



## HSVPOA Police Chief Speaks at Board Retreat

### Description

Ricky Middleton, Hot Springs Village Chief of Police, spoke to the Board of Directors at the Board Retreat on May 12, 2021. The Chief has been with the POA for 41 years, 35 years with the HSV Police Department.

The Chief said, “when people think of a police department, they typically think of a municipal type setting. Hot Springs Village and Diamondhead are very unique in the state. We work for private entities, but we carry full arrest authority and that is granted by the Sheriffs (in our case of Saline and Garland County). In the early 1980’s Arkansas passed laws that allowed Arkansas Sheriffs to commission officers in planned communities. That is how we draw our authority.”

### Unique Issues

#### Funding

Since we are not a police department by statute, we do not receive funds from federal or state government or from any of the citations the department issues.

#### Laws and Policies

“Enforcing laws and policies creates all kinds of problems. Under the statutes of the Federal and State government, when you see the badge come in, we are there for law enforcement purposes, explained Middleton.

We have a Compliance Division that helps out with policy enforcement. The police work closely with them to try to resolve issues.

#### Limited Staff for a 24/7 Operation

The Police Department is a 24/7 operation. The dispatch is a 911 center that operates 24/7. “When the

calls come in, we dispatch for Fire and Police and we transfer calls to [LifeNet](#), if it is a medical need,” explained Ricky.

The schools have their own police districts and we dispatch for Jessieville District School.

There are 21 police officer positions. “That seems like a lot of folks, but when you are working 24/7, have four shifts, have a criminal investigation division and administration, that stretches us very thin,” said Ricky.

Security is a big issue in the Village and we need to think about growing the Police Department. Middleton tries to get a couple of more police officers every year and the budget is pretty tight. As the Village grows, the Police Department also needs to grow.

HSV Police Department has six full-time and two part-time dispatchers who answer the emergency calls. That is a very busy job.

The Police Department writes approximately 5,000 reports per year.

The Village is changing. The call types are different than they used to be.

#### **Animal Control**

Middleton is also in charge of Animal Control, which also presents unique challenges. There are county ordinances that help out with the animal control issue. There are two full-time and one part-time animal control officers. They take care of barking dogs, loose dogs and keep the roadways clear of deceased animals.

#### **Recruiting/Retention/Training**

Recruiting and retaining are two of the Police Department’s biggest obstacles. The wages paid to officers are \$15.25 for noncertified officers and \$15.75 for certified officers. This wage makes it hard for the Village to compete with the surrounding agencies.

The noncertified officers take a 12 week-field training class in Camden, Arkansas. Once certified, a lot of these employees move on to a different Police Department. It is a constant battle to retain the employees. The yearly pay for Hot Springs is \$41,800. We pay around \$37,000 per year which includes 208 hours of built-in overtime. They work 48 hours one week, 36 hours the following week. The counties pay \$18.00 per hour. They also have added benefits like take-home cars. That is around a \$5,000 a year benefit. That would be difficult to do here without requiring folks to live inside the Village.

It is difficult to let guys off to go to training. Middleton has to pay overtime to cover shifts while officers are in training.

At one point this year, the Chief was down seven officers. This causes a load on the officers to pick up the slack.

## Training Center

Ricky uses the Training Center for a Citizens' Police Academy (CPA) training twice a year. This class is one night a week for eight weeks. Since the Village Police Department doesn't qualify for state or federal funding, Villagers developed a 501c3 Citizens' Police Academy Alumni Association. The Alumni Association accepts donations and uses these donations to help with the purchase of emergency equipment and other items for the officers.

The Police Department has a [MILO Training Simulator](#), one of very few in the state. Officers use this for virtual training. The Citizens' Police Academy Alumni Association purchased this equipment. The simulator can be rented. The money goes to the CPA Alumni. The CPA in turn uses this money to purchase more equipment for the Police Department.

Ricky has a Coffee/Tea on the second Tuesday of each month. The purpose of this meeting is to answer questions and educate the public on laws. There are often guest speakers at this meeting.

Director Corry asked Ricky why the Police Department doesn't arrest people for trespassing if they are not supposed to be in the Village. The Chief said this was a complicated issue. First, probable cause to detain someone must first be established.

Stickers on vehicles are not required, so omission of a sticker is not probably cause.

Middleton runs the license plates to see if they are Village residents. There are nonresident Villagers so not being a nonresident is not probable cause.

The officers can follow the vehicle to see if there is a violation of a traffic law. If there is, then there is probable cause for a stop.

When an officer turns on their blue lights, that is a seizure. The officer must think there is a law violation in order to turn on his blue lights.

The Police Officers cannot share information obtained when running a license plate with the Compliance Davison. This is a felony.

Middleton said the Security (Gate) people do not have the authority to stop and detain people.

## Grants

We are a private community, a corporation. Federal and state grants usually do not apply to private communities. If the grant is specifically written for any law enforcement agency, then 'yes.' We have received some grants. We received 18 tasers off a grant and as soon as they saw we received them, they changed the last sentence to say, 'Not for planned communities.'"

Stephanie Heffer said, "there was a recent bill that went to the legislature that is going to help us specifically because it reimburses us for training."

Middleton explained, "I was able to get a representative to pass a bill that allows us to go after the folks

who go for the training but then do not stay for 18 months, there is now partial reimbursement for the training.”

## Other

The Chief has three new patrol cars this year. There are eight total patrol cars. Five are patrol and three in CID (Criminal Investigation Division) and administration.

We have one radar trailer and are purchasing another this year.

Prisoners arrested in the Village are taken to the County Jails.

Middleton said the last time he did a survey, out of 49 arrests, 48 were Property Owners or renters. They had a reason to be in the Village.

Property Owner Maxine Klein asked about the possibility of using drones for police work. This would require training and certain statutes would need to be followed. The Chief said, “currently if someone has Alzheimer’s and walks off, we call the Arkansas Department of Correction in Malvern. They will bring their bloodhounds and track for them. This is a 45 minute response time. They send three officers to do this and it is done free of charge.” There are also other resources to call.

Property Owner Marcy Mermel asked how the crime in Hot Springs Village has changed from the past. Middleton said, 35 years ago, we didn’t have the population we have now. Anytime your population increases, unfortunately, people have unique problems that they bring with them and we have to deal with a lot of that – a lot of drug and alcohol abuse. There is an increase in domestics. Finances can be difficult. People may inherit the house.

Director Omohundro said there has been a change in people in the past 25 years. “They are not respectful. It is a different world we live in,” stated Tucker.

By Cheryl Dowden, May 14, 2021

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