Opioid Crisis

An opioid task force is in place. The department, along with recovery coaches, conducts door-to-door follow-ups with those who have experienced an overdose. The department also has mental health professionals it can deploy during crisis calls. As substance use disorders and mental health disorders are often co-occurring, these efforts are commendable. Some programs are in their initial stages (such as the LEAD program mentioned above), including one on the diversion of offenders committing smaller crimes to fuel addiction. Evaluation should occur routinely, and expansion will likely be required.

Homelessness

There are widespread complaints regarding homeless community members, with the bus station and areas around intersections with traffic lights identified as significant areas of concern.

While there is a community-wide list of resources, capacity seems to be an issue both within the city as a whole and specifically within the police department.

Like many communities, the police are called to deal with homeless community members. While the frustration of community members over the impact of homelessness (trash, "tent cities," panhandling, etc.) is understandable, just being homeless is not a crime. There is community pressure to "move the homeless along," but the reality is that without a supportive housing program or expanded programming for behavioral and mental health along with substance use disorder treatment and the availability of jobs, homelessness will continue to be a community-wide issue. There is a homeless taskforce, but despite progress being made, as in many communities, the need outpaces the resources.

Youth Programming

Not one patrol officer mentioned knowing about any youth initiatives. This is not to imply that there are not efforts underway but rather that it does not appear to be a priority unless an officer is directly involved (for example, for those conducting the youth academy).

Community members expressed support for the SROs and youth programs but stated there are not enough of them and that the current focus appears punitive vs. supportive. Given the investment in programming, the department needs to do a better job of communicating its efforts to community members.

Court

Insight was provided that due to poor scheduling and cancelations by the court, the department is spending money unnecessarily. Management needs to work with the court to improve scheduling and decrease the impact of the court on overtime.

Many of those interviewed (both internal department members and community members) expressed there is a "revolving door at court." The department should meet with courts to determine if impact players are being released and to discuss other efforts such as procedural justice as a way of creating meaningful outcomes of court involvement to community members. This is an area that would benefit from increased collaboration with the courts. The department is actively putting out information related to impact players, but additional support is needed.

Traffic

There appears to be little emphasis on traffic, and there is a belief that traffic safety is a unit issue rather than a department issue. The community was vocal with its desire to have traffic enforcement and felt it was also a way to create more visibility. To address this need, an additional traffic officer was added.

PSSG recommends the department embrace the Data Driven Analysis of Crime and Traffic Safety so that it can integrate traffic safety into other operational areas.

Officer Wellness and Safety

Internally, there was not very much knowledge of this topic. External stakeholders stated that the training they provided was met with resistance and was not taken seriously.

Given that officer suicide nationwide has already reached well over 118 in 2018 there are issues to address. In addition, general health and wellness issues such as sleep, nutrition, and emotional stress need to be addressed in a policing environment. There have been some efforts made, but there was little participation by department members.

Internal and External Communication

There are a significant number of complaints regarding communication both internally and externally. Internally, department members felt that the three stations do not communicate well with each other or the command staff, that specialized units do not share information, and that information from headquarters is limited. Many expressed that they do not know why the chief makes changes or what his plan is, despite the information being shared at staff meetings. Changes are underway with how staff notes are distributed to help with this issue.

Many believe the chief needs to do a better job of delegating. Members expressed that the chief has good ideas but acts too quickly and fails to include others in the conversation. Having a chief of staff and a community coordinator would help the chief with converting good ideas into action, including others in the process, and communicating the positive efforts with the department.

Whether actually uninformed or just not supporting the process, on several occasions we were told by interviewees that they did not know why PSSG was there. For one of the night meetings at the station, the front desk officer said he had no knowledge of a meeting occurring.

Community members felt the chief was visible but wondered if there could be improvements with how information is shared.

The community complimented the chief on his response to immigration-related issues and collaborating with faith-based communities to foster dialogue and commended his efforts on outreach. They hope this effort can be sustained.

There is a sworn Public Information Officer (PIO) and a civilian community relations specialist. It is not necessary to have a sworn member act as a PIO. The civilian PIO should be involved in command staff meetings to help with internal messaging. Creating messaging for the departments' webpage and Facebook page should be a responsibility of the civilian PIO as well.

The civilian PIO and assistant should help with developing recruiting material, training brochures, community programming/posters, and all related material.

A formal communications plan is needed for both internal and external efforts. The plan should include the continued use of social media, but also include traditional media outreach such as internal newsletters, external press releases, and the use of radio shows that reach diverse communities.

Record Keeping

It was reported that lots of time is wasted tracking down detail slips. Automated systems are needed for tracking time, and officers need to be held accountable for timely submission. This was addressed with new software.

Payroll was reported as being efficient without many errors occurring.

Administrative paperwork, such as records and databases for items such as training, rosters, deployment, organizational charts, grants, case management, data, and

initiatives, is extremely lacking. This was evident during this study as many records required for the review were not ready when the project started and some were not provided until eight months after the initial interviews began.

Not only was the study hampered by lack of data, the department operations also suffer because of inadequate records. Supervisors lack data for informed decision-making, and tracking of both successes and limiting factors is next to impossible without properly structured databases and trained personnel.

Southeastern Massachusetts Law Enforcement Council (SEMLEC)

To evaluate the special response efforts and policies of the NBPD, PSSG interviewed the Bridgewater Police Chief, who is also the president of the Southeastern Massachusetts Law Enforcement Council (SEMLEC), which comprises 30 law enforcement agencies in the area surrounding New Bedford.

The NBPD is a member of SEMLEC for Mutual Aid, but is not part of the group for regularly scheduled training or coordinated response to nonemergency situations and events.

NBPD employs a 25-member Special Reaction Team that responds to critical incidents. The team consists of approximately 10% of the sworn agency staffing. Members are assigned to other operational roles within the department and assemble for training and call-outs to real events.

While it is not unusual for large departments to maintain their own specialized units, NBPD is of a size that still relies on regional response. Policing requires interoperability and reliance on neighboring agencies to help prepare for large-scale events, such as an active shooter, a mass casualty incident, and manmade and natural disasters. The National Incident Management System (NIMS) calls for interoperability and multi-agency training and support. This level of training and support goes well beyond simply signing a mutual aid agreement.

Certainly, there are advantages to having an in-house trained SWAT team within an agency. Training is done with the same personnel, interoperability, and communications (radios, codes, signals). Members know their teammates' strengths, weaknesses, and capabilities. They are familiar with weapons, gear, equipment, and vehicles. However, there are also clear disadvantages that include staffing issues, call-outs, and training that takes officers away from their regular duties, as well as a siloed perspective of a single organization. There are limits in terms of availability of on-duty personnel and response delays by those off-duty or away for training, vacation, time off, illness, or disability.

Partnering with SEMLEC affords the NBPD several advantages, including a multitude of additional personnel available from the other 30 neighboring agencies. There is a clear advantage that SEMLEC is an exponential force multiplier. There is increased access to federal and state homeland security resources, including funding and equipment. SEMLEC has received several SWAT-related pieces of equipment, including an armored

Bearcat rescue vehicle and weapons. With SEMLEC comes increased area situational awareness, training strategies, and innovations.

Dues to become a member of SEMLEC are based on a percentage of the number of dedicated personnel. For example, an agency that dedicates 10% will pay $2,000 annually, while an agency that contributes 5% will pay $3,000 and one that dedicates 0% will be assessed $5,000. By the year 2020, the fees will be the same, except for an agency that dedicates no personnel, where fees will rise to $8,000 in order to be part of the council. The structure seeks to have all agencies contribute personnel for cohesiveness.

The NBPD may want to conduct a further financial comparison; however, PSSG suggests becoming a member of SEMLEC.

Integration of the 21st Century Policing Six Pillars

The concepts emerging from the 21st Century Policing task force are not new, but the process of connecting the pillars to goals, strategies, and actions can improve police operations.

In this section, each pillar is listed along with potential strategies. Each strategy will require a series of action items to implement. PSSG suggests working groups to oversee each pillar. The department should plan on a two-year timeline to fully define the pillars, establish action items, begin implementation, and constantly evaluate the progress.

Pillar One—Building Trust and Legitimacy

Example strategies could include

- Implementing training for officers on nontraditional topics such as understanding implicit bias, trauma-informed policing, and building cultural competency.
- Researching programs that could enhance resolution to low-level crimes outside of the traditional court system so that the department and community will feel there is less of a revolving door.
- Fostering a culture of transparency and accountability by devoting an area of the website for posting of an annual internal investigations audit and sharing more information about department operations (in bulletins versus Facebook postings).
- Creating a community advisory board and engaging the community in conversations related to problem solving, positive education, and enforcement activities as a means of developing a shared responsibility for crime reduction and improved quality of life.
- Evaluating the unintended consequences of military-style appearances when staffing community events and participating in community-based meetings.
- Discontinuing the use of department-hosted surveys in favor of outsourcing to increase anonymity and ensure an unbiased reporting of the results.

Pillar Two—Policy and Oversight

Example strategies could include

- Establishing open lines of communication of efforts related to service delivery to communities that might be detached from government and policing—especially those affected by crime and disorder.

- Creating policies that deal specifically with members of the community affected by substance use and mental health disorders to promote diversion and treatment over incarceration.
- Reviewing all policies (especially those related to use of force, searches, gender identification, racial profiling, pursuit driving, and other high-risk areas) to ensure they are congruent with community needs while still preserving community safety.

Pillar Three—Technology and Social Media

Example strategies could include

- Researching and implementing best practices for all technology integrations including cameras, case management software, advanced vehicle location and tracking, and license plate readers.
- Seeking to obtain efficiencies through hardware and software upgrades to improve field reporting and connectivity.
- Increasing the use of social media (which the department is doing well) to inform while also sustaining traditional and grassroots information-sharing strategies, which were important to community members.

Pillar Four—Community Policing and Crime Reduction

Example strategies could include

- Creating a community coordinator position that moves the department beyond siloed approaches to engagement (i.e., the chief being on multiple boards and committees and the SROs being a sole focal point).
- Moving the department beyond public relations and working to engage the community in efforts to identify issues and problem solve.
- Establishing multidisciplinary task forces or working groups to share information and address crime and disorder in the community.
- Involving multigenerational groups to participate in planning sessions and encouraging them to help support initiatives important to the community and the department.
- Creating strategies that integrate data analysis, information sharing, and evaluating efforts that move beyond the traditional CompStat models and include

other city departments such as code enforcement, planning, and fire along with external partners providing community services.

Pillar Five—Training and Education

Example strategies could include

- Establishing a database of training by person that can be analyzed to ensure efforts are focused on the mission and goals of the organization.
- Ensuring that training is distributed in an equitable manner that reflects the needs of the community and the department.
- Hosting training that is of value to the department and provides seats to NBPD members.
- Evaluating readily available training for instilling leadership and consistently sending department members to the same training to foster a shared vision.
- Assessing the need for additional Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) training and ensuring department members have up to date information on substance use and mental health disorders, implicit bias and cultural responsiveness, policing in a democratic society, procedural justice, and effective communication skills along with updating core policing skills.
- Collaborating with local partners that can provide training to department members on issues of importance to the community.
- Establishing career development tracks so that individuals are aware of expectations for promotions and inclusion in specialized units.

Pillar Six—Officer Wellness and Safety

Example strategies could include

- Purchasing state-of-the-art safety equipment such as custom-fitted vests, night sights, ballistic shields, and battlefield medic kits (quick clot and tourniquets).
- Ensuring use of all safety equipment to include safety belts.
- Creating peer-support units.
- Providing stress management training for members and their spouses/partners.
- Providing healthy eating options through vending machines at the department and analysis of fast food options.

- Limiting the number of hours worked per day and per week (excepting emergencies) for personnel.

As appropriate, community partners and external stakeholders should participate in conversations about the pillars. Internally, efforts toward implementing the action items should be discussed at CompStat meetings and updates provided to the department members at least every other month.

Next Steps

This study is just the first step in a long process. Given the long-standing poor culture and dissension in the police department, there is much work to do to move the agency forward and ensure effective and efficient operations. While there are small incremental changes that can be made to improve operations, the biggest issue is resetting the department and having its members accept the philosophy of a modern-day Police Department.

The chief has vision and ideas that would serve the community well; however, he often operates on an island because others are not embracing the philosophy that he has adopted. Areas such as internal communications need work so that all department members are informed of both new programs and ongoing initiatives. Inclusion of all segments of the department in planning for the future is required in order to foster collaboration and esprit de corps and to create ownership over the plan rather than department members seeing it as a top-down approach.

The relationship with the community and some segments appears to be improving based on the visibility and personality of the chief and his desire to be involved; this enthusiasm needs to trickle down to other department members. The chief also needs to be afforded some latitude in picking his command staff as well as the ability to restructure and use civilians as appropriate, especially in roles such as Chief of Staff, public information officer, and supervisors of administration functions including communications and fiscal operations.

Relationships between the administration and the union need improvement so that both sides can share an understanding of the needs of the department as a whole and the individual members. There has been resistance to separating command staff members out of the patrol union. This is, however, an important step toward enhancing the ability of leadership to effectively manage the department. The ideal situation is to change some of the current captain positions to deputies so that there is greater latitude for this and any subsequent chiefs to pick their command staff.

The quality of data is extremely poor, which hampers a credible analysis of staffing needs. Work will continue to extract data in a meaningful manner so that an analysis can be produced that the Public Safety Strategies Group is willing to stand behind. More reliable data is also needed to ensure the CompStat process is accurately reviewing the data.

Investments in training and the fleet are required not only to enhance morale but to mitigate risks.

To effectively manage the change process, the chief is going to need additional staff. Three critical positions include a Chief of Staff, a community coordinator, and a second crime analyst.

The change process will also require the establishment of a steering committee and several working groups to first review and revise the mission, vision, and values of the department and then align the goals using the framework of the six pillars outlined in President Obama's Task Force on 21st Century Policing.

Implementation is often difficult, because agencies fail to recognize the tremendous amount of work that is required to move forward with a strategic plan. As part of the conclusion to this process, PSSG will be meeting with the chief and others at his discretion in order to discuss the contents of the report and how to create a timeline for the implementation of change. The unknown in this process is whether the mayor and council will grant the chief the funding required to support implementation.

As this was a collaborative process between the city and the police department, the process also included the development of steps to implement in the near term, some of which have been completed or are underway. These include the following:

Staffing and Operations

- Moving narcotics and the gang unit under Criminal Investigations.
- Moving traffic and the port authority to Station 1.
- Moving communications to the administrative captain or a civilian administrator.
- Adding 23 cameras short-term and 47 long-term under an extensive project to strategically place cameras in high-crime areas.
- Secure funding for a chief of staff who can manage projects and work with the chief on strategy implementation, oversee policy and procedure revisions, and act as a community liaison.
- Remove the captains from the union and allow for the chief to appoint the command staff.
- Civilianize the management information system position.
- Hire a crime analyst.
- Create a force multiplier by deploying single-person patrols.

- Evaluate an elimination of the officer assigned to city hall, or move the officer to a highly visible location and ensure coverage at important meetings.

Facilities

- Investigate the development of a single, modern police facility.
- For the short term, increase evidence capacity.
- Conduct an evidence audit.

Equipment

- Continue to expand mobile cameras (currently have six) to address crime increases or to monitor critical events.
- Create a funding plan ($500,000.00 per year) for cruiser replacement to include nine replacements in year one and two and then a continual replacement plan that will include the entire fleet, not just patrol.
- Investigate the replacement of CAD/RMS.
- Secure new mapping software.

Training and Management

- Secure funding to increase the training budget (currently $18,000.00).
- Continue to send first-line supervisors to the program developed by the police department, mid-managers will continue to attend Roger Williams, and senior leaders will attend courses offered through agencies such as the FBI, Northwestern, Penn State, and the Police Executive Research Forum.
- Investigate software that will capture both hours worked (by type—straight time, overtime, details, special enforcement, etc.) and training (by type, hours, cost) to improve tracking and deployment.

Taking action on these items while simultaneously having a Steering Committee oversee implementation of strategic goals and action items will help continue to reduce crime in the city and enhance operations.