

Falmouth Police Department

*2 Marshall Drive
Falmouth, Maine 04105
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Memorandum

September 8, 2009

To: Nathan Poore,
Fr: Ed Tolan
Re: Request for additional officer

As you are aware the department has recently faced a severe staffing issue with a retirement, a maternity leave, a long term medical leave and the position that was eliminated from the FY10 budget. We had hoped to replace that position with the *COPS* Grant, but as we now know that grant was based almost entirely on the economic condition of our community.

We have recently hired Dan Austin, who began his duties August 28th, to fill the vacancy left by the retirement of Sgt. Walker. Officer Cheryl Dupuis, is on maternity leave and will not return until early 2010, and Officer Libby is on medical leave and his date of return is yet to be determined.

With your permission we hired Kurt Fegan on August 17th, but he is at the police academy until late December and upon return will be in the *Field Training Officer* program for one month. Thus he will not be able to help us during this period of staffing deficiencies.

Due to the staffing level we have been forced to realign the department's patrol shifts and eliminate the traffic car position, which brings us down to two officers per shift. In fact some day and evening patrol shifts are being covered by Lt. Kilbride. Two officers per shift in a town of our size located next to Portland and with four major highways (I-95, I-295, Rt. 1 and Rt. 100) traversing it, is a safety issue for the officers. Our calls for service are up dramatically over the same period in 2008. As of today's date we are at 16,430 calls. In 2008 the number was 11,120. All it takes is one officer being assigned to a call which takes him/her out of service, and the other officer being asked to respond to a call that normally would require two officers. This has been occurring all too frequently recently.

Another of the detriments to this level of staffing is that this requires any vacant (vacation, holiday, sick or training) shifts to be filled with overtime rather than possibly not filling the shift. In researching our overtime since July 1st, the start of the new fiscal year until mid August we paid out **389 hours** of overtime. During the same period of 2008 when we were not faced with this dilemma, we paid **262 hours** of overtime. This is an increase of almost 50% in a month and one half. Facing this

problem over an entire year I think you can see what it would do to the overtime account in the budget.

In addition to the higher than normal expenditure of overtime, this can create an unhealthy situation for the officers. Large amounts of overtime often means inadequate sleep between extra shifts, and forced doubles (16 hour shifts), which means less rest time. Moving into the winter months only compounds this problem with sicknesses such as the common colds and flu. This can affect productivity and morale within a department.

An excellent example of this would be the *Speed Enforcement Grant* that Lt. Kilbride obtained for the department. The State provided us with \$3,700 for overtime for extra details for speed enforcement during a specific period (Memorial Day through Labor Day). Due to the extra patrol shifts the officers have been forced to work we have not been able to fill all the "extra" details and will be returning approximately \$1,000 to the State. This does two things; it reduced the number of speed enforcement details that we conducted and it *may* impact our ability to obtain grants such as this in the future.

I have also attached a document that provides the staffing levels for departments of similar size and facing similar problems to ours. Please note that we are staffed at a level that is lower than departments of similar size.

While the level of traffic remains fairly consistent over the past several years, the amount of time the officers can dedicate to specific traffic issues has been reduced by the number of additional calls they are answering. Please remember that when they answer a call they are also writing a report for that call, which takes away additional time during their shift. The traffic car position was implemented approximately three years ago to address this problem and has worked well for the department.

The traffic officer focuses on traffic enforcement, responds to specific concerns from citizens, investigates all accidents when working, places our traffic analyzer and radar sign board at locations in response to complaints and then completes follow-up reports on the data from this equipment. This position would also be utilized to staff the traffic control point at Falmouth and Woodville Roads, which has been mandated for the new school.

In summation, with the addition of Officers Austin and Fegan, and if Officers Libby and Dupuis return to work we will be at full strength. Therefore, I believe it is imperative that we maintain Officer Fegan's position.

I hope this information is useful to you and the council in your decision process. Should you have any questions please contact me.

Respectfully submitted,

Edward J. Tolan
Chief of Police