

DATE: December 19, 2007

TO: Mayors and City Councils of Cape Elizabeth, Falmouth, Portland, Scarborough, South Portland and Westbrook and the County Commissioners of Cumberland County

FROM: Chiefs of Police

RE: Regional Forensics Laboratory Concept of Operations

Background:

For the past two years, a coalition of local governments in the Portland Metro area has explored the possibility of establishing partnerships to save taxpayers money and improve the quality of municipal services. The Metro Coalition consists of the County of Cumberland, Cape Elizabeth, Falmouth, Portland, Scarborough, South Portland and Westbrook.

In June 2006, the law enforcement heads from the participating communities proposed the creation of a regional crime lab. Forensic services are vital for effective law enforcement, but also represent a significant challenge to develop and maintain.

Over the course of the next eighteen months the Chiefs met to refine the regional crime lab idea, develop a draft inter-local agreement, and outline costs associated with this project. In December 2007, the town of Yarmouth formally joined the discussions.

On December 19, 2007, the Chiefs finalized the proposed inter-local agreement and the following concept of operations for the regional crime lab.

Concept of Operations:

1. The regional crime lab will be located in the Portland Public Safety Building. To minimize construction costs, the existing gymnasium will be renovated to house the crime lab. The City of Portland will finance the renovation with the participating communities assessed a proportionate share of the cost annually.
2. The crime lab facility will be shared by all participants; personnel will not be shared. There are no additional personnel costs associated with this project and existing personnel will remain the employees of their respective employers. This effort simply enables those individuals to expand their effectiveness and efficiency.
3. The participating Chiefs and Sheriff will serve as the governing board to manage operation of the facility. Chairmanship of the governing body will rotate annually upon vote of the board.
4. The participating communities will fund the equipping of the facility and ongoing maintenance costs associated with the equipment under a cost sharing agreement. Cost

sharing enables the purchase and maintenance of necessary equipment while increasing the cost effectiveness of the expenditure by maximizing utilization of the equipment.

5. The Board will develop rules, establish minimum training standards and promulgate procedures for the operation of the facility. Accepted practices in forensics are standardized in the law enforcement profession. Therefore, there is no deviation between individual agencies in this regard.

Relationship with the Maine State Police Crime Lab:

1. The regional crime lab will not replace or compete with the Maine State Police Crime Lab. It will act as a feeder to the State Police Crime Lab. Evidence will be processed at the regional crime lab and forwarded to Augusta for scientific testing and analysis.
2. The regional lab will complement the State lab by increasing the flow and standardizing the quality of evidence submitted to Augusta. The timely processing and analysis of evidence is essential to public safety. The more quickly evidence is processed, the more efficiently and effectively crimes are investigated, suspects are identified, and criminal defendants are prosecuted. Additionally, efficient handling of evidence protects the public from further criminal activity that may occur if cases remain unsolved.

Need:

The development of new technologies and methodologies has dramatically advanced the capabilities of forensic examination and analysis. However, the equipment, training, certifications and expertise required to provide the services are extremely expensive to implement and maintain over time. This fact forces police departments to limit the application of forensic techniques. While the state crime lab is a valuable resource and will continue to be so, it has a limited capacity to deal with the region's high demand for service.

Justification:

1. Forensics equipment is expensive to purchase and maintain. It is counterintuitive for agencies in close proximity to replicate the purchase of equipment. Cost sharing enables the purchase of equipment and increases the cost effectiveness of the expenditure by maximizing utilization of the equipment.
2. Cost sharing also permits the purchasing of advanced equipment out of the reach of single agencies. By providing each community with improved access to advanced forensic capabilities there will be an expansion of forensic services in the communities involved in this effort.

3. The training associated with forensic crime scene investigation and laboratory processing requires a significant commitment of time and money. By sharing the functioning of a single facility, personnel will advance the training and expertise of one another in a cost-effective manner.
4. A joint regional forensic effort will establish effective information sharing that will aid criminal investigation. Since the same criminals are active in the Greater Portland area, the unification of forensic processing activities will enhance the criminal investigations conducted in each community.
5. In addition to traditional forensic services, this effort will include the increasing demand for forensic computer analysis and processing. Once again, this effort is costly both in terms of equipment and training and readily lends itself to this concept.

Cost:

The cost associated with the renovation of the public safety building is estimated to be \$1,491,100. The cost associated with equipping the facility is estimated to be \$150,000. All costs will be shared using the formula established in the Interlocal Agreement.

Timeline:

Assuming agreement of the regional governing bodies of the coalition and Portland City Council approval of the CIP, the renovation could begin next year. It would take approximately one year to complete and become operational.