routinely work. Importantly, 61 percent of MPD employees indicated that the MPD does not have enough police officers to adequately police the community. Figure 5 depicts these responses.

Figure 5. Does your department have enough officers to adequately police the community?



The survey results highlighted consistent differences in opinions across a number of internal processes. These results point to a strong need to improve internal communications and understanding relative to “how things work” in the MPD. Consistency and transparency are at the heart of these differences.

Regarding assignments and promotions, responses revealed greater differences in perceptions. In Table 4, we present some of those results.

Table 4. Employee perceptions of treatment

	Percent
Men are treated better than women	11%
Women are treated better than men	7%
Men and women are treated about the same	66%
No answer	16%
White people and minorities are treated about the same	78%
White people are treated better than minorities	7%
No answer	15%

In addition, there were significant disagreements about the promotional process being fair and transparent. Only 23 percent of respondents reported that the MPD has a fair and transparent promotional process, while many believed that being favored by MPD leadership influences promotional process decisions. In terms of new assignments, less than one-third (29 percent) believed that the MPD has and communicates a fair and transparent process for new assignments, and their perceptions of favoritism by MPD leadership mirrored their perceptions of the promotional

process. We observed similar patterns when asking respondents about MPD disciplinary actions. Respondents expressed mixed perceptions regarding adequate levels of counseling and coaching as a first step in performance improvement. However, only 30 percent of respondents believed that the MPD has and communicates a fair and transparent process for disciplinary action, and 47 percent believed that the process favors individuals who have connections to MPD leaders.

### **Open-ended response analysis**

A final optional survey item allowed respondents to add comments in an open-ended format. Specifically, we asked, “**If there is anything else that you would like to share with the audit team, please add your comments here.**” Our analysis of responses to this item adhered to best practices in analyzing qualitative data through which the data are reviewed and coded for common themes and patterns in responses. These themes are inductive, meaning they arise from common terms used in the responses, rather than from themes the researchers identify in advance.<sup>10</sup>

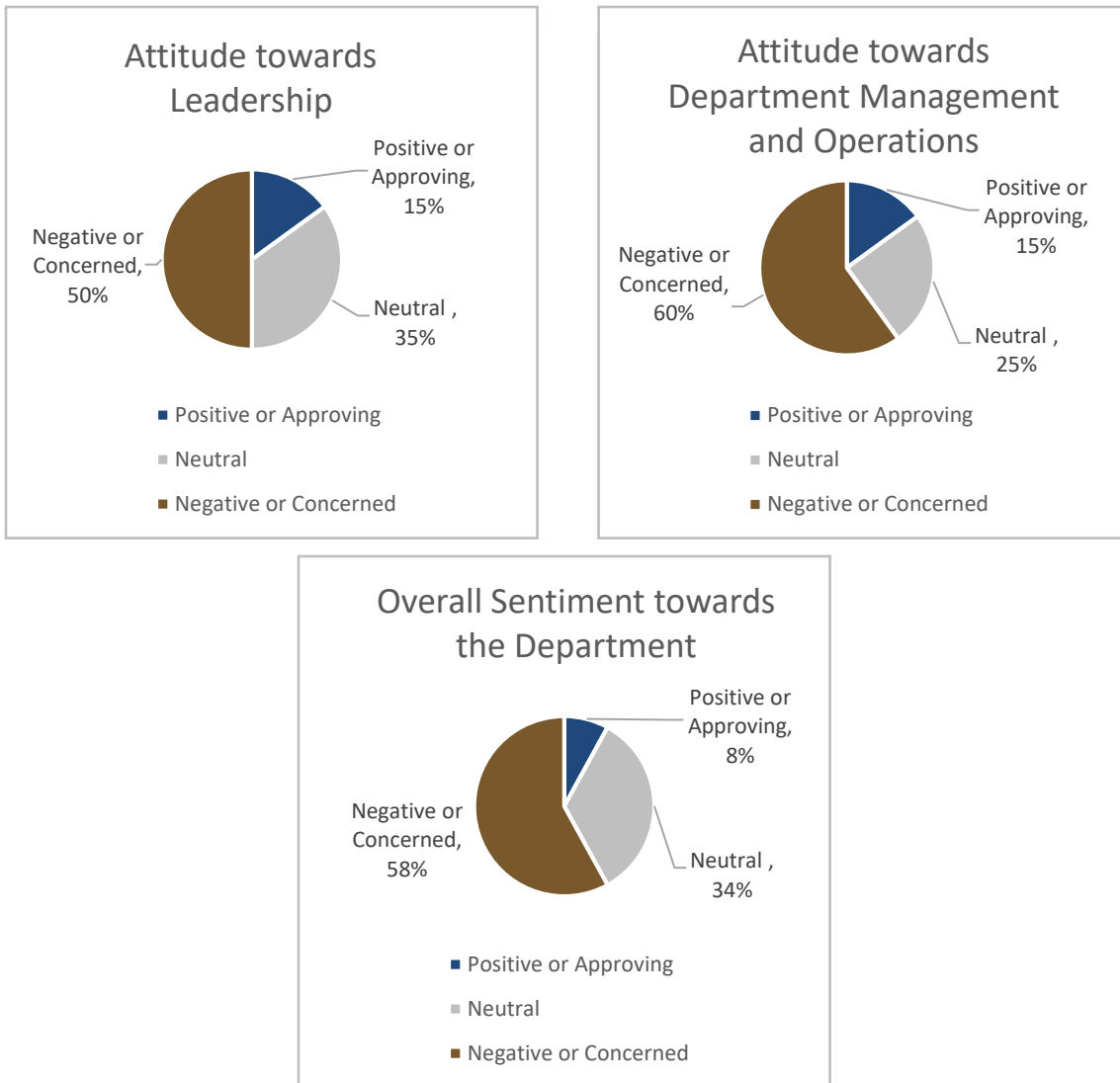
A total of 48 coded responses were provided for this one item. In other words, of the 104 respondents, 48 (46 percent) provided additional comments related to department operations or culture in the open-ended item. Comments that mentioned topics that fell outside the scope of this audit were not included in this analysis. We recognize that these responses are not reflective of all survey respondents; rather, these comments are from respondents who wanted to share additional information about their opinions and experiences. These responses add to what we learned in the interviews since the data gleaned from this item mirror the interview data in tone and themes.

The following figures summarize this qualitative analysis. To start, Figure 6 provides a high-level overview of themes, analyzing each response according to three categories: (1) the **Attitude towards Department Management and Operations** category describes comments regarding how the department is managed and how daily operations are performed, (2) the **Attitude towards Leadership** category describes comments regarding department leadership, and (3) the **Overall Sentiment towards the Department** category describes comments regarding the morale or attitude of the department members. The analysis sought to summarize the overall sentiment of each of the 48 open responses as positive/approving, neutral, or negative/concerned in relation to each of the categories.

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<sup>10</sup> Patton, M.Q. (2014). *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods: Integrating Theory and Practice* (4th Edition). Sage Publications.

Figure 6. Open-ended response sentiment analysis



We also analyzed how many times a specific topic was mentioned in the open-ended responses (e.g., 30 of the open-ended responses mentioned promotion, hiring, and discipline) and examined the sentiment related to that response. This analysis describes the overall sentiment of the input across the open-ended responses, categorized as being either approving, disapproving, or neutral (e.g., 14 percent of responses that mentioned “department management and operations” were approving). Among the most frequently mentioned topics were department management and operations; promotion, hiring, and discipline; treatment of employees and leadership; and employee relationships. Note that the comments in the open-ended response item were more often negative; however, some topics elicited more negative responses than others. These results reveal areas of concern relevant to many personnel and can help MPD determine where to focus their priorities

when making improvements. Table 5 provides more detail relative to these topics to describe the themes across the open-ended response item.

Table 5. Open-ended question response summary

	Positive or Approving	Neutral	Negative or Disapproving	Total Mentions
Promotion, Hiring, and Discipline	7%	7%	86%	30
Treatment of Employees	0%	0%	100%	23
Department Management and Operations	14%	0%	86%	22
Leadership and Employee Relationships	0%	0%	100%	20
Training and Academy	27%	18%	55%	11
Policy, Procedure, and Strategies	17%	0%	83%	6
Employee Salaries and Benefits	0%	0%	100%	4

The survey results highlight some key strengths of the department, revealing that MPD personnel (sworn and civilian) are committed to making the MPD the best it can be. There is a strong desire to live up to standards of excellence for the community and for the profession. Many survey respondents also expressed satisfaction with the training and resources provided to them. However, the results reveal significant concerns related to a number of internal processes and practices. In fact, the analysis above suggests that the number of disapproving sentiments and experiences pertaining to administrative, management, and operational aspects of the MPD is far greater than the positive ones. Although these comments come from only a percentage of survey respondents, their sentiments align with what we learned in other aspects of this review. The quotations here reflect the range of differences in perceptions, but they show the need for significant attention to internal processes and practices.

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*“I feel that the in-house training provided (firearms, defensive tactics, taser, baton, OC spray) has consistently been very good throughout my career.”*

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*“The department has the potential to be one of the best Police Departments in the country. The problem is, there are certain individuals that want to cause problems due to jealousy and negativity. Those same people have caused a great deal of divide and have spread negativity throughout.”*

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*“There is not so much an issue with supervision, but with leadership. Accountability is not evenly distributed from person to person. Likewise for a fair promotion/ special assignment process.”*

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*“In general, the MPD administration has shown very unfair practice when it comes to discipline, promotions, and specialty assignments. Also, only patrolmen which consists of 32 men on the road are the only ones to be ordered into work for shifts. The overall morale for this department is extremely toxic and volatile!!”*

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*“The Dept is at an all-time low when it comes to morale. Good men and woman have taken less paying jobs due to the direction this Dept. Has moved in. Racism is at an all-time high. In this Dept. Minorities are not given the same opportunities that the white officer is given. Officers are held to a different standard then the administration is held to.”*

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As these quotations demonstrate, the need for consistency, fairness, and transparency was a consistent theme in this employee survey. Inconsistent policy and practice implementation, combined with organizational cultural deficiencies, directly affects the perceptions and experiences of the MPD workforce. These discrepancies and perceptions directly affect morale, officer health and wellness, and satisfaction in the work. More specifically, respondents expressed serious concerns about favoritism as a decision criteria, fear of others within MPD, lack of transparency and lack of accountability across a number of functions, and ethical concerns within the agency. These perceptions, along with other sentiments revealed in this analysis, suggest that a number of changes need to be made in order to build an environment in which MPD employees feel stronger support.

## Section 3: Interviews

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Over the span of about three weeks, the audit team interviewed 32 individuals for this performance audit. Interview respondents included officers, superior officers, and civilian staff, and all interviews were conducted via the secure ZoomGov technology platform. The audit team reached out to all department members who participated in the anonymous survey and offered the opportunity for an interview. The experience levels of interviewees ranged from decades of service experience with the department to only several years of experience.

Through this interview process, the CNA audit team gathered information on department operations, procedures, as well as experiences working with the department. During the interviews, it became clear that MPD members of all levels were aware of the controversy and negative perceptions surrounding the department. Members at different levels of the department held various sentiments. It is clear that there is strong division in the department, reflected by the differing opinions regarding department processes and procedures.

In this section, we highlight five core themes from the interviews: climate, management style, equity issues, equipment, and priorities. In addition, in section four we discuss interview findings in more detail along with providing the appropriate findings and recommendations.

### Climate

The climate within MPD was described by some as “toxic,” “hostile,” and “retaliatory” and as producing low morale abetted by an atmosphere of fear. There is a significant divide within the department aligned along “pro-administration” vs. “anti-administration” factions, with the former being primarily made up of specialists and the latter by the uniformed patrol officers. Several of those interviewed spoke of fear in the workplace and concern about being “written up” for minor infractions; they believed those viewed as “favored” (based on their relationship with the chief) escape scrutiny. Officers reported being unwilling to volunteer for overtime because of this internal climate and fear of being written up for minor infractions. This results in “forced overtime” assignments, which, according to the interviewees, are not required of specialists.

### Management style

Several interviewees specifically referenced Chief Solomon’s high level of intellect and his command presence during times of crisis. On the other hand, many felt that this chief views his employees as “with” or “against” him and “his team.” They also felt that those not favored by the chief are often targeted, ridiculed, or written up. Many spoke about the frequent use of being written up and expressed concerns about how to avoid such scrutiny.

The chief's toughest critics have still acknowledged his intellect, command of systems and processes, and decisiveness in the occasional emergency. However, many believe that he has created a system within MPD, through the control of hiring, assignments, promotions, and discipline, that has enhanced his ability to hire, transfer, and promote individuals perceived as loyal to him. Furthermore, we acknowledge that the chief and the union representatives who supported his civil service appeal have received raises making them some of the highest paid police officials in the country, and the council members who voted for those raises are seen as having been rewarded by the chief, either directly with jobs or indirectly through their relatives.

## Equity issues

Assessment centers are used to inform promotion and hiring decisions through a structured evaluation of the relevant skills, knowledge, and abilities of candidates by means of situational testing. The process uses a series of simulated job challenges to gauge a candidate's ability to perform the targeted job. The performance of candidates is evaluated by trained assessors. Despite the fact that assessment centers are seen as viable alternatives to multiple-choice exams, the system in Methuen suffers from credibility issues because many officers do not trust the process. The examiners are friends and former colleagues of the chief, and members of MPD have noticed that those with positive relationships with the chief more often benefit from this process. The audit team learned during interviews that a promotional course was offered by the person who conducts the test. It is surprising that this did not raise concerns early on or result in grievances and complaints to civil service. The promotion process, and its use of assessment centers, was seen as a way to ensure the promotion of the chief's allies to senior positions, and discipline was seen as something applied only to patrol officers

The processes for hiring, assignment, promotion, and discipline were all identified as lacking objectivity and transparency. The hiring process was considered manipulated to secure advantage for hiring and promoting "friends and family," while little time was spent trying to increase diversity in the ranks. We should note that MPD has few Hispanic or Latino officers and no bilingual dispatchers in an agency serving a community that is approximately 30 percent Hispanic or Latino.<sup>11</sup> The specialist selection process is viewed as secretive, and many interviewees reported being unaware of how they could rise through the ranks..

## Equipment

Officers were aware of their agency being seen as an "early adopter" of the "nice to have" latest technology (e.g., ballistic helmets, GPS darts for use in pursuits, dictation software, license plate readers). Although many officers reported that the department provides a lot of new equipment, they noted that most of it was underused while the "must have" equipment, primarily patrol cruisers, was

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/methuentowncitymassachusetts>

old and in need of replacement. Some officers would like the department to make sure all of the equipment purchased is necessary and will be used efficiently.

## Priorities

Given the diversity of opinions cited above, a significant preponderance of opinion unsurprisingly favored change at the top of the organization. A number of MPD employees felt that changes at the leadership level would help advance some of the necessary changes in the department, such as those surrounding hiring and promotion. During previous promotional cycles, the MPD has decided to use the assessment center process. Strong negative sentiment was expressed regarding the decision to use two retired chiefs to manage both the assessment center and internal investigations. There was a strong desire to revamp the promotional and hiring processes. Overall, many agreed that the department should prioritize creating a department that is fair and transparent in their processes, allowing all MPD employees to feel supported.

## Additional interview findings

The comments from the interviewees not only were consistent regarding the significant issues affecting the morale of the agency, but they also identified similar concerns through anecdotes. They expressed concerns that certain individuals with personal connections with leadership either have been protected from discipline, ensured a specialist assignment, or granted a promotion. The quotations here summarize the different thoughts and experiences of individuals who work with or for the MPD.

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*"We have great people but we need a change."*

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*"Improvement requires change at the top, nothing will change without that."*

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*"It's scarier to work inside the police station than outside the police station."*

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*“MPD is all about who you know.”*

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*“Specialists have new SUVs while patrol officers drive cruisers with 125,000 miles on them.”*

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*“Discipline is aimed at people, not conduct.”*

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None of these issues happened in a vacuum. The internal politics of a police agency can be reflective of the historic political culture of a given jurisdiction. It is clear that there were serious political controversies involving the police department occurred during the terms of some previous mayors that abated when allies of the chief assumed the office. In that context, the politicization of the office of the chief might be seen by some as a form of self-preservation despite the protections offered by Civil Service.

Overall, MPD has great officers who are there to do a professional job. MPD employees show up to work ready to do their jobs and demonstrate a strong commitment to serving their community. Addressing the issues identified in the interviews can help to develop processes throughout the department that are more transparent and fair. MPD officers indicated that making these changes would result in positive changes in overall performance and help promote a safer community.

## Section 4: Findings & Recommendations

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The CNA audit team drew from data collected from interviews, surveys, our review of MPD policies, and administrative data provided by the MPD to help us develop findings and recommendations. In this section, we describe our findings and recommendations for each of the five major areas of this assessment:

- Organizational structure and governance
- Budgeting and planning
- Operating policies and procedures
- Department culture
- Professional standards and accountability

These findings and recommendations are based on our assessment of MPD practices, policy, organization, and culture. Based on these findings, we recommend that the MPD address a number of areas including transparency, diversity, morale, procedures, and management. Some example findings in this report include the lack of Spanish-speaking personnel, low confidence in fair hiring and promotion practices, and deficient high-liability policies.

Although it is important to note the areas of necessary improvement, we also note that the MPD has several key areas of strength. Examples include MPD's strong training program, regularly updated department equipment, and continued active social media presence, as well as the committed MPD members who show a clear dedication to promoting public safety in the community. This findings and recommendations section identifies areas in which MPD's strengths can be leveraged to make further improvement. The CNA audit team feels confident that the City, the MPD, and the Methuen community are committed to addressing the findings and implementing the recommendations to support the department. Moving forward, continued commitment and support from the department leadership and officers will be critical to ensure the successful implementation and sustainability of improvements.

## Agency organizational structure and governance

Organizational structure and governance form the foundation of any law enforcement agency. General orders, organizational structures, and staffing shape much of what an agency does, how it is organized, and how it meets its obligations to its residents and taxpayers. In developing findings for this section, our team analyzed how agency demographics, organization, and structures influence the efficiency of department operations. We compared these areas to the practices of similar local agencies and national best practices to inform our assessments. Overall, our findings from this section indicate that MPD would benefit from re-evaluating their staffing and assignments approaches. MPD would also benefit from making more efforts to recruit a diverse staff. The department should focus more on building an organization that reflects the community and operates at its highest efficiency and effectiveness. Here, we reiterate the need to adhere to standards and best practices, thus relying on national and state accreditation, research evidence from policing and management, and guidelines from the industry. Reports such as the *Final Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing* should inform and guide the adoption and implementation of audit findings.

### **Finding 1: MPD has a relatively low number of sergeants assigned to patrol.**

This front-line level of supervision is essential to any law enforcement agency. Sergeants serve as key decision-makers in the daily delivery of services and have a lot of contact with the public. According to a November 2020 MPD Manpower Analysis report, of the 10 sergeant positions, only six are assigned to patrol duty. It is difficult to envision how six sergeants can provide adequate staffing in any 24/7 rotational schedule in a medium-sized agency like MPD.

Since sergeants are of such significance, an evaluation should be undertaken to review overall numbers and identify ways to increase the presence of sergeants on patrol. This may be accomplished through reassigning personnel. MPD may want to increase staff numbers generally, or reduce numbers in other ranks to enable an increase in the sergeant rank.

### **Recommendation 1: Evaluate the overall number and deployment of sergeants within the MPD.**

### **Finding 2: MPD has a high number of assigned specialist positions.**

Another significant variation from the comparison communities is the number of personnel assigned to specialist or non-patrol assignments. We heard repeatedly from interviewees of the large number of specialist positions and the challenge this has presented to patrol operations. The November 2020 MPD Manpower Analysis report highlights this disparity in assignments. According to the report, only 41 out of 71 officers are presently assigned to patrol, leaving 30 officers assigned elsewhere. This is in addition to the number of supervisors in specialist assignments. This low number of patrol officers exists even following a recent force reduction and the reassignment of several individuals back to patrol positions. The crime data do not support such a high percentage of specialist assignments. Interviewees reported strained resources on patrol and officers being forced to work

overtime to cover vacancies. Additional resources on patrol will better enable proactive efforts, which prevent crime or aid in the detection of yet unreported crime.

The MPD should evaluate its options to modify the current deployment of personnel. MPD should regularly conduct thorough assessments of its resource deployments and of the effectiveness of specialty units. In addition, the MPD should consider the role that non-sworn personnel may play in carrying out some of the specialist functions to reduce overall costs and allow the redeployment of sworn personnel.

### **Recommendation 2: Evaluate the deployment of personnel within the MPD.**

### **Finding 3: The MPD uses part-time, intermittent, and reserve officers to supplement its staffing.**

The MPD appears to be rather unique as a city police department in Massachusetts in that it allows part-time officers to work patrol assignments, according to Chief Solomon. In addition to full-time civil service police officers, MPD has intermittent officers and reserve officers.

Chief Solomon explained that the reserve officers are selected from the civil service commission ranked order-hiring list and meet the criteria for Methuen residency. After undergoing a background investigation and interview process, candidates are rank ordered based on a scoring system resulting from the interview process. They are then hired based on this new ranked order, which deviates from the civil service commission ranked order. These reserve officers participate in reserve officer training and are allowed to work paid detail assignments. Reserve officers undergoing additional hours of training may also be permitted to work patrol shifts.

Intermittent officers are not required to be Methuen residents nor are they required to be on civil service ranked order-hiring list. Once selected and hired, these candidates also receive training and are permitted to work paid details and patrol assignments. Several intermittent officers were actually hired to work patrol assignments on a full-time basis, and no limits appear to have been imposed on the number of hours intermittent officers could work. One additional category of special police officer exists: reserve officers, which consist of retired Methuen officers who work paid details.

These additional categories of officers have caused confusion and concern within the MPD. Interviewees believed that these two categories of intermittent officers and reserve officers are systems in place to avoid the expectations and restrictions of the civil service commission hiring system. There is a belief that these systems are manipulated to ensure that those with political or personal connections are hired. Once afforded the opportunity to work as a reserve officer, these officers are then given preference when hiring of full-time officers occurs. In this way, it is possible for an individual ranked 30th or lower on civil service list to be selected as a reserve officer and then later selected as the number one candidate for full-time hire. It appears that because reserve officers were viewed as part-time detail officers, this hiring process was not given appropriate oversight and was not recognized as a possible tool for manipulating civil service processes. The intermittent officer system is even more suspect because it permits non-Methuen residents, as well as those who have



never taken the civil service hiring test, to be hired for full-time employment—thus taking an available position away from civil service recognized candidates.

Specifically, MPD should ensure that part-time, intermittent, and reserve officers are not being used to sidestep standard hiring procedures nor to fulfill duties that should be handled by full-time sworn personnel.

**Recommendation 3: The MPD should conduct a thorough review of the use of supplemental personnel to conduct sworn personnel duties and develop appropriate limitations on the job duties and tenure of these personnel.**

**Finding 4: The demographics of MPD are not representative of the demographics of the City of Methuen.**

The makeup of the department falls short in various aspects of diversity. Departmental data indicates that MPD employs six female sworn personnel, none of whom are superior officers. These female officers account for about 7 percent of the sworn personnel, which is below the national average of 10.6 percent for similarly sized jurisdictions.<sup>12</sup> This trend is repeated with the racial and ethnic demographics of the department (see Figure 7). The department currently employs no Black full-time sworn officers, although their community population is about 4 percent Black.<sup>13</sup> Approximately 30 percent of the city’s residents identify as Hispanic or Latino;<sup>14</sup> however, only about 10 percent of MPD full-time sworn officers are Hispanic or Latino. About 23 percent of Methuen residents speak Spanish,<sup>15</sup> and the vast majority of the Hispanic and Latino MPD officers speak Spanish; however, Methuen employs no Spanish-speaking dispatchers. Note also that members of the department who are fluent in Spanish are concentrated solely at the officer level.

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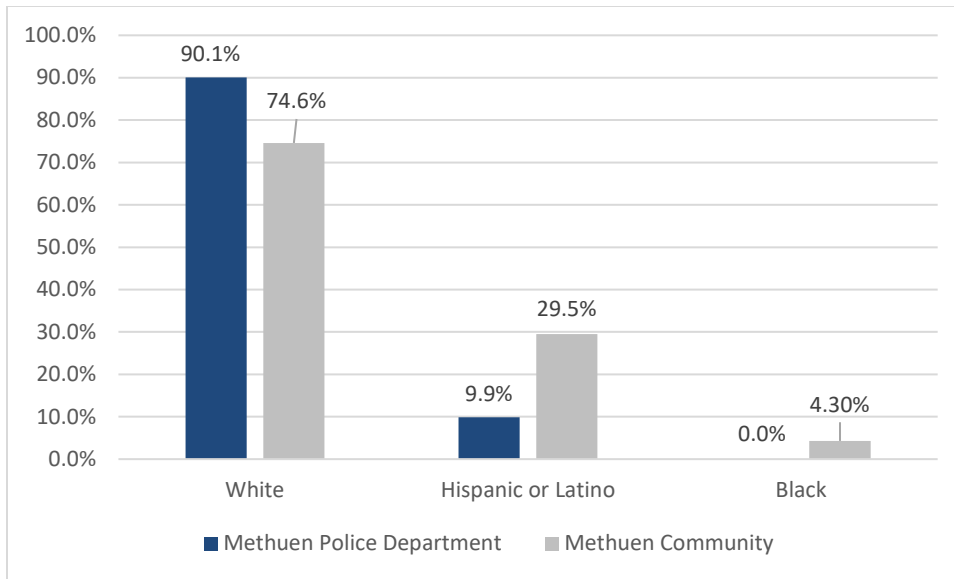
<sup>12</sup> Hyland, S. S., & Davis, E. (2016). [Local Police Departments, 2016: Personnel](#). Washington DC: US Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/methuentowncitymassachusetts>

<sup>15</sup> [https://www.cityofmethuen.net/sites/g/files/vyhlf886/f/uploads/tr\\_20\\_81.pdf](https://www.cityofmethuen.net/sites/g/files/vyhlf886/f/uploads/tr_20_81.pdf)

Figure 7. Racial demographics of MPD (fulltime-sworn) and community



Recruitment and selection of candidates are critical functions of any police agency. A detailed policy should be written that outlines the MPD’s vision and efforts to recruit candidates for hire. The MPD has a multi-step hiring process to select candidates, and this should be memorialized in policy form to ensure transparency and consistency.

In addition to a detailed policy, the MPD should develop a plan to guide recruitment efforts to help the department maintain a consistent recruitment approach and track ongoing progress. Leadership should clearly state its commitment to diversity and share the objectives of this plan with the Methuen community and all members of the department. This plan should include time-specific benchmarks and goals, along with opportunities for professional growth and advancement.

Finally, in order to reach candidates from diverse backgrounds, the department will need to continue to recruit in areas with more diverse applicants. MPD should consider participating in career expos and job fairs hosted by schools and local community groups, particularly those in the areas most heavily populated by underrepresented groups, to increase its outreach. Efforts to diversify the department should be documented in the aforementioned recruitment and selection policies and plan.

**Recommendation 4.1: The MPD should develop a clear and concise policy that articulates the process of recruitment and selection of candidates for hire.**

**Recommendation 4.2: MPD should develop a recruitment plan for full-time sworn personnel, prioritizing recruiting Spanish-speaking officers and individuals from underrepresented demographics with the goal of creating a department that reflects the Methuen community.**

**Recommendation 4.3: MPD should expand the reach of their recruitment and hiring efforts to attract diverse candidates.**

**Finding 5: The lack of racial and ethnic diversity in the department has negatively affected various facets of the department.**

The audit team learned that at least one prospective officer of color withdrew from the recruitment process due to fears of tokenism. The audit team also learned that a Spanish-speaking officer may be required to return to the police station to take a call in dispatch if the caller speaks only Spanish. Officers may also be requested to interpret in other settings as well, taking them away from their duties. At best, this is time consuming, but it may also present challenges in the effective prosecution of cases when attempting to display critical information of the case.

We recognize that this pervasive issue is not unique to Methuen. In addition, Methuen uses the civil service system, which does not allow for preferential hiring for diverse candidates, which complicates rectifying this issue. However, despite the evident shortcomings of the department in this respect, MPD leadership has shown no commitment to increasing the diversity of the department.

MPD should assess whether issues of stereotyping, overt or covert prejudices, or hostility exist within the department that could negatively affect members of underrepresented groups. MPD should consider utilizing a self-assessment survey or hiring an independent diversity expert to ensure that retention of new officers does not become an issue once the department is able to increase diversity.

**Recommendation 5: MPD should identify any practices that may prevent officers from underrepresented backgrounds from feeling comfortable in the department.**

**Finding 6: MPD members have low confidence in the fairness of the special unit assignments process.**

MPD officer assignments can be divided into two fairly broad categories: patrol and specialists. Although the vast majority of officers start their careers in patrol, many aspire to be assigned to special units. The specialist positions are considered a promotion and come with distinction, opportunities for an increase in overtime (and therefore pay), and more flexible hours. These positions include, but are not limited to, the detective unit, the drug and gang unit, the community policing unit, and the K-9 unit.

Over the course of this audit, the audit team noticed a clear dichotomy between patrol officers and specialists in their support of the department processes related to assignments. Patrol officers of varying career lengths held very low confidence in the equity of assignments. One of the reasons for this is the lack of transparency within the department about how these decisions are made. When asked how officers are assigned to specialty units, the audit team was told that positions are either appointed or may be posted for any officer to apply. However, in the latter instances, those who have congenial relationships with or are ideologically aligned with senior MPD leadership have a distinct advantage over others. However, according to the chief, he assents to the personnel requests of the accountable supervisors regarding specialist position assignments, since they work closer to the person who will be assigned. Further, the audit team could not identify any policy or procedures that

would provide more structure for this process to combat the feedback expressed during the audit interviews.

MPD should develop a written procedure for the assignment process that includes the posting process, the selection process, and any preferences allowed. MPD members should be included in the development of this process to ensure it can be perceived as legitimate. MPD should institute an annual review process in which MPD officers are provided the opportunity to share feedback concerning the process for assignments.

**Recommendation 6: MPD should establish a more transparent and impartial process for officer assignment, developed with input from all department members, particularly patrol officers.**

# Budget and planning

Strategic and capital planning and budgeting are key processes within a law enforcement agency that support long- and short-term goals of the organization. The CNA audit team assessed capital planning and budgeting relative to past practices and those of surrounding departments. This assessment included a review of current and historical data, as well as interviews of relevant parties. Our findings show that MPD could benefit from better planning and evaluation mechanisms to ensure it makes more informed planning decisions and allocates resources efficiently. Furthermore, the City of Methuen and the MPD would greatly benefit from clear and consistent transparency, auditing, and reporting procedures to instill greater trust in the decisions and actions made related to budgeting and capital.

**Finding 7: MPD does not currently have a system to guide the rotational cycle of department vehicles.**

Aside from a firearm, there is no more important piece of equipment for a police officer than their patrol vehicle. This vehicle ensures that the officer is able to patrol effectively and arrive on scene for calls for service and priority calls safely and equipped with the necessary tools to operate effectively. Since the vehicles are generally operated 24 hours per day, seven days per week, they are prone to significant wear and tear and require critical and continual upkeep, maintenance, and replacement. Adding to the wear on these vehicles is exposure to the winter weather conditions in the northeast.

All of the available department police vehicles have accumulated significant mileage, with seven of the available marked vehicles substantially exceeding 100,000 miles. Furthermore, many of the newer vehicle models are not assigned to patrol. There is no established system within the MPD to rotate the use of department vehicles that would help to better maintain the vehicles and ensure longtime use.

During the audit team’s interviews, personnel emphasized the deplorable condition of the patrol fleet of vehicles. MPD assigns only seven marked vehicles for patrol, and many have significantly more than 100,000 accumulated miles. Based on data from November 26, 2019, seven of the twelve available marked vehicles assigned to patrol substantially exceeded 100,000 miles, with another year of use elapsing without new vehicle purchase.

Table 6. 2019 MPD cruiser list

Vehicle Year	Division Assignment	Assignment	Approx. Mileage
14	Patrol	Spare #1	166,593
14	Patrol	Spare #4	164,429
14	Patrol	Spare #2	160,336
16	Patrol	Patrol	142,084

Vehicle Year	Division Assignment	Assignment	Approx. Mileage
16	Patrol	Patrol	128,553
16	Patrol	Patrol	122,835
16	Patrol	Spare #3	117,757
17	Patrol	Patrol	74,791
17	Patrol	Patrol	71,250
18	Patrol	Patrol	70,550
17	Patrol	Patrol	69,659
17	Patrol	Patrol Supervisor	25,451

However, personnel also reported that the department had 29 vehicles designated as “take-home” vehicles for those in specialist positions. Reportedly, recent changes implemented by Mayor Neil Perry have resulted in a dramatic reduction in the number of take-home vehicles available. A review of the past five year’s budgets shows that the most recent vehicle purchases occurred in 2018. However, according to a cruiser list dated November 26, 2019, of the six 2018 model year vehicles purchased, only one was assigned for patrol use—with the remaining new vehicles assigned to Chief Solomon, three captains, and former Mayor James Jajuga.

The MPD does not have a system to regulate the rotation of vehicles, which would allow patrol vehicles to be routinely upgraded and replaced. Departments that have a regular rotational cycle are able to remove patrol vehicles from front-line operations after one year. These vehicles then become secondary line vehicles or specialist vehicles. It is very common for police vehicles to have multiple cycles of use within a police organization, but the newest vehicles should always be on the patrol lines. For example, having a three-year rotational cycle would ensure that no front-line vehicle is older than three years.

**Recommendation 7: The MPD should institute a system to routinely upgrade the fleet of patrol vehicles.**

**Finding 8: Although MPD remains at the forefront of emerging technology, they lack a process to evaluate the benefits, need, and impacts before the purchase of new technology.**

The MPD has been frequently cited in the local news media and social media for implementing the latest policing technologies. The department seems to have a desire to be the “first” to implement the latest technologies. MPD leadership actively pursues opportunities to acquire new equipment and emerging technologies. MPD has adopted new technologies, such as ballistic helmets, GPS darts on the cruisers, license plate readers, and drones.

During the interview process, MPD’s regular purchase of new equipment was a common theme. Interviewees revealed that many officers felt that they often receive equipment that is “state of the art.” Overall, the MPD seems to do well at equipping their officers with new tools that they feel will best serve their community.

Although this department demonstrates a strong commitment to technology advancements, they do not consistently evaluate the equipment before implementation. In many cases, this comes at a significant cost to the department in both equipment and specialized training. In other cases, the technology has been noted as unnecessary and burdensome to the officers to the point that it may not even be utilized on a regular basis.

One such example is dictation software, which allows officers to orally prepare their reports. Many of the officers interviewed explained that the technology does not necessarily expedite the report-writing process, leading them to suspect the reason for its adoption may be a connection between the vendor and MPD senior leadership. Much of the anecdotal information relayed to the audit team implied that the optics of the department receiving and utilizing new technology was more important to MPD leadership than the actual efficacy of the technology. It was also frequently noted by the interviewees that a former local police chief has served as a sales representative or broker for a number of these new technologies.

Any number of new gadgets and technologies are marketed to police agencies each day. Given the enormous efforts by vendors to engage with police agencies and municipalities, MPD should consider implementing a technology plan to guide the procurement of new technology to ensure that these technologies are necessary for the department and the community. The plan should include a testing and evaluation process and should follow state mandates. This process could include a cost-benefit analysis, an officer interest survey, or a pilot program, when applicable. Receiving data and input from the field and from officers can help the department to acquire equipment that will be efficient and supportive of the work that MPD members do. A number of resources are available to help guide MPD's improvements in ensuring technology effectiveness, efficiency, and evolution. Some example resources include the *Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing* (referencing the Technology Pillar) and the National Public Safety Partnership (PSP) report on technology cost considerations.<sup>16</sup>

The technology plan should fit within the strategic plan of the organization to ensure it does not draw funding away from other critical needs. It is not uncommon to be offered a lower cost purchase fee only to see service and maintenance costs balloon considerably in the following years. An additional burden that new technology can place upon an organization is the need for policy and ongoing training. These are common considerations for departments when moving forward with new purchase decisions.

**Recommendation 8: MPD should develop a technology plan for the procurement of new technology, including a process to evaluate new technology before it is purchased.**

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<sup>16</sup> [Understanding Technology Cost Considerations In Law Enforcement](#)

## Operating policies and procedures

General orders, policy manuals, and standard operating procedures are critically essential to a law enforcement agency. They apply an organization's vision, values, and goals to the actions and behaviors of its officers. They also provide all members of the organization with clear guidance on how to conduct policing business, and they set the tone for the agency's culture. Policies and procedures are living documents that will evolve based on implementation of the policies, accreditation standards, additional guidance from governing bodies, changing community sentiment, and critical incidents. In developing these findings and recommendations, our team conducted an in-depth review of MPD's current high-liability policies and standard operating procedures. These were aligned with best practices such as Massachusetts Police Accreditation Standards as well as comparison cities similar to Methuen (Peabody, Salem, Haverhill, Malden, and Medford). Our team also used interviews to gain a better understanding of common applications of policies. Based on our findings, MPD should ensure that they routinely update all policies and prioritize increasing the transparency of department procedures.

### **Finding 9: MPD does not presently have any policies and procedures for Agency Authority and Jurisdiction.**

During the policy review, we noted the lack of policies that outline the law enforcement authority and jurisdiction of the MPD. This type of policy is essential because it outlines the agency's role, authority, and code for ethical conduct. Having this in place lays the foundation for the department to operate in accordance with sound and ethical policing principles.

These policies lay the foundational statement for the agency in terms of jurisdiction, and the Oath of Office and Code of Conduct serve as a means for the employees to make a public commitment to the duties, responsibilities and obligations associated with being an officer of the MPD.

### **Recommendation 9: MPD should prioritize the creation and dissemination of policies that outline the agency's law enforcement role, lawful authority, oath of office, and code of ethics.**

### **Finding 10: The MPD lacks a policy that addresses departmental discipline.**

The disciplinary process plays an important role in holding police officers accountable for their behavior. The MPD does not presently have a policy that addresses departmental discipline. Without a clear and concise policy to govern the discipline process, there is no assurance of consistency throughout the organization.

A recurring theme throughout the survey and interview process was the concern expressed over disparate and frequent discipline. For example, during the interviews, interviewees described a paid leave ("house arrest-like") form of discipline in which officers are suspended from duty (with pay) and ordered to stay at home between 8:30 am and 4:30 pm. Members of the CNA audit team were not familiar with this form of discipline in law enforcement. According to the chief, this was a non-disciplinary intervention. The audit team also noticed that the orders that place officers on paid leave



do not note the reason for discipline. The chief noted that this exclusion was meant to save such officers embarrassment by excluding detail of the discipline. The chief agreed with our team that it might be better to note reasons on such orders. Some respondents suggested that the use of paid leave “house arrest” could be a way of circumventing disciplinary processes that might be grievable.

A detailed discipline policy will ensure that departmental expectations are clear and provide the tools for supervisors to act in a consistent manner throughout the organization. All employees will understand and have clear expectations about how, when, and in what form discipline will be rendered.

**Recommendation 10: The MPD should develop a policy that outlines the department’s philosophy and disciplinary procedures, including the progressive steps and responsible personnel for rendering the stages of discipline.**

**Finding 11: MPD lacks a policy that addresses off-duty conduct and employment.**

The MPD does not have a policy for off-duty conduct or off-duty employment for personnel. A well-written off-duty conduct policy provides consistent guidelines for what is and is not acceptable. This is especially important because some off-duty misconduct can do significant damage to an organization’s reputation and ability to operate effectively.

The MPD should establish an Off-Duty Conduct policy and an Off-Duty Employment policy that address agency expectations of officer conduct and clear consequences if those expectations are not met. The Off-Duty Conduct policy should detail speech and behavior that are not acceptable outside of work hours. The Off-Duty Employment policy should include the steps necessary if notification to the agency is required, provide criteria for whether agency approval is required, and list any categories of employment that would be inherently not permitted due to conflict of interest.

**Recommendation 11.1: MPD should develop a policy that address off-duty conduct.**

**Recommendation 11.2: MPD should develop a policy that addresses off-duty employment.**

**Finding 12: MPD lacks a policy that addresses emergency vehicle operation.**

Emergency vehicle operation is a critical aspect of a police officer’s job. The officer will spend the majority of his or her shift operating a vehicle and responding to calls for service, including emergency response. This is an area of high liability for the agency because of the risk of accidents.

The MPD should develop a policy that fully addresses emergency vehicle operations, including the expectations of the agency, the responsibilities of the operator and supervisors, and training requirements. This policy should be developed clearly with detailed guidance and remain in accordance with best practice standards.

**Recommendation 12: The MPD should develop a policy that fully addresses emergency vehicle operations.**

**Finding 13: MPD has a strong training program, which is not presently documented in policies.**

Training is critical to ensure that all personnel operate consistently and effectively, in accordance with departmental policies, and have full knowledge of the tools and equipment they are required to use. Training is an essential risk management tool and an essential component of career development within the MPD. The overall sentiment expressed during the survey and interviews was that members felt that they receive sufficient training. Interviewees felt the training was of high quality and frequent enough for members to fully understand policy and practices. Additionally, the MPD has demonstrated a commitment to training through the creation of a police academy and in-service training program. It appears that the department does well at making sure they train officers in the proper skills to serve the community.

The MPD should develop policies on training that articulate the department expectations regarding training, including who is responsible to oversee training, types of required training, when training will be required, and how to request specialized training. Specific training areas for policy development should include entry-level training, annual officer retraining, agency- or assignment-specific training, and skill development training upon promotion.

**Recommendation 13.1: MPD should develop a detailed training policy that outlines MPD's role in its recruit academy and in-service training programs.**

**Recommendation 13.2: MPD should train employees on newly developed or updated policies.**

**Finding 14: MPD policies and procedures are reviewed on an ad hoc basis. More than 50 percent (57 of the 94 policies) of the MPD policies have no date of issue, effective date or revised date.**

MPD has no formal procedure or process in place to conduct a comprehensive review and update of policies and procedures on a regular basis. Without any date as a frame of reference, it is impossible to note whether these policies are current and consistent with Massachusetts General Laws, case law, and best practices. At least five of these policies (Extra Details, Light Duty, Drug Testing, Noise Pollution, and Blood Alcohol Testing for OUI Arrests) bear the signature of a former chief of police, suggesting they are more than 18 years old without revision. Additionally, a date of issue is relevant to ensure policies are compliant with any changes to Massachusetts General Laws, case law, or criminal procedure.

MPD should establish a procedure to review policies each year to ensure that they meet best practices and the needs of the community. MPD should conduct annual reviews of its policies to ensure that practice matches policy, that policy meets best practice, and that policies are updated to address potential negative trends.

**Recommendation 14: MPD should establish a formal annual review process to re-examine its policies and procedures to ensure that they align with departmental practices, training, and promising practices in the field of policing as well as conform to Massachusetts General Laws, case law, and criminal procedure.**

**Finding 15: MPD is very active and engaged with the community through social media.**

The MPD is very engaged on social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. They use these platforms regularly to share information on community events, provide public safety information, and increase their interactions with local residents. This type of engagement is very important because it continues to connect the department with the community and increase information-sharing opportunities. This consistent use of social media demonstrates MPD's strong commitment to engaging the community.

MPD should continue to engage with the community through these social media platforms and look for new ways to leverage their strong social media presence to promote new engagement opportunities. For example, MPD should look for more opportunities to conduct outreach to local residents, especially minority and Spanish-speaking community members, through using social media platforms. They should consider utilizing these platforms to expand their recruitment efforts to attract candidate from diverse communities and create a more representative department.

Social media is a powerful tool for communicating information with local residents; however, this form of communication is one-sided. In order to increase police-community interactions, the MPD should establish a consistent process and tools for engaging with the community. Some examples of these tools could be regular community meetings or forums, community advisory groups, or community surveys that are administered on a regular schedule.

**Recommendation 15.1: MPD should continue with active social media engagement and increase efforts to connect with and recruit members from Spanish-speaking communities.**

**Recommendation 15.2: MPD should establish new tools for engaging with the community on a consistent basis.**

**Finding 16: Community policing activities are not well integrated with other policing strategies and activities occurring within the department.**

The MPD community engagement and outreach unit is responsible for community outreach activities such as using social media and conducting community events. The unit organizes basketball games, conducts afterschool and drug addiction programs, participates in toy drives, and holds other events. The mission of the unit focuses on community engagement, while other units focus on street operations. These community engagement activities appear to be siloed into one specialized unit rather than integrated as a philosophy in which every department member views this as their mission.

The MPD should review and consider revising its roles and responsibilities for patrol officers to ensure that they include community-policing principles. MPD should reinforce the concept that community policing is the responsibility of all officers—not just those assigned to the community engagement specialty units. Integrating community-policing principles into the roles and responsibilities of all staff can help strengthen community cooperation and enhance public safety. MPD should also establish guidance for department members that focuses on building trust and engagement from all community members. The 21st century pillars provide a solid framework to support the development of this guidance.

**Recommendation 16.1: MPD should intergrade community engagement as departmental philosophy rather than the responsibility of a single unit through revising officer's roles and responsibilities.**

**Recommendation 16.2: MPD should review department policies and procedures related to patrol officers and revise them to incorporate community-policing principles.**

## Department culture and morale

Efficient decision-making, communication, and transparency are necessary to ensure the MPD is successful and provides effective support to the community. In developing the findings for this area, it was important for our team to evaluate how MPD's management team understands and assesses the efficiency and effectiveness of lines of communication. The effectiveness of horizontal lines of communication between individuals at the same level is important for developing and ensuring a unified and consistent message for members of the community. Vertical communication is equally as important to ensure that the priorities, standards, and expectations of the department are known by all. Many of the findings in this section were developed relying upon data from our department survey and interviews with line officers, command staff, and city officials. Overall, our findings in this section indicate that MPD should place more focus on ensuring both the perception and the application of full transparency within the department.

### **Finding 17: MPD officers do not feel confident in making formal or informal complaints or expressing concern relating to department operations and management.**

During our audit, it became clear that many MPD members do not feel comfortable voicing their concerns. Some members do not feel the internal MPD process is effective, and others fear retaliation for speaking against leadership. There is also low trust in the external systems for addressing concerns. Some members even noted that they are discouraged from going to the human resources department to express concerns. There appears to be a culture of fear and mistrust that is leaving many MPD members feeling unsafe within their own department.

MPD should reevaluate the mechanisms for officers to express their concerns. The City and the MPD should work to establish a process through which officers feel protected in voicing concerns. In establishing these new mechanisms, it will be essential to ensure that individuals managing concerns are not closely linked to leadership and are free from conflicts of interest. The City and MPD may also want to consider implementing anonymous surveys as a method to better understand some of the more widely held concerns from members of the department.

### **Recommendation 17: MPD should work with members of the department to develop processes that foster an environment in which officers feel safe expressing concerns.**

### **Finding 18: There is a widespread perception that favoritism affects management and discipline decisions within the MPD.**

Within the survey results, we found the theme of fear among personnel that affects their morale and satisfaction with their employment with MPD. Perceptions of a lack of fairness and transparency can affect officer mental health and wellness. The *Final Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing* highlights officer health and wellness; thus, we recommend that the City of Methuen and the MPD prioritize the physical and mental health of all agency personnel. The City or MPD must take significant steps to address these perceptions and enhance transparency related to department leadership. Many of these steps pertain to recommendations already provided in sections on policy

and practice, but additional steps can be informed by policies and practices required through accreditation.

Transparent and consistent communication and implementation of departmental policies and decisions are critical to ensure that an institution is seen as legitimate by internal and external stakeholders. In other words, employees and the community will not trust or have faith in an organization if they believe that their policies and practices are inherently unjust.

**Recommendation 18: The City of Methuen and the MPD must prioritize and address the perceptions that cause members to believe that there is unequal treatment in assignments, promotions and discipline.**

## Professional standards and accountability

Professional standards and accountability are crucial elements of all law enforcement agencies. It is important for departments to promote principles that help build trust and establish processes that ensure fairness. The audit team comprehensively assessed MPD's policies and procedures for promotion and hiring. The findings from this section rely heavily upon data from survey analysis and interviews with department members. Overall, our findings from this section indicate that the MPD should place more focus on the impartiality of these very important processes and on ensuring that policy and practice are aligning with department values.

### **Finding 19: The assessment center was run by individuals who were involved in other areas of department operations, such as internal affairs investigations, causing officers to not trust MPD's promotional methods.**

A retired local police chief was hired to conduct internal affairs investigations for the MPD on matters of misconduct for many years. Chief Solomon said he began using outside resources, specifically this former chief, to conduct internal affairs investigations since his return to the chief's position in 2010. Many of the interviewees questioned the impartiality of the former chief in this process, particularly in light of his knowledge of many of the candidates as subjects or witnesses in various matters. As reported by several interviewees, although the retired chief was not an assessor, he was the point of contact on this process, met with the candidates for the information session, and was present throughout the testing coordinating the process. Many interviewees noted that the relationship with Chief Solomon and retired police chiefs and the MPD was too complex for them to have full confidence in the trustworthiness of this process.

Another former local police chief has been involved with the MPD for a number of years, serving as intermediary or broker for various technologies and equipment that the department has purchased and implemented. As previously noted, Integrity Testing LLC website lists the former police chief as a principal owner of the testing company used for the assessment center. Several interviewees believed that this former chief and Chief Solomon are friends and have been observed to socialize together at events in Methuen. This former chief also served as an assessor in the 2017 assessment center process. His complex financial relationship with the MPD, as well as his perceived friendship with Chief Solomon, caused many interviewees to doubt his ability to be unbiased in this process.

The assessment center process being used by the MPD is concerning based on the complex relationships of the two principals of the testing company, Integrity Testing LLC. The only way to restore trust and confidence in this process is to utilize a company with no ties of any kind to MPD or the candidates. The MPD must also ensure that the chosen company is also not providing preparatory classes for candidates of the MPD.

### **Recommendation 19: Establish a process to ensure that the assessment center is managed by an impartial party with no connections to the MPD personnel.**

**Finding 20: MPD uses an assessment center to make promotional decisions, but this process is not trusted by personnel, and the firm that runs the assessment center has financial ties to other aspects of MPD internal operations.**

In more recent years, civil service has authorized the use of the assessment center model for promotional examination. Although a candidate can do preparation to understand the process and enhance performance, there is no requirement to study any of the materials outlined above within the traditional testing model.

The MPD has used the assessment center process for the past two promotional testing cycles in 2015 and 2017. The most recent testing cycle in 2017 used the assessment center process for all ranks (sergeant, lieutenant, and captain). In order to operate an assessment center for promotion, a Delegation Agreement must be received from the Massachusetts Human Resources Division. A community must appoint a delegation administrator to oversee and coordinate the entire process. Mayor Stephen Zanni, as the appointing authority, delegated this role to MPD Chief Solomon in a letter to Mr. George Bibilos, Director, Organizational Development Group, HRD, dated February 27, 2014. Further, Chief Solomon reported that he met with union leadership to discuss his plan for testing and that the unions supported the process. Based on interviews with MPD employees, it appears that the decision to use an assessment center was based on an agreement among the unions that the centers would provide a better evaluation than a written test.

Integrity Testing LLC, an organization external to MPD, was chosen to conduct the assessment center. It is unclear how they were selected for this role. Chief Solomon indicated during his interview that a competitive Request For Proposals (RFP) process was conducted, but no such documentation can be located by Methuen officials. A review of the Integrity Testing LLC website indicates this company is co-owned by two former local police chiefs. Troublingly, these retired chiefs have other financial ties to the MPD, including conducting internal affairs investigations of MPD personnel and brokering the purchase of a number of police products and technologies by the MPD.

Based on the survey and interview data, one of the most significant areas of personnel concerns relates to selection for assignment and promotion. The stated belief of interviewees was that these processes are not transparent, fair, or in accordance with the intent of civil service procedures. Some members feel that complaints regarding the testing and assessment methods are without merit and were brought forth by disgruntled employees. Some respondents claimed that neither the superior's union nor the patrol officer's union objected to the assessment center process when both were consulted, while others claimed that this decision did not involve much input from the officers who would be affected by the decision.

During the interviews, the chief said that he regularly adheres to all of the proper processes involved in hiring, testing, promotions, and discipline. MPD members have pointed out that there appears to be a low number of grievances and complaints to civil service regarding these areas, which may indicate that appropriate practices are followed. Other members of the department noted that there is much fear in proceeding with formal grievance processes, and that is the reason for the low number of grievances. According to the chief, during the hiring and promotion process, any "skips" or "bypasses" on civil service lists have been accompanied by appropriate justification to Civil Service



without being rejected by them. He also claimed that all promotional candidates can file an appeal; however, these candidates cannot always see their test results because test materials are destroyed after the exam. This practice does not appear to follow the Delegation Agreement, which requires that all records be kept for a period of three years. During the interviews, the chief stated that despite the fact that he is covered by the Massachusetts “strong chief” law, the mayor ultimately decides or approves who is hired, promoted, or disciplined.

It is imperative for police organizations to have police promotional practices that are consistent and transparent, and that are implemented with the highest ethical standards, to ensure the process and outcomes are fair, just, and viewed with integrity. Traditionally within the civil service system in Massachusetts, promotions to all ranks have been conducted through a uniform written multiple-choice exam resulting in a ranked order for candidate selection. This examination process required candidates to study selected materials on topics including community policing, criminal investigations, police administration, Massachusetts General Laws, motor vehicle law, juvenile law, criminal law, and criminal procedure. A deep understanding of all of these topics is vitally important for a supervisor to be effective.

The MPD should prioritize the routine review of policies and procedures surrounding promotion. They should make sure that these processes are fair, transparent, and trusted by MPD employees. In doing this, MPD should review their procedures to ensure that there are no conflicting interests or relationships involved in any hiring or promotional decisions.

**Recommendation 20: The MPD must review its procedures for promotional decisions, including the use of an external firm to run the assessment center, and ensure that these processes are fair and equitable.**

**Finding 21: MPD members experience inconsistencies in receiving notifications regarding the bypassing of their promotions.**

There appears to be some misunderstandings about the process through which an officer is bypassed for a promotion. The lack of trust in the promotion process is worsened by the lack of transparency that officers feel is necessary to know that promotions are given fairly. Some officers have claimed that they did not receive notice describing the bypass for their promotion.

The MPD should make some changes to the process to ensure that officers understand the related standard procedures. The department should consider establishing a standard process for communicating and sharing information with interested candidates related to promotions. The standard process should allow all members to receive the same information related to promotions and next steps in the process. Tracking the information and notices that go out to candidates can help increase transparency and trust in these processes.

**Recommendation 21: Develop a more standardized process for promotions that features transparency and consistent communication with candidates.**

**Finding 22: Members of the organization did not trust the department’s use of the assessment center to make promotional decisions. Not all candidates were aware of a promotional preparatory course that was being provided by an assessment center company.**

The involvement of former local police chiefs in the promotional testing, with their varied agency roles involving technology and investigations, is cause for great concern. Further compounding this concern is the availability of preparatory classes being conducted by one of the former chiefs, as reported by MPD personnel. Based on numerous interviews, interviewees believed that only certain individuals had been informed of these classes by the administration. It is unclear whether this is true or simply the dissemination of information among work colleagues. What is apparent is that this former chief was conducting a preparatory class attended by a number of Methuen officers (reported to be candidates) in Wilmington, Massachusetts, approximately two months before the actual testing process. This would have been within the window of time that the testing process had been formally announced and Integrity Testing LLC was under contract (signed by this former chief) to conduct the testing. It was communicated during the interviews that the preparatory class exercises were precisely those used during the testing process, which greatly increased the significance of the attendance at this class. This class was attended by officers from other agencies as well.

Although far more laborious and time consuming, the preparation required for the traditional model of civil service testing provides a strong base of knowledge for future supervisors and leaders within an organization. We recommend that a model be utilized that requires the study of these critical materials as outlined above for the rank of sergeant, whether that be solely the written exam or a blended model of written exam followed by assessment center. For example, a blended examination would value the written testing component at 50 percent, and only a passing score would move the candidate forward to the assessment center phase, which would also be valued at 50 percent. This blended model would ensure that each candidate for sergeant has demonstrated command of the necessary knowledge coupled with a process for evaluating problem-solving skills under duress.

**Recommendation 22: MPD should reassess the use of assessment centers for all ranks.**

**Finding 23: Although MPD began the process to seek Massachusetts state accreditation over five years ago, the process seemingly has stalled, and little progress has been made.**

More than five years ago, MPD began the process towards achieving state accreditation through the Massachusetts Police Accreditation Program. The process of accreditation ensures that the agency adheres to published and established practices and standards in the field. It is also a risk management tool for an agency and aids in preventing or reducing financial loss in liability claims. Although the benefits to accreditation will vary from agency to agency, the most common benefits of the process include providing a basis to identify and correct deficiencies before they become problems, ensuring all agency policies and procedures are detailed and current, and providing a means of independent evaluation of agency operations for quality assurance.

The accreditation process begins with a self-assessment of the agency by the agency. This is a labor-intensive process that consists of a comprehensive review of all accreditation standards to document the status of agency compliance. This self-assessment process allows corrective action to be taken,

which generally involves policy writing, minor facility adjustment, and in some cases the purchase of equipment.

Current Massachusetts accreditation standards require compliance with 159 standards, which affect officer and public safety, address high-liability/risk management issues, and generally promote operational efficiency throughout an agency. Although the MPD began the accreditation process five years ago, very little evidence of progress was found in our audit, and it appears that no further action has been taken for the past several years.

**Recommendation 23.1: The MPD should reinvigorate their accreditation process and establish a specific plan to achieve accreditation, including mapping responsibilities to specific personnel and establishing timelines.**

**Recommendation 23.2: The MPD should also develop a plan for seeking CALEA accreditation, either in parallel or sequence to achieving state accreditation.**

# Conclusion

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The MPD has experienced several crises: a crisis in its public reputation on the heels of several negative articles in the regional and state press, a crisis in credibility with the current political establishment, and a crisis in the leadership's credibility within the MPD. There has also been a general crisis in trust in the agency's leadership both within MPD and with its constituencies over the compensation the chief negotiated through the Superior Officers Association. The seriousness of these matters is manifest in the lack of trust department members have in all of the key functions of leadership: hiring, assignments, discipline, and promotion.

It should be noted that, in many ways, the City of Methuen, its police chief, and its police department have been in this situation before. As has been widely reported, Chief Solomon was fired by a former mayor in 2008 following allegations of grant mismanagement, conflicts of interest, and assertions of "loss of confidence." All of this contributed to heated public controversy and intense political conflict. Although this was 10 years ago, one cannot help but note that many of the issues (such as those surrounding "favoritism" and "micromanaging") have resurfaced. Finally, it should be noted that the previous city council and mayor negotiated what is generally perceived as an exorbitant raise for the chief and the Superior Officers union which generated pressure for outside reviews (including this one) of the current climate within MPD.

Notably, accountability systems appear to have been inadequate during the past several years. There are other "strong chiefs" in Massachusetts who often find reform efforts obstructed by grievances, demands to bargain, or arbitrations involving their unions, and yet in Methuen, this process has been severely inadequate. It is worth noting that all but one of the recent police union's presidents personally benefited from their position by being either promoted or assigned to a specialist position. It is also worth noting that the Civil Service Commission approved hiring processes that have continued to disfavor veterans, minorities, and others on civil service lists. Those involved in the hiring decision-making process appear to be missing the negative effects that hiring decisions and practices have had on minority representation in the MPD.

Despite these issues, the audit team has great confidence in the MPD's desire to improve and function as a top-notch police organization, and in its ability to make significant and lasting change based on the findings of this report. This audit has not been an investigation. Formal investigations must be left to entities with the authority and power to investigate and recommend specific actions. This audit used surveys, document reviews, agency comparisons, and interviews to identify strengths, operational challenges, and areas of concern expressed by members of the community.

Our audit found that the MPD should reevaluate and update many of its policies and procedures. Particularly, the department should focus on establishing more formal and transparent procedures that support processes such as promotion, hiring, and assignments. Other areas to focus on for change include disciplinary processes, staffing, and culture and morale. Overall, the high survey response rate and participation in this audit may be indicative of the real desire for change within

the department. The department should redirect its focus to patrol personnel, who are at the heart of public service to the community. It is clear that the agency is in conflict and that unresolved issues of accountability should be appropriately addressed. We believe that this report provides an assessment of observations and testimony to advance the necessary civic discussions and decisions required.

In conducting this audit, we found that many members of the department clearly did not trust or support MPD leadership or direction; however, a large majority of the individuals we spoke to indicated that they were eager and hopeful to see change. In moving forward, it will be important for the MPD to ensure that all operations are being guided by accountability standards and that their systems are equipped to oversee these processes. Maintaining this priority will be essential in developing a better department to promote public safety in the City of Methuen.

# Appendix A: Table of Findings and Recommendations

<b><i>Finding No.</i></b>	<b><i>Finding</i></b>	<b><i>Recommendation</i></b>
1	MPD has a relatively low number of sergeants assigned to patrol.	1. Evaluate the overall number and deployment of sergeants within the MPD.
2	MPD has a relatively high number of assigned specialist positions.	2. Evaluate the deployment of personnel within the MPD.
3	The MPD uses part-time, intermittent, and reserve officers to supplement its staffing.	3. The MPD should conduct a thorough review of the use of supplemental personnel to conduct sworn personnel duties and develop appropriate limitations on the job duties and tenure of these personnel.
4	The demographics of MPD are not representative of the demographics of the City of Methuen.	4.1. The MPD should develop a clear and concise policy that articulates the process of recruitment and selection of candidates for hire.
		4.2. MPD should develop a recruitment plan for full-time sworn personnel, prioritizing recruiting Spanish-speaking officers and individuals from underrepresented demographics with the goal of creating a department that reflects the Methuen community.

<b>Finding No.</b>	<b>Finding</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
		4.3. MPD should expand the reach of their recruitment and hiring efforts to attract more diverse candidates.
5	This lack of racial and ethnic diversity has negatively affected various facets of the department.	5. MPD should identify any practices that may prevent officers from underrepresented backgrounds from feeling comfortable in the department.
6	MPD members have low confidence in the fairness of the special unit assignments process.	6. MPD should establish a more transparent and impartial process for officer assignment, to be developed with input from all department members, particularly patrol officers.
7	MPD does not currently have a system to guide the rotational cycle of department vehicles.	7. The MPD should institute a system to routinely upgrade the fleet of patrol vehicles.
8	Although MPD remains at the forefront of emerging technology, they lack a process to evaluate the benefits, need, and impacts before the purchase of new technology.	8. MPD should develop a technology plan for the procurement of new technology, including a process to evaluate new technology before it is purchased.
9	MPD does not presently have any policies and procedures for Agency Authority and Jurisdiction.	9. MPD should prioritize the creation and dissemination of policies, which outline the agency's law enforcement role, lawful authority, oath of office, and code of ethics.
10	The MPD lacks a policy that addresses departmental discipline.	10. The MPD should develop a policy that outlines the department's philosophy and disciplinary procedures, including the

<b><i>Finding No.</i></b>	<b><i>Finding</i></b>	<b><i>Recommendation</i></b>
		progressive steps and responsible personnel for rendering the stages of discipline.
11	MPD lacks a policy that addresses off-duty conduct and employment.	11.1. MPD should develop a policy that address off-duty conduct.
		11.2. MPD should develop a policy that addresses off-duty employment.
12	MPD lacks a policy that addresses Emergency Vehicle Operation.	12. The MPD should develop a policy that fully addresses emergency vehicle operations.
13	MPD has a strong training program, which is not presently documented in policies.	13.1. MPD should develop a detailed training policy that outlines MPD's role in its recruit academy and in-service training programs.
		13.2. MPD should train employees on newly developed or updated policies.
14	MPD policies and procedures are reviewed on an ad hoc basis. More than 50% (57 of the 94 polices) of the MPD policies have no Date of Issue, Effective Date or Revised Date.	14. MPD should establish a formal annual review process to re-examine its policies and procedures to ensure that they align with departmental practices, training, and promising practices in the field of policing as well as conform to Massachusetts General Laws, case law, and criminal procedure.
15	MPD is very active and engaged with the community through social media.	15.1. Continue with active social media engagement and increase efforts to connect with and recruit members from Spanish-speaking communities.



<b><i>Finding No.</i></b>	<b><i>Finding</i></b>	<b><i>Recommendation</i></b>
		15.2. MPD should establish new tools for engaging with the community on a consistent basis.
16	Community policing activities are not well integrated with other policing strategies and activities occurring within the department.	16. 1. MPD should intergrade community engagement as departmental philosophy rather than the responsibility of a single unit through revising officer's roles and responsibilities. 16.2. MPD should intergrade community engagement as departmental philosophy rather than the responsibility of a single unit through revising officers' roles and responsibilities.
17	MPD officers do not feel confident in making formal or informal complaints or expressions of concern relating to department operations and management.	17. MPD should work with members of the department to develop processes that foster an environment in which officers feel safe expressing concern.
18	There is a widespread perception that favoritism affects management and discipline decisions within the MPD.	18. The City of Methuen and the MPD must prioritize and address the perceptions that cause members to believe that there is unequal treatment in assignments, promotions, and discipline.
19	The assessment center was run by individuals who were involved in other areas of department operations, such as internal affairs investigations, causing officers to not trust MPD's promotional methods.	19. Establish a process to ensure that the assessment center is managed by an impartial party with no connections to the MPD personnel.

<b><i>Finding No.</i></b>	<b><i>Finding</i></b>	<b><i>Recommendation</i></b>
20	MPD uses an assessment center to make promotional decisions, but this process is not trusted by personnel, and the firm that runs the assessment center has financial ties to other aspects of MPD internal operations.	20. The MPD must review its procedures for promotional decisions, including the use of an external firm to run the assessment center and ensure that these processes are fair and equitable.
21	MPD members experience inconsistencies in receiving notifications regarding the bypassing of their promotions.	21. Develop a more standardized process for promotions that features transparency and consistent communication with candidates.
22	Members of the organization did not trust the department's use of the assessment center to make promotional decisions. Not all candidates were aware of a promotional preparatory course that was being provided by an assessment center company.	22. MPD should reassess the use of assessment centers for all ranks.
23	Although MPD began the process to seek Massachusetts state accreditation over five years ago, the process seemingly has stalled, and little progress has been made.	23.1. The MPD should reinvigorate their accreditation process and establish a specific plan to achieve accreditation, including mapping responsibilities to specific personnel and establishing timelines.
		23.2. The MPD should also develop a plan for seeking CALEA accreditation, either in parallel or sequence to achieving state accreditation.

# Appendix B: MPD Employee Work Survey

## **SURVEY INFORMED CONSENT FORM Methuen, MA Police Department**

Please read this consent form carefully and ask as many questions as you like before you decide whether you want to participate in this survey. You are free to ask questions at any time before, during, or after your participation in this survey.

### **1. PURPOSE OF THIS ASSESSMENT**

You are being asked to participate in a survey about your employment and experiences working in the Methuen, Massachusetts Police Department. The goal of this survey is to learn more about employee perceptions of agency operations. The data will be analyzed to provide information about the future of the Methuen Police Department.

### **2. PROCEDURES**

This is a self-administered survey. Auditors will collect this information via an agency survey, to be distributed via email through Checkbox, a survey assessment platform. Upon receiving the survey and if you consent to completing it, you will be asked a series of questions about your employment at the MPD. The survey should take no more than 15 minutes to complete. The survey does not ask for your name and contact information. However, this information was used to generate a unique survey link and the contact information will be held strictly confidential. Responses will be aggregated for the purpose of reporting survey results. At no time will your responses be reported individually or in connection with your name. Responses are available to the CNA Audit Team only.

### **3. POSSIBLE RISKS OR DISCOMFORT**

We do not think there are any risks or possible harm that can come to you as a result of completing this survey, because we will take thorough precautions to protect your confidentiality and will only report findings in summary formats (no individual respondents will be identified in the assessment report).

### **4. POSSIBLE BENEFITS**

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this survey. Your participation is strictly voluntary.

### **5. CONFIDENTIALITY**

Your participation in this assessment will be treated as confidential. The results of the assessment will be published in reports, but we will not present the results of the assessment in a way that individual participation will be known. All hard copy surveys and other forms will be kept in locked filing cabinets, only accessible to approved members of the audit team. Data that is stored electronically will be maintained on secure servers. All data that contains personally identifiable information (PII) will be maintained and encrypted on CNA's server and will not be available on a computer network. No data will be transferred that contains PII.

### **6. SOURCE OF FUNDING FOR THE ASSESSMENT**

City of Methuen, Massachusetts

### **7. YOU MAY DECLINE TO PARTICIPATE**

You are free to choose whether to participate in this survey. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits if you choose not to participate.

### **8. AVAILABLE SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

Any further questions you have about this assessment will be answered by the Project Director:

Name: Edward Flynn Contact Information: flynne@cna.org

If you have questions about your rights as a participant or if you have questions, concerns or complaints about the audit, you may contact:

Mark E. Rosen

SVP General Counsel and Corporate Secretary CNA Corp

Telephone: 703-824-2720 E-mail: rosenm@cna.org

### **\*AUTHORIZATION**

I have read and understand this consent form. By taking the survey, I provide my voluntary consent to participate in this research study. I understand that I may choose not to participate, and that there will be no negative consequences for me if I choose to not participate.

**\*\*Date (MM/DD/YYYY):**

**SURVEY OF METHUEN, MASSACHUSETTS POLICE DEPARTMENT PERSONNEL 2020**

As part of CNA’s review of the Methuen, Massachusetts Police Department (MPD) we are conducting this survey to gather input and feedback from MPD personnel about employee satisfaction and employee perceptions of the work environment. Your responses will provide information to inform improvement of the MPD.

This survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Please answer all questions, unless otherwise instructed in the question directions. You do **NOT** have to put your name on this survey, and anything you write ***will be kept confidential***. There are also some **OPTIONAL** questions at the end of the survey that ask about who you are.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey!

**\*Q.1. Please check off one of the following categories of employment:**

- a. Civilian Employee
- b. Sworn Employee

**The following questions ask about your job and your views of your department.**

**\*Q.2. Please rate your overall satisfaction with the agency as a place to work.**

- a. Very satisfied
- b. Dissatisfied
- c. Very dissatisfied
- d. No answer

**\*Q.3. How supportive are you of the direction that top management is taking this organization?**

- a. Extremely supportive
- b. Very supportive
- c. Moderately supportive
- d. Slightly supportive
- e. Not supportive at all
- f. I do not know management’s direction
- g. No answer

**Q.4. In general, how well does your department do each of the following?**

	Very well	Somewhat well	Not too well	Not well at all	No answer /Refused
a. Communicate your job responsibilities to you clearly	0	0	0	0	0
b. Train you adequately for your job	0	0	0	0	0
c. Equip you adequately to perform your job	0	0	0	0	0

**\*Q.5. Does your department have enough officers to adequately police the community, or not?**

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. No answer

**\*Q.6. Please describe how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statement. I am strongly committed to making the agency successful.**

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Disagree
- d. Strongly disagree
- e. No answer

**Q.7. In general, how well does your department do each of the following?**

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Hardly ever	Never	No answer /Refused
a. How often are employees in your department asked for their input on decisions that will affect them?	0	0	0	0	0	0
b. How often does your supervisor treat the officers he or she supervises with respect?	0	0	0	0	0	0

**\*Q.8. How important is it, if at all, for law enforcement officers today to have a good knowledge of what scientific research shows are effective policing strategies?**

- a. Very important
- b. Somewhat important
- c. Not too important
- d. Not at all important
- e. No answer

**\*Q.9. In order to be effective at their job, how important is it, if at all, for law enforcement officers to have detailed knowledge of the people, places and culture in the areas where they routinely work?**

- a. Very important
- b. Somewhat important
- c. Not too important
- d. Not at all important
- e. No answer

**\*Q.10. When it comes to decisions about assignments and promotions, which comes closest to describing how things work in your department?**

- a. Whites are treated better than minorities
- b. Minorities are treated better than whites
- c. Whites and minorities are treated about the same
- d. No answer

**\*Q.11. When it comes to decisions about assignments and promotions, which comes closest to describing how things work in your department?**

- a. Men are treated better than women
- b. Women are treated better than men
- c. Men and women are treated about the same
- d. No answer

**\*Q. 12. When it comes to promotions in the MPD, what comes closest to describing how things work in the MPD?\* (check all that apply)**

- a. the MPD has and communicates a fair and transparent process for promotions
- b. the MPD promotional process benefits individuals that are favored by MPD leadership
- c. the MPD promotional process benefits individuals that are favored by city officials
- d. the MPD does not use a formal or consistent process for promotions
- e. no answer

**\*Q. 13. When it comes to new assignments in the MPD, what comes closest to describing how things work in the MPD?\* (check all that apply)**

- a. the MPD has and communicates a fair and transparent process for new assignments
- b. the MPD new assignment process benefits individuals that are favored by MPD leadership
- c. the MPD new assignment process benefits individuals that are favored by city officials
- d. the MPD does not use a formal or consistent process for new assignment
- e. no answer

**\*Q. 14. When it comes to discipline in the MPD, what comes closest to describing how things work in the MPD?\* (check all that apply)**

- a. the MPD has and communicates a fair and transparent process for disciplinary action
- b. the MPD disciplinary action process benefits individuals that are favored by MPD leadership
- c. the MPD disciplinary action process benefits individuals that are favored by city officials
- d. the MPD does not use a formal or consistent process for disciplinary action
- e. no answer

**Q.15. Please describe how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.**

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No answer /Refused
a. For minor mistakes, the department helps officers with coaching and counseling rather than punishment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. In this agency, the disciplinary process is fair.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**\*Q.16. In general, would you say the rules governing the use of force in your department are...**

- a. Too restrictive
- b. Not restrictive enough

- c. About right
- d. The department has no such guidelines
- e. I am not familiar with the department's use of force policies
- f. No answer

**\*Q.17. How useful are your department's use of force guidelines when officers are confronted with actual situations where force may be needed?**

- a. Very useful
- b. Somewhat useful
- c. Not too useful
- d. Not useful at all
- e. The department has no such guidelines
- f. I am not familiar with the department's use of force policies
- g. No answer

**\*Q.18. Do you think officers should or should not be required to intervene when they believe another officer is about to use unnecessary force?**

- a. Yes, they should be required to intervene
- b. No, they should not be required to intervene

**\*Q.19. In your opinion, how useful in policing today is requiring MPD employees to be responsive to community concerns and work in close partnership with the community to solve problems?**

- a. Very useful
- b. Somewhat useful
- c. Not too useful
- d. Not useful at all
- e. No answer

**\*Q.20. In your opinion, how useful in policing today is requiring MPD employees to show respect, concern, and fairness when they deal with the public?**

- a. Very useful
- b. Somewhat useful
- c. Not too useful
- d. Not useful at all
- e. No answer

**\*Q.21. How much support does your department's leadership give to MPD employees who want to show respect, concern, and fairness when they deal with the public?**

- a. A great deal of support

- b. A fair amount of support
- c. Not too much support
- d. No support at all
- e. No answer

**Q.22. In the PAST 12 MONTHS, how much training, if any, have you received in each of the following areas? (Answer if you are sworn and/or civilian personnel).**

	4 hours or more	Less than 4 hours	None	No answer
a. Non-lethal methods to control a combative or threatening individual ow to deal with individuals who are having a mental health crisis	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. How to deescalate a situation so it is not necessary to use force	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Firearms training involving shoot-don't shoot scenarios	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Q.23. In the PAST 12 MONTHS, how much training, if any, have you received in each of the following areas? (Answer if you are sworn personnel)**

	4 hours or more	Less than 4 hours	None	No answer
a. Non-lethal methods to control a combative or threatening individual ow to deal with individuals who are having a mental health crisis	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. How to deescalate a situation so it is not necessary to use force	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Firearms training involving shoot-don't shoot scenarios	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Q.24. If there is anything else that you would like to share with the Audit Team, please add your comments here:**

Please note that the following four items are OPTIONAL. Collecting this information helps us ensure we are meeting needs of diverse employees and information will only be considered in the aggregate, but if you wish to skip any of these items, you may either choose the "prefer not to answer" choice.

**Q.25. What is your gender?**

- a. Female
- b. Male
- c. Non-binary/third gender
- d. Prefer not to answer
- e. Prefer to self-describe:

**Q.26. What is your race/ethnicity? Please select all that apply.**

- a. Native American or Alaskan Native
- b. Asian
- c. Black or African
- d. Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish Origin
- e. Middle Eastern or North African



- f. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- g. White or Caucasian
- h. Biracial or Multiracial
- i. Prefer not to answer
- j. Another race or ethnicity not listed here:

**Q.27. What role/function best describes your work in the MPD?**

- a. Frontline (officer, investigator)
- b. Civilian staff (not manager/supervisor)
- c. Sworn supervisor
- d. Civilian supervisor
- e. Prefer not to answer

Thank you for taking the survey.

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