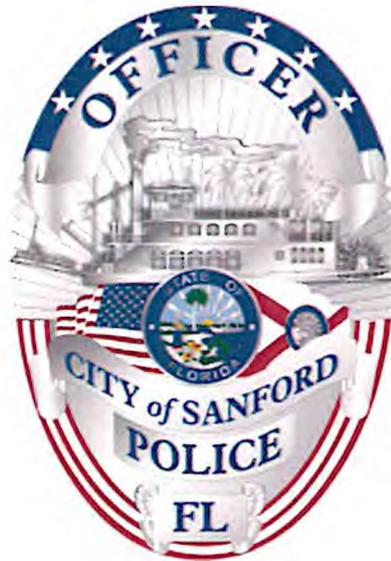


**Sanford Blue Ribbon Panel
Police Department/Community Relations Assessment Report
Twenty Month Progress Report
July, 2013 – February 2015**

**Prepared By:
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City of Sanford
Police Department
Sanford, Florida**



Executive Summary

The Blue Ribbon Panel completed its task and submitted their Report to the City Manager on June 4, 2013. The Report was a thorough assessment of the Sanford Police Department recruitment, salaries, hiring process, staff composition, general policies and procedures, community's perception of the Department, and Management. The report contained a total of 27 recommendations. Chief Smith provided a six month progress report on action taken towards accomplishment of the recommendations to the Panel and the Community in January of 2014. The following are comments from Police Chief Cecil Smith and a summary of steps and actions taken by the Department to address the recommendations from July 2013 – December, 2014.

"During this time we received the final report from the "Blue Ribbon Panel" which was formed as a result of the Zimmerman/Martin case. The panel outlined several areas that they felt needed to be addressed within the Sanford Police Department. I'm happy to report that many if not all of the recommendations have been accomplished or have become programs which will remain as a continuous part of moving the Sanford Police Department forward. There are 27 Conclusions and Recommendations. We have addressed the items presented to the City Manager regarding community concerns and the expressed needs from the Citizens of District 2 (predominantly African Americans).

We have reached out to the community for help with the unresolved homicides. The community responded positively and one of the long standing unsolved murders has been solved with 2 of the 3 suspects in custody. Through our enhanced community engagement we received information on other unsolved cases which hopefully will lead to more arrest.

We began the Community Relation Unit which focused its attention on redeveloping the community connection thru the Neighborhood Watch Program, Volunteer Program, Chaplains Program, Elderly and Mental Health Programs, and a variety of other community oriented services.

There were a series of pre-trial, trial and post-trial activities initiated by the Department that is worth noting and instrumental in the Department connecting with the community and laying the foundation for improved police community relations.

- *Developed alliances with the pastors, DOJ, Sheriff, State Attorney's Office, Activist group (NAACP) and the Urban league*
- *Established the Walk, Knock and Talk concept:*
- *Created the Neighborhood response Unit, to deal with "Hot Stops" gangs, drugs and special enforcement concerns*
- *Established the Community Relation Unit to focus its attention on redeveloping the community connections.*

We have come a very long way during the year and I know we still have a long way to go. I am encouraged with where we are today and I certain the future relationship between the community and the Sanford Police Department will continue to grow in a positive directions. My only request is that we continue to work to together and keep the lines of communications open"

Thanks you again for your time

Cecil Smith, Chief of Police

Recommendations

Funding:

- 1) The City should allocate sufficient funding so that SPD can fill the positions that are currently vacant. The City should consider additional funding for special task forces and other innovative activities.**

Action:

- I. The department is in the process of recruiting new officers to fill the present vacancies within the department. We recently hire five (5) new officers in August of 2013; we hired 10 new officers in January of 2014; three (3) new officers in May and six (6) new officers in November of 2014. We are in the process of hiring six (6) new officers now February, 2015. It is my goal to hire additional 5-7 new officers by late September, 2015. In less than two (2) years a third of the department has less than two (2) years' experience.
- II. I've promoted one of the most diverse and qualified group of officers within the past 10 years. Black, White, and Hispanic. All willing to make a difference within the department and willing to be a part of the community redevelopment and connection.

- 2) The City should bring salaries up to at least the average rate paid to other law enforcement agencies in Seminole County.**

Action:

- I. It was our hope the present salaries will be reviewed during the 2104 contract negotiations. As of February 2015 the contract negotiation continues. A salary review was requested through the City Manager's office in 2014 for all areas within the city.

Police Practices:

- 3) When SPD officers observe crime, even minimal crime, they should stop and investigate. This would result not only in the intervention regarding that individual criminal activity but also would prevent the escalation of criminal acts in that area. The Panel recognizes that current resources may not be sufficient to presently implement this recommendation.**

Action:

- I. Officers have been instructed to take appropriate action when they observe crimes occurring. We have seen an increase in the number of arrest. With the creation of the CRU (Crime Prevention/Community Relations Unit) we've also seen a marked improvement in our working relationship with the communities of Goldsboro, Georgetown and other heavily populated minority areas within the city.
- 4) **Community policing should be used throughout the City, but particularly with a focus on the areas of the City that have higher crime. Furthermore other citizens in Sanford, beyond Goldsboro, indicated to this Panel that they lack community policing as well. Goldsboro is an area of specific concern. But community policing is vital throughout the City. One suggestion to increase police presence in Goldsboro is to establish police substations in the area. Admittedly, the Public Safety Complex is blocks away from the heart of Goldsboro. However, strategically placed substations would emphasize police presence and could be used for other purposes as well, such as functioning as pretrial release centers. If the street level officers were closer to the neighborhoods, their presence would not only deter crime, but would also facilitate development of relationships with the people who live there. As State Attorney Phil Archer stated to the Panel, "If the community is in partnership with law enforcement, then the witnesses will be more apt to cooperate and appear for trial." The Sanford Police Department should be brought up to capacity, and all budgeted positions should be filled, in order to fully implement community policing. When the agency is understaffed the demands on their time is such that the officers do not have time to concentrate on building relationships in the community.**

Action:

- I. The recommendation to locate a substation within the Goldsboro area is not financial reasonable at this time. It should be noted that the Sanford Police/Fire facility is located within the Historic Goldsboro are. What we have established is a SAO (States Attorney Office) office within the Sanford Police Department. The local office allows citizens direct access to speak with the ASAO. This also allows access to the reporting officers regarding ongoing cases.
 - II. We've also created workspace for investigators from the DJJ (Department of Juvenile Justice), Parole/probation and the DEA/ATF taskforce within the department. The process of implementing a Community Relations Division within the department has helped to combat many of the community issues
- 5) **The Panel recommends that the DUI checkpoints be used consistently so that assertions of selective enforcement cannot be made. SPD and its legal advisors should research and develop methods for further investigation of crime, for example check points.**

Action:

- I. As part of the reorganizational chart within the department, the Traffic Enforcement Unit has and will continue conducting DUI/ roadside safety checks. The reassigned of personnel into this area has occurred and two (2) additional officers was added to this area
- 6) **The Panel recognizes that preparation of arrest reports, especially under the stress of arrest and booking, is both time consuming and tedious. However, accurate arrest reports enable the prosecutors to properly determine the appropriate charges to bring and enhance the testimony of the arresting officer if called to testify at trial. Citizens who serve on juries expect police witnesses to have made a thorough investigation when the burden of proof is beyond a reasonable doubt. Thus, the thorough investigation and reporting of crime is necessary to obtain convictions. Officers should remember that their reports are utilized through every stage of a criminal case, from the determination of conditions of pretrial release at first appearance to sentencing. Additionally, the arrest report is often the best tool used to prepare for a trial that takes place months after the report was written.**

Action:

- I. As of the week of August 5, 2013 Patrol officers began training in courtroom testimony and investigative report writing classes. As new officers are hired each group has been assigned additional report writing classes.
- 7) **SPD officers need additional training in their role and how they are to function with the State Attorney's Office. An arrest accomplishes little if there is no conviction. SPD officers should investigate and assist prosecutors beyond the point of arrest, so that the prosecutor can meet his or her burden in court.**

Action:

- I. As indicated above, each of the officers has had a refresher class on conducting and completing investigative reports. In some cases I've found that this was an area which is lacking during the academy and FTO training sessions. Starting September 1st, 2013, members from the Investigation Unit will conduct roll-call training on investigative reporting to the patrol officers. The SAO and SCSO have also conducted in house training as well.
- 8) **SPD officers should be educated about "Fair and Impartial Policing" so that the law is enforced in a consistent manner, thus avoiding the appearance of racial bias. The Panel recommends that the City or the Federal Department of Justice fund the "Training of the Trainers" so that the appropriate members of SPD are trained to educate SPD officers on this important aspect of policing. The Panel believes this training will enhance trust in the agency. Upon completion of the Training of the Trainers SPD should establish a rollout plan to train the remaining members of SPD. A quarterly progress report should be provided to the Citizens' Advisory Board to ensure timely compliance with the recommendation.**

Action:

- I. The officer began the Fair and Impartial Policing “Train the Trainer” training in November of 2013. The Departments Command Staff took part in the training in May of 2013. Every officer has completed the training with the exception of the officers hired during November of 2014. The training will be completed prior to their release from Field Training (FTO). Officer will also be attending training on “Verbal Judo”. The purpose is to teach the officers how to “Engage and Disengage when dealing with the public.
- II. Community members were invited to participate in the Fair and Impartial Policing training program; three (3) citizens’ attended.
- III. In November of 2013 Sanford Police Department hosted the Fair and Impartial Policing certification course “Train the Trainer”. Amongst the 25 police instructors who traveled from across the country to participate in the program, Captain Anthony Raimondo, SPD participated in the Fair and Impartial Policing Instructor certification course “Train the Trainer” and became a certified instructor.

9) The Panel encourages SPD to invest in the Goldsboro Task Force on a long-term basis, and use data collected to show long-term results.

Action

- I. Goldsboro new “Task Force”/ Neighborhood Response Unit was created in April of 2013 and remains active and vital part of reducing crime within the city.

10) Supervisors should make sure that the lack of a speedy response is not caused by unmotivated officers. Dispatchers should comply with standard operating procedures established by the Seminole County Sheriff’s Department and be trained on an acceptable protocol to explain to the callers that there is a prioritization of calls, and the possibility that they may have to wait for a response to a non-emergency call. An adequately staffed department should reduce these types of complaints. (See Recommendation #2 under Police Practices regarding adequate staffing.)

Action:

- I. With regards to response time to call, we’ve worked with the Seminole County Sheriff’s Office regarding prioritization, call volume and CSA’s. The re-organization has benefitted the department with faster response time and more accurate assessment of events.
- II. The department has been more transparent and responsive to crimes in a timely and professional manner.

Training:

11) SPD should continue the vetting of new hires but should require additional training of new officers either by extending the probationary period for the new officers or establishing a regular training schedule. The Panel is concerned about the implementation of the training on the street. Additional supervised basic training should improve performance. Training should include impressing new officers with the attitude of protection and peace towards citizens and conveying a sense of community service rather than an “us versus them” mentality.

Action:

- I. As part of the new officer training (FTO) they are expected to spend additional time during their training working and speaking within the community. Additional time on investigative report writing, crime scene/evidence collection, interviewing has been included within the training. Some of these items have been included in the daily roll-call training for all patrol officers.

12) The City should acquire the band width and cameras necessary to place body cameras on more of the officers.

Action:

- I. The “Body Camera” issues were resolved. In May of 2013 we deployed the first twenty (20) Taser body-cameras to the four (4) patrol shifts. An additional 60 cameras were issue during the month of October, 2013. Ten (10) additional Body cameras were purchased approve for the School Resource Officers (SRO) in January of 2015. A total of Ninety (90) “Body Cameras” has been purchased to outfit each officer (not including supervisors at this time) in a patrol capacity.

Management:

13) The Chief of Police should assess which officers are not performing and create a dynamic to encourage those officers to seek other employment. The Chief will need the support of City government to back up the decision to replace officers who do not measure up to standards.

Action:

- I. As we’ve moved beyond the trail phase within the department and City, as noted above we have begun the weed and seed within the department. The reorganization of the department, reassignments within divisions, the required training and shorter more directed discipline structure set the tone for a more professional department.

14) SPD and its crime statistics should serve multiple purposes. Not only should SPD keep statistics (as required) in order to report to the FBI, but it should also keep statistics so that SPD management can track and measure crime, including data on drugs. The SPD management could then ascertain which crime or crimes deserve additional resources

Action:

- I. With the graduation from the crime analysis school, Jennifer Blake has the ability for extract the needed information to accomplish what's needed in this area.

15) SPD must take as many steps possible to alert the public of the grievance process. Citizens who file grievances or complaints should be kept informed of the progress and outcomes of their grievances or complaints.

Action:

- I. The Commendation and Complaint" information regarding the conduct of any SPD personnel is available on the website our face book account and within the lobby of the station. Citizens can also contact the Office of Professional Standards directly if they feel uncomfortable speaking with a supervisor. The departments new PIO updated the information on the department's website.

16) SPD should put a system in place which publicly recognizes and awards officers for their excellent work and achievements. This could be accomplished through an annual award ceremony, and through choice assignments, promotions and commendations.

Action:

- I. Since May 1, 2013 we began reorganizing the recognitions and awards program within the department. We have on a number of occasions recognized several officers publicly for the outstanding work they've done. The "First" ever police memorial program held on May 13, 2013 is a shining example of such a program. The program has continued and has evolved into a Seminole County wide law enforcement event.

17) SPD should continue training and adherence to standards and best practices in order to maintain professionalism.

Action:

- I. We reclassified the previous position responsible for Internal Affairs from the rank Sergeant to the rank of Lieutenant. The goal here is to allow for greater structure and decision making ability during an investigation.

Reporting Crimes:

18) SPD should, when possible, protect reporting citizens' confidentiality. The Panel recognizes that the identity of reporting citizens may ultimately have to be disclosed if they become witnesses in a criminal case. However, that disclosure should normally be left to the prosecuting authority and not the investigating officer. Officers should take pains not to reveal their sources unless obligated under the law or the necessity of the case. The

telephone number for Crimeline should be publicized because it provides an anonymous source of information.

Action:

- I. Confidentiality: It is of great importance that we continue to develop and maintain the trust of those who place their trust in us. It is a matter of changing the mindset within the department and the community. Each officer has been reminded that maintaining confidentiality among the community is important. It is equally important with our call takers and dispatcher.

19) SPD should investigate the possibility of installation of cameras in neighborhoods with high criminal activity. SPD should recommend the installation of cameras to the City government if it appears that cameras could be an effective crime detection tool. There is reported success with the use of cameras in Orlando.

Action:

- I. The use of cameras as a deterrent for crime is a great concept. The problem is its cost prohibited and manning the cameras will require additional manpower, IT services, storage capacity and list goes on from there. I and well as our Information Technology section (IT) have recommended hiring personnel to fill this position. It is not sustainable with the present budget. I will gladly recommend the use and purchase again but in the meantime, I would prefer having the bodies on the street working with the people first.

Relationship with the Community:

20) Educated citizens who understand the division of responsibility among the various elements of the criminal justice system are less likely to respond negatively to police action in tense situations. The Panel has been informed that the City of Sanford has hired a public information officer to assist in the future and that is a positive step in the right direction. SPD, in conjunction with the State Attorney's Office, should be in dialogue with the community about the criminal laws, and the criminal process. Instead of merely enforcing the law, both SPD and the prosecutors could work to explain the law through community meetings, open house sessions at the police station, tabling events, and public forums. SPD and the prosecutors must be in the community, in order to share that information. It is likely that much of the tension surrounding the Trayvon Martin shooting could have been lessened if the public had been better informed concerning the possible unintended consequences of an arrest and the substantive law of "Stand Your Ground." Communication will result in trust. And communication happens through proximity. The Panel urges SPD and the City of Sanford to find formal opportunities for dialogue and education, and for the street level officers to seek opportunities to educate. The Panel has been informed that the SPD is in the process of hiring a Public Information Officer and that is a step in the right direction.

Action:

- I. Hired a new Public Information Officer (PIO) who has done her best to keep the community informed of events within the Police Department good or bad.
- II. Education and communication are some of the key components to improving the communication and community relationship. We have worked with the SAO to put together information for the community regarding how the laws affect them. As a department, we will begin an in house Citizen Police Academy (Volunteer program) and offered it to the community. The goal is to allow the community the opportunity to see the inner working of the police department. This program will be in addition to the Volunteer/COP programs already in place. When I began, April 2013 we had twelve (12) Volunteers. We have sixty five (65) and the program continues to grow.
- III. Officers have become more engage with the community. Some people like the engagement, some don't. Some feel safer having more of a police presence, some call it over bearing. I would rather you come to me say the police are here too much than say you don't see them at all!!!
- IV.

21) The only contact person with SPD the victims currently have are the investigating officers who should not be responsible for this function. Victims are not getting follow-up information from SPD and this contributes to a lack of support or lack of trust. Victims are in need of both information and respect, and trained victim advocates can provide the assistance victims need. The Victims Advocate could be trained volunteers. The training of the volunteers and management of the program will be an additional cost, which the City may need to underwrite, but the cost will be somewhat offset because officers will be relieved of this responsibility. The Victims Advocate position could be so valuable to the Department that eventually this could be a paid position instead of volunteer position.

Action:

- I. We have spoken with the Seminole County Sheriff's Office regarding the development of a Victims Advocates program within the department. As it stands today, Seminole County provides this resource to the entire county. We have spoken to an advocated that is working on the needed grants to get the program up and running.
- 22) Partnership requires communication. Communication between SPD and the public can be enhanced via community newsletters, and community awards from SPD to blocks that are free of crime for a particular period of time. SPD or the City should create incentives for SPD officers to move into neighborhoods to promote visibility and community. Perhaps these incentives can come from community development dollars. SPD could create opportunities to mingle with citizens of Sanford via "Meet and Mingle" events, held in different parts of Sanford each month. The events would last one or two hours and could be held at parks, houses of worship, businesses or even a parking lot of a business. The officers in SPD should**

be encouraged to participate in more community outreach programs, beyond the current scenario of merely Neighborhood Watch and the boxing club, which is affiliated with the Seminole County Police Athletic League (PAL.) SPD should consider creating a position titled “Community Relation Coordinator” who oversees a 3-year plan for developing a closer relationship with the community. This Coordinator would work with the Citizens’ Advisory Board made up of representatives of the community/community leaders who would help develop an action plan for relationship building. The Citizens’ Advisory Board should be reviewed to ensure that the community is well represented regarding race, age, gender, ethnicity, and geography. The reports from the Citizens’ Advisory Board should be available on the City’s webpage as well as the SPD web page.

Action:

- I. Created a Hispanic/Latino outreach position with the goal of the position being to connect with the Hispanic community.
- II. The Department sponsored a Hispanic/Latino festival and a picnic in the park for the Hispanic/Latino community
- III. Established a Walk, Knock and Talk concept in April of 2012: As a Department, leadership and officers go out into the community walk the street, knock on doors to meet people, hear concerns if any and develop strategies to address the concerns. We will continue this effort until we’ve reach as many communities as possible.
- IV. The fourth Thursday of each Month, leadership of the Department attend a community meeting in the African American community along with other City Department heads to provide a status report on activities and receive feedback from the community.
- V. The Police Department working with the Parks and Recreation Department partnered with the Goldsboro Community in sponsoring several community events including Celebrate Sanford, and the Goldsboro Festival.
- VI. We established the Community Relation Unit which focused its attention on redeveloping the community connection thru the Neighborhood Watch Program, Volunteer Program, Chaplains Program, Elderly and Mental Health Programs, and a variety of other community oriented services.

23) The City should invest in the Goldsboro area so crime will dissipate. This investment should be in bricks and mortar and building a city, but it should also include the soft skills of people power, and human capital. Crime prevention can come in many forms; one method of crime prevention is investing in the youth by giving the youth an alternative to criminal activity. Funding programs that keep the youth busy and stimulated will alleviate the issues that provide youth with the incentive to commit crime. This investment in the community will build trust which will result in relationships. If the relationships are enhanced citizens who know about crime will give information to the police, and citizens who are witnesses to crime will be more likely to come to court to testify.

Action:

- I. The Department participates in the Youth Empowerment and Leadership Development Academy (YELDA) program and provides employment for four (4) youth during the summer.
- II. The City Manager, Chief of Police, department heads and officers volunteered and assisted Habitat for Humanity to build a home for low income homeowner.
- III. The Police Department teamed with the Public Works Department to clear alleys of over growth and increase lighting in the Goldsboro and Georgetown neighborhoods.
- IV. The Department is working with Code Enforcement Department to demolish and clear vacant and blighted structures in the Goldsboro and Georgetown neighborhood. During the past two years a total of sixteen (16) structures have been demolished.
- V. The Department is working with Code enforcement to explore how the "Magistrate" program can be used to enforce minor vehicle violations.
- VI. The Department is working with Parks and Recreation and Public Works Departments on strategies to clean up the parks in Goldsboro and Georgetown and make them safer for the kids and beautify the community.

24) SPD and the City of Sanford should actively work with corporations and businesses to seek sponsorship of and support for the SPD efforts in youth programs, such as Save the Youth Initiative and Young Men of Excellence, in order to decrease the amount of crimes involving youth in the community.

Action:

- I. With the assistance of local businesses we have successfully purchased and outfitted a mobile sports and activity vehicle. The vehicle can be used by an assigned officer to take recreational services to a specific neighborhood. The vehicle will allow the officer to go into the community and interact with the kids in specific areas.
- II. Permanently assigned officers in Call for Service Areas (CSA's) will attend community events within their assigned area and they will be required to develop at least one event a year in those areas. Several local and major retail chains like Walmart, target and Sport Authority have donated funding and several other companies have offered in kind items.
- III. The Department (Specifically the Chief) works directly with the Young Men of Excellence program.
- IV. In April of 2013 the Department partnered with Seminole County Public Schools, Seminole County Sheriff's Office, State Attorney's Office, Urban League of central Florida and several local non-profits to sponsor the first a Youth Violence Prevention Summit in Sanford.

25) Citizens' complaints or allegations of rude or inappropriate conduct on the part of law enforcement should be documented in order to identify repeat offenders.

Action:

- I. If a citizen wishes to speak with an officer's supervisor at scene or within the station regarding the officer's conduct, we will provide have provide a venue to take care of the issue immediately. If the citizen chooses to file a formal complaint the information is located on to accomplish this on our website, on our face book/next door accounts and within the lobby of the police facility. All complaints are documented and track for proper follow up and disposition.

26) The City through the City Commissioners should empanel a new Citizens' Advisory Board, which would serve not as a group that micromanages SPD but instead would provide the Chief a sounding board. The Citizens' Advisory Board would consist of both law enforcement members and lay people. The Advisory Board would provide (a) accountability (b) credibility and (c) visibility.

Action:

- I. Presently SPD does not have a Citizen Advisory Board. The previous board we disbanded due to continued conflict between the members of the board. The disbandment occurred prior to Chief Smith's arrival. The idea of establishing a new board will be revisited in 2015.